



The Wilnecote School

Title:
Looked After Children Policy

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1. Introduction and context

The Wilnecote School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This commitment is emphasised and extended with regards to those children who are designated as being a ‘looked after child’ (LAC). The school’s provision and support for our LAC students is informed by the following legislation and guidance:

- In England and Wales, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 aims to ensure children in care receive high-quality care and services, which are focused on and tailored to their needs.
- The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children.
- In England, the Department for Education (DfE) has provided guidance and regulations on care planning, placement and case review (DfE, 2015).
- The DfE has also published a protocol for local authority children’s services, local care providers, police forces, criminal justice agencies and local health services (including mental health services) on reducing criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers (DfE, 2018a).
- In England, schools must have a designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children. The DfE has published statutory guidance for local authority maintained schools on their roles and responsibilities (DfE, 2018b).
- The DfE has also published guidance on promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (PDF) (DfE, 2018c).
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standard on the health and wellbeing of looked after children and young people sets out best practice in meeting the health and wellbeing needs of looked after children and young people in England (NICE, 2013).

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer.

Looked after children are:

- living with foster parents
- living in a residential children's home or
- living in residential settings like schools or secure units.

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people enter care.

- The child’s parents might have agreed to this - for example, if they are too unwell to look after their child or if their child has a disability and needs respite care.

- The child could be an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them.
- Children's services may have intervened because they felt the child was at significant risk of harm. If this is the case the child is usually the subject of a court-made legal order.

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. However local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21.

2. Purpose of this policy

This policy is designed to support the commitment for all looked after children to share the same life chances as any other child, in that we want them to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society, and achieve economic well-being.

The Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children 2015, (updated 2018)' place a duty on us to work together to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. We recognise that schools and teachers are at the very heart of this process so that we can provide a good education in order to unlock a bright future and so increase life chances of this vulnerable group. We are highly ambitious for these young people, knowing that securing the best possible progress for them will greatly enhance their life chances.

We recognise our responsibilities and we actively want to support the local authorities in undertaking its statutory responsibility, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004. This is to help this vulnerable group to succeed in education, champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative assumptions at all levels.

All school stakeholders - governors, teachers and support staff - are aware we can make a significant difference. We recognise that we have a key role and major influence to ensure that the needs of looked after children are considered at the improvement planning and policy level through to monitoring and evaluation of the outcome.

3. The Policy

3.1 LAC Designated Teacher

Our LAC Designated Teacher (Mark Herbert - Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion) will carry out the specific duties below in relation to the looked after children attending The Wilnecote School. This policy requires our appointed Designated Teacher to undertake the recommendations set down in the statutory guidance 'The Designated teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked-after Children' DfE Feb 2018.

In this context the LAC Designated Teacher will:

- Be the central point of contact at this school for all professionals and agencies working with and supporting the individual looked after children we have on roll, including the Staffordshire Virtual School.
- Work closely with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. The LAC cohort is extremely vulnerable, the most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect and the school is aware of the need to monitor the welfare and ensure the support of children in this category by working collaboratively.

- Take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Personal Education Plan. The PEP should be established within twenty school working days for any looked after child starting on roll. This to include the gradual addition and updating of further information over time e.g. attendance, attainment and progress results;
- Cascade information for staff development and updating information regarding looked after children;
- Ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account;
- Establish good working relationships and communications with Foster Carers, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend meetings and reviews;
- Provide support and sanctuary to help settle a looked after child into the school, and at other times;
- Ensure that the looked after child feels safe, knows who to trust and who to go to if they feel the need for support in school;
- Ensure the transfer of records if a looked after child moves school;
- Provide written information to assist planning, reviews and reporting as required;
- Seek and prioritise meetings with, and referrals to, appropriate external agencies in situations that require external support.

3.2 Teaching and Support Staff

We require our school teaching and support staff to contribute to the implementation and support of this policy for looked after children by requiring all staff to:

- ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained;
- be familiar with, and respond appropriately to, requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews;
- respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with;
- ensure that no child in care becomes the victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and dealt with using the school behaviour system;
- positively promote the self-esteem of looked after children;
- convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

3.3 The School Standards Committee (Governing Body)

As the Governing Body, the School Standards Committee will:

- endeavour to raise expectations for achievement of looked after children and encourage them to do well by combining high expectations and standards with inclusion.
- monitor and evaluate the impact of our school provision, teaching and learning and support for looked after children ensuring that the annual reporting cycle informs on the following key aspects of provision:
 - the number of looked after children on roll;
 - attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence;
 - the frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded suspension;
 - how they are performing in core subjects, their progress using data collected from classroom teachers monitoring;
 - the frequency of them taking part in extra-curricular activities;
 - the provision arrangements for additional support identified and supported through PEP funding;