



Curriculum, Staffing & Pupils

Chair of Committee _____

Review Date _____

Signed by _____

Date _____



ORCHARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Looked After Children Policy

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CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the guidance documents ‘Education of Young People in Public Care’ (DfEE/DoH 2000) and ‘The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children’ (2009), and should be read in conjunction with them. This policy should also be read in conjunction with Bexley Council’s policy for the Education of Children in Public Care and with Orchard Primary School’s Equal Opportunities, Inclusion, SEN and Anti-bullying/Behaviour Management Policies.

1 Objective

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public Care, (Children Looked After, CLA) within a supportive and inclusive school culture.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

a) The Head Teacher and designated teacher

The Head Teacher and designated teacher will inform staff of a child’s care status and determine the extent to which information is shared with other members of staff.

b) The designated teacher

The designated teacher for Children Looked After (accommodated children, children in public care) is the Head Teacher.

The role of the designated teacher is to:

- * Maintain a register of children looked after in public care and ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carers and that this information is kept up to date.**
- * Ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children/ young people looked after and understand the need for high expectations and positive systems of support to overcome them.**
- * Act as an advocate for children looked after.**
- * Hold a supervisory brief and monitor the educational progress of all children looked after.**
- * Supervise the smooth induction of a child has been recently accommodated into the school.**
- * Act as a named person for the child or name another appropriate adult in school.**

- * **Promote the involvement of children looked after in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school council etc, and intervene if there is evidence of individual under- achievement, absence from school or internal truancy etc.**
- * **Ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and that school-based access to services and support is in place.**
- * **liaise with designated teacher for Child Protection and the SENCO.**
- * **Help co-ordinate education and Social Care Department (SCD) review meetings, so that the PEP can inform the child's Care Plan and enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspect of their Care Plan.
Attend or arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to SCD's planning meetings.**
- * **Act as advisor for other staff in the school and for governors on issues relevant to children in public care. Ensure that there is sensitivity to the background of children in public care within teaching, especially in work around families, family trees and family values.**

Identify a named contact in the school responsible for children looked after for colleagues in Education and SCD.

- * **Ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals and report on the progress of all children in public care to the relevant Social Care team for Children Looked After.**
- * **Develop knowledge of SCD and Education procedures by attending training events organised by the local authority and cascade training to staff as appropriate.**

c) The Governors

The named governor with special responsibility for children looked after is Mrs Sue Twynam.

The named governor reports to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- * **The number of children looked after in the school, who has knowledge of their status and who has an overview of their educational needs and progress.**
- * **The test scores, attendance and exclusion rates of the discrete group, compared with those of other pupils.**

The Governing Body should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that children looked have equal access to:

- **the National Curriculum**
- **public examinations**
- **careers guidance**
- **additional educational support**
- **extra-curricular activities**
- **special educational needs adequately address the need of children**
- **work experience**

The governors will assist the school in looking at whether the policies and practice on behaviour, admissions, exclusions, attendance and looked after.

3 Confidentiality

The Head Teacher and/or the designated teacher have responsibility for informing all teaching staff who are in contact with the child of their care status.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some basic information will be shared with the teacher covering the class by the Head Teacher or the designated teacher.

As the initial contact of carers and other agencies with the school, the Office Manager will have knowledge of the child's care status.

It is appropriate for a Teaching Assistant (TA) to have knowledge that the child is being looked after when directly involved in the teaching of the child.

Other staff may need to know if there are particular concerns that require a whole-school approach.

In each case, the extent of the information shared will be determined by the Head Teacher and the designated teacher. In every case, only information that is critical to the effective working relationship will be passed on.

4 Admissions

On admission, records will be requested from the previous school, where appropriate and a meeting held to inform the PEP.

An appropriate school induction will take place.

5 Involving the Child

The child will be consulted and involved in decisions about themselves according to their age and understanding.

A child will be made aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them depends on their age and understanding. The explanation will emphasise that the school, the Social Worker and the carers are working together to support their education.

The teacher may discuss, or ask the social worker to discuss, how the child will tackle questions about their home, by peers in the playground, for example.

6 Involving the Parent(s) and Carer(s)

Orchard Primary School recognises that support from home greatly assists a child's educational progress and aims to involve parents, carers and those with parental responsibility in an open and positive manner.

The school will maintain regular communication with the primary carer and will ensure copies of reports are forwarded to the social worker in addition to the foster carer and parent. Refer to Orchard Primary School's Safe Guarding Policy.

7 Involving other Agencies

Orchard Primary School recognises that multi-agency working is critical to the support and progress of children looked after.

The school will work closely with other agencies involved in supporting the achievements and welfare of the child, particularly the social worker.

The school will exchange significant information to appropriate personnel between reviews when necessary.

8 Assessment, Planning, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Assessment, planning and monitoring will be carried out by the class teacher, as with all pupils, in accordance with general school practice. Refer to Orchard Primary School's Assessment and Record Keeping Policy.

Each child looked after will have a PEP as part of their Care Plan. This will identify basic information, act as a record of progress, identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The PEP will be reviewed at least every six months and will feed into the Care Plan.

The designated teacher will maintain an overview of the progress and needs of each child looked after as specified in 2.

The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body as specified in 3.

APPENDIX

Context

Research shows that generally children in care continue to have poorer outcomes than the wider population – particularly in relation to educational achievement, homelessness and mental health. It is difficult to determine the extent to which these outcomes were caused by the child's experiences prior to coming into care, rather than their experiences once in care. However we do know that further support is needed to help these children and young people overcome the effects of the abuse and neglect they have suffered. Research shows that there is a direct link between successful education and escaping from social disadvantage. It is therefore essential that schools, working together with parents, carers, social workers and other agencies, support the educational achievement of this vulnerable group.

Terminology and the legal understanding of Children Looked After

The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if s/he is in their care by reason of a care order (the local authority has gone to court) or is being provided with accommodation under s20 of the 1989 Act for more than 24 hours with the agreement of the parents.

s20 is where the parents have voluntarily agreed for their child to be looked after by the local authority. For a child who is 'accommodated' under section 20 voluntary arrangements ('an accommodated child'), the local authority does not have parental responsibility for the child – parental responsibility remains with the parents.

Although a care order gives the local authority parental responsibility for the child, any person who is a parent or guardian also retains their parental responsibility and may continue to exercise it to the extent that their actions are not 'incompatible' with the care order. This means that as long as they act as a parent complying with the care order.

Children who are accommodated away from home under an emergency protection order (this is where the court grants an order in an emergency), or where they are accommodated by or on behalf of the local authority are classed as children looked after. So too are children in police protection and at the police's request accommodated by the local authority.

Short breaks

If a child receives a short break away from his parents/ main carer for less than 17 days and does not total more than 75 days in any 12 month period, the child is not looked after, however if the days go over this amount then an IRO must be appointed and a Care Plan drawn up.

Parental responsibility (PR)

What is parental responsibility?

All mothers and most fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent - known as 'parental responsibility'.

If you have parental responsibility, your most important roles are to:

- provide a home for the child
- protect and maintain the child

If you have parental responsibility for a child you don't live with, you don't necessarily have a right to contact with them - but the other parent still needs to keep you updated about their well-being and progress.

You're also responsible for:

- disciplining the child
- choosing and providing for the child's education
- agreeing to the child's medical treatment
- naming the child and agreeing to any change of name
- looking after the child's property

Parents have to ensure that their child is supported financially, whether they have parental responsibility or not.

Who has parental responsibility

A mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child from birth.

A father usually has parental responsibility if he is:

- married to the child's mother
- listed on the birth certificate (after a certain date, depending on which part of the UK the child was born in)

You can apply for parental responsibility if you don't automatically have it.

Births registered in England and Wales

If the parents of a child are married when the child is born, or if they've jointly adopted a child, both have parental responsibility.

They both keep parental responsibility if they later divorce.

Unmarried parents

An unmarried father can only get legal responsibility for his child in 1 of 3 ways:

- jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother (from 1 December 2003)
- getting a parental responsibility agreement with the mother
- getting a parental responsibility order from a court

Births registered in Scotland

A father has parental responsibility if he is married to the mother when the child is conceived, or marries her at any point afterwards.

An unmarried father has parental responsibility if he is named on the child's birth certificate (from 4 May 2006).

Births registered in Northern Ireland

A father has parental responsibility if he is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth.

If a father marries the mother after the child's birth, he has parental responsibility if he lives in Northern Ireland at the time of the marriage.

An unmarried father has parental responsibility if he is named, or becomes named, on the child's birth certificate (from 15 April 2002).

Births registered outside the UK

If a child is born overseas and comes to live in the UK, who has parental responsibility depends on the UK country they're now living in.

Same-sex parents

Civil partners

Same-sex partners who were civil partners at the time of the treatment will both have parental responsibility.

Non-civil partners

For same-sex partners who aren't civil partners, the second parent can get parental responsibility by either:

- applying for parental responsibility if a parental agreement was made
- becoming a civil partner of the other parent and making a parental responsibility agreement or jointly registering the birth

Parental responsibility and children looked after

Parents retain parental responsibility for children who are accommodated (voluntary), although the local authority still has responsibilities as corporate parent.

Parental responsibility is shared between birth parent(s) and the local authority where a child is subject to a care order.

Foster carers

In practice, foster carers carry out many of the day-to-day parenting tasks this includes regular contact with schools, attendance at parents evening, monitoring and assisting with homework, attendance at specific school events, such as assembly and attending the personal educational plan meeting

Living arrangements for Children Looked After

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements.

A child on a Care Order can be living:

- with foster carers
- in a residential school
- with a specific carer (relative or friend, authorised by Social Services)
- with parent(s) under the supervision of the Social Services Department
- in a children's home.

An accommodated child can be living:

- with foster carers
- in a residential home
- with a specific carer (relative or friend, authorised by Social Services)
- in a children's home.
- It is rare that a child who is 20 (voluntarily care) would be placed with a parent, as usually if children can return or live with a birth parent they are likely to be discharged from care.

Corporate Parent

Looked after children and young people are unique individuals from all walks of life with different aspirations and ambitions. Many looked after children are at greater risk of social exclusion than other children of similar age. Consequently, all agencies within the Local Authority, including the education department, have a responsibility and a positive role to play in enriching the lives of looked after children and young people.

As corporate parents our duties include the education, health and welfare of LAC, what they do in their leisure times, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

Reviewed: Autumn 2015

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