



Children in Care Policy

Adopted: January 2017

Review: January 2018

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 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 Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the Local Authority. Both these groups are said to be 'In the Care' of the Local Authority. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days in one year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living:

- With foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives

- With parents – under supervision of the Social Services Department.

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- With foster carer
- In a children's home
- In a residential school.

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the guidance document "Education of Young People in Public Care" (DfEE & DoH, 2000), and should be read in conjunction with it.

Objective

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children in Care.

The designated teacher for Children in Care is Kath Boase.

The Role of the designated teacher for Children in Care

- 1) Act as a liaison person for other agencies and individuals in relation to Children in Care
- 2) Advocate for Children in Care in schools
- 3) Attend relevant training on Children in Care.
- 4) Ensure that staff in school have relevant information/training on Children in Care to enable them to positively promote educational issues
- 5) Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if the child in care is experiencing difficulties at school or is in danger of being excluded.
- 6) Act as an advisor for other staff/governors on issues relevant to Children in Care.
- 7) Ensure that CIC 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
- 8) Ensure that all Children in Care have a Personal Education Plan and that it is prepared within the appropriate timescales
- 9) Ensure that each Child in Care has a member of staff they can talk to
- 10) Ensure speedy transfer of educational information when the child changes educational placement (including Secondary school transfer) and supervise an induction programme.

The Governor with special responsibility for Children in Care is Frank Baker

The Role of the Governor with special responsibility for Children in Care

- 1) Promote the importance of education for Children in Care on an ongoing basis and act as advocates
- 2) Attend any relevant training events
- 3) 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.
- 4) Support the Principal and staff generally in the process of positively addressing the educational needs of Children in Care.
- 5) Ensure the school liaises with Social Services on a regular basis in regard to the Young People in Care within the school
- 6) 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.
- 7) Set up mechanisms in the school so that proper consultation takes place with Children in Care, and that they are listened to
- 8) Check that all Children in Care have a Personal Education Plan
- 9) Foster good relationships with carers, social workers and management in Social Services 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
- Ensure the carer is informed of the existence/name/role of the designated teacher for children in care
- 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 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 Services, 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 officers, and to the Social Worker and other Social Service 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.

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 Services 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 Services 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.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each Child in Care will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the designated teacher and social worker will take leads in developing. This will identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. Areas for consideration will include:

- Attendance
- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise)
- Behaviour
- Homework
- Involvement in extra curricular activities
- Special Needs (if any)
- Development needs (short and long term of skills, knowledge and/or subjects)
- Long term plans (including progress, career plans and aspirations)

The PEP will be updated each term as part of the Care Review process.