Lostwithiel School: Policy for children in care

Adopted by the Governing body:	September 2021
Review date:	September 2022

Objective
To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children In Care

At Lostwithiel School we believe that all Children in Care should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Cornwall children. We as a school community aim to be champions for Children in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we as school have a vital role to play in promoting children and young people's social and emotional development.

Our aims to support Children in Care

- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Bring the educational attainments of our Children in Care nearer to those of their peers.
- Making sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Identifying our schools' role to promote and support the education of our Children in Care.
- Asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'
- All settings are required to have a Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with carers, natural parents (as appropriate) and social workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues

Background
There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995 a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework
- Underachievement in further and higher education

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children. All schools should have a policy for Children in Care (CIC) that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. The policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of Children in Care but also the procedures.

The designated teacher for children in care is: Mrs Sarah Kriskovic
Second contact for CiC if DT unavailable: Natalie Simmonds or Kate Webber

The role of the Designated Teacher for Children In Care

- Act as a liaison person for other agencies and individuals in relation to Children In Care
- Advocate for Children In Care in schools
- Attend relevant training on Children In Care
- Ensure that staff in school have relevant information / training on Children In Care pupils to enable them to positively promote educational issues
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if the Child In Care is experiencing difficulties at school or is in danger of being excluded
- Act as an advisor for other staff / governors on issues relevant to Children In Care
- Ensure that LAC Reviews and health assessments are seen as a priority and that the appropriate teacher from school attends and / or a report is sent to the meeting
- Ensure that all Children In Care have a Personal Education Plan and that it is prepared within the appropriate timescales
- Ensure that each Child In Care has a member of staff they can talk to
- Ensure speedy transfer of educational information when the child changes educational placement (including Secondary school transfer) and supervise an induction programme

The role of the Governor with special responsibility for Children In Care

- Promote the importance of education for Children In Care on an ongoing basis and act as advocates
- Appoint a designated member of the governing body to have specific responsibility for Children In Care and attend any relevant training events
- Ensure that the school complies with legal duties, and has in place appropriate policies and procedures in relation to the education of Children In Care
- Support the Principal and staff generally in the process of positively addressing the educational needs of Children In Care
- Ensure the school liaises with Social Care on a regular basis in regard to the Children In Care Young People within the school

- Create an ethos of support and acceptance in the school, and an environment where children who do not live with their birth families are equally accepted and valued

- Set up mechanisms in the school so that proper consultation takes place with Children In Care, and that they are listened to

- Check that all Children In Care have a Personal Education Plan

- Foster good relationships with carers, social workers and management in Social Care and Health

The Role of the School

- Have a Designated Teacher for Children In Care (both in the care of Cornwall and other Local Authorities)

- Keep a register of Children In Care stored in a confidential place

- Give all foster carers relevant information about the school

- Provide an ethos of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes

- Ensure appropriately high expectations of Children In Care

- Ensure that all Children In Care have a Personal Education Plan

- Consult and involve children in decisions taken about themselves as appropriate, taking into account the child's age / level of understanding and maturity

- Consider how it can offer extra academic and pastoral support if this is needed

- Not send children home from school on an informal basis, and only use formal exclusion as a last resort, in line with LEA procedures

- Contribute to CIC reviews in person or in report form

- Take appropriate action as soon as there are any problems with behaviour or attendance, and ensure that foster carers and social workers are aware of any difficulties as soon as possible

- Have regular liaison and consultation with Social Care, social workers, foster carers, parents and other professionals involved in the child's life.

- Ensure that children with learning difficulties are being assessed and getting appropriate resources to support their learning

- Keep records of Children In Care absences and make these available on a regular basis to the Educational Welfare Officer and other LEA officers, and to the Social Worker and other Social Care and Health officers

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carers / parents / Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

Attendance

- Where attendance is a problem, a first day of absence procedure needs to be established
- Inform Education Welfare service / Social Worker / CiCESS if any concerns about attendance
- Acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern
- If a child is on a protection plan, ensure Social worker and Carer are contacted if child is absent from school

Exclusion

- Identify any Child in Care who is at risk of exclusion and contact the Children in Care Education Support Service (CiCESS), Social Worker and relevant professionals to put proactive strategies in place to avoid the Child in Care missing days from school
- Ensure in the case of a fixed term (or permanent) exclusion that the carer (or persons holding parental responsibility) and the Social Worker have been spoken to and within one day a letter has been sent specifying the period and the reasons for the exclusion, date of return, outline of the rights of carers to make representations to the governing body where appropriate and details of arrangements made to enable the excluded pupil to continue his/her education.
- Make sure in the event of any exclusion, contact is made with the Children in Care Education Support Service (CiCESS) with details of the exclusion outlining the reasons why the child has been excluded so that an appropriate response can be made.

Involving the Young Person

It is important that a Young Person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker and their carers are working together to promote their education.

It is important to establish the child's view of their changed circumstances and what they want others to know. It is also important to ensure that a Social Worker / teacher / carer prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home – for example by other pupils in the playground.

Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (such as End of Year Reports) should be forwarded to the Young Person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker, and if appropriate to parents.

Schools, the Education Service and the Social Care Department should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings – for example to have an Annual review of a Statement combined with a Statutory Care Review.

Schools, the Education Service and the Social Care Department will need to exchange information in between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the Young Person's circumstances – for example if the school is considering an exclusion or there is a change in care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- Ensure that there is a Personal Education Plan for each child to include appropriate targets. This must be compatible with the child's Care Plan held by the Social Worker, and form part of any other school plan eg Statement, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme
- Contribute to the process whereby all Children in Care have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 10 days of starting the school. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need)
- Following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by staff in order that any Child in Care has the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set
- Support referrals for the Personal Education Allowance (PEA) for CIC who are at risk of underachieving academically through discussions at PEP meetings
- Hold a PEP meeting for every statutory care review, involving the Social worker, foster carers, young person and parent if appropriate

Useful resources and guidance

Key documents at the time of publishing:

Raising standards of achievement

Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities February 2018

Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children in primary schools DCSF 2009

Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children in secondary schools DCSF 2009

Special Educational Needs: SEN Code of Practice 2015

Related Documentation

See CiCESS website on Cornwall intranet for related documentation and information
http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=21191