



THAMESVIEW SCHOOL

**Thong Lane, Gravesend,
Kent, DA12 4LF**

**Looked After Children
(Children in Care) Policy**

THAMESVIEW SCHOOL POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (CHILDREN IN CARE)

Nationally, Looked After Children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well being, in line with *Every Child Matters*.

Helping Looked After Children succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority for Kent County Council and Kent schools. This policy takes account of:

- The County Council's duty under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC).
- The Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (England) Regulations 2006.
- Relevant DfES guidance to Governing Bodies (*Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors*).

Thamesview School's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education.
- Promoting attendance.
- Targeting support.
- Having high expectations.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Early intervention and priority action.
- Listening to children.
- Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability.
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals.

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 'looked after children' (LAC) or children in care or 'children looked after' (CLA) by 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 a 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, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home, or
- In a residential school

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, the Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher – Statutory Guidance for School Governors (2009) and the Kent Policy Statement on Children Looked After and should be read in conjunction with it. All schools have been issued with a copy of each document and may also refer to the Virtual School page on the Kelsi website.

The Children and Families Act 2014 amends section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day to day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

Implications

As for all our students, Thamesview is committed to helping every Looked After Child to achieve the highest standards they can, including supporting aspirations to achieve in further and higher education. This can be measured by improvement in their achievements and attendance.

The Governing Body of Thamesview School is committed to providing quality education for all students and will:

- Ensure Looked After Children are prioritised in the school's oversubscription criteria, in line with the Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (England) Regulations 2006. (These require admissions authorities to give top priority for admission to LAC in their oversubscription criteria. Faith schools must give first priority to LAC of their faith ahead of other applicants, and are permitted to give priority to all LAC, regardless of faith. In addition, Grammar schools must give top priority to LAC who meet the academic requirements).
- Ensure a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is identified and enabled to carry out the responsibilities set out below
- Ensure a Personal Education Plan is put in place, implemented and regularly reviewed for every Looked After Child, in line with the placing authority's guidance on Personal Education Plans.
- Identify a governor as Designated Governor for Looked After Children.

This policy links with a number of other school policies and it is important that Governors have regard to the needs of Looked After Children when reviewing them:

- Oversubscription criteria.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Home School Agreement.
- Anti-bullying Policy.
- Single Equality Scheme
- Child Protection Policy.
- Special Educational Needs Policy.

The school will champion the needs of Looked After Children, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes about them, in order to ensure that they achieve to the highest level possible.

Advice and support is available from Virtual School Kent:

<http://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/> and from other local authorities.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCHOOL POLICY ATTACHMENTS

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEADTEACHER

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below. It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of Looked After Children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children. OFSTED now select a number of Looked After Children, tracking their results and the support they have received.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

- Identify a nominated Governor for Looked After Children.
- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children.
- Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Looked After Children.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Looked After Children.
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.

Procedures: the Governing Body will:

- Monitor the academic progress of Looked After Children, through an annual report (see below).
- Ensure that Looked After Children are given top priority when applying for places in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria.
- Work to prevent exclusions and reduce time out of school, by ensuring the school implements policies and procedures to ensure Looked After Children achieve and enjoy their time at the school, by recognising the extra problems caused by excluding them and by not excluding them except as a last resort.
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Headteacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are recognised and met.
- Receive a report once a year setting out:
 1. The number of looked-after students on the school's roll (if any).
 2. Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other students.
 3. Their end of KS3 assessment scores. GCSE results, and other qualifications achieved, as a discreet group, compared to other students.
 4. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
 5. The destinations of students who leave the school.

6. The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the students concerned.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

Government Guidance says that the Designated Teacher should be “someone with sufficient authority to make things happen... [who] should be an advocate for Looked After Children, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them.”

Governors should be aware that all schools are already required to have a designated teacher for LAC. It is strongly recommended that this person should be a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Training for Designated Teachers has been and will continue to be available through our Looked After Children Education Advisory Team. Governors should also be aware that OFSTED will focus on Looked After Children, monitoring how the School has promoted their inclusion and attainment and the effectiveness of joint working with other services involved with them.

Our Designated Teacher will:

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child’s social worker.
- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child’s own wishes. *Members of staff who take on this role may need to be supported by someone from the school’s Community Leadership Team. They should also be alerted to any child protection issues, any disclosures that students may make, and know what action to take. They should link closely therefore with the school’s Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator.*
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium funding and additional budget share funding (where relevant) is used to support the learning objectives for the student and to be accountable for how it is spent with outcome evidenced
- To intervene quickly if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding to accelerate progress;
- Co-ordinate any support for the Looked After Children that is necessary within school.
- Ensure confidentiality for individual students, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.
- Encourage Looked After Children to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning.
- Ensure, as far as possible, attendance at planning and review meetings.
- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of Looked After Children.
- Set up timely meetings with relevant parties where the student is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure the speedy transfer of information between individuals, agencies and – if the student changes school – to a new school.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life.

- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- In cases of bullying/safeguarding concern the following will happen:
 - a) The Designated Safeguarding Lead will have 24 hours in which to make contact with any external agencies e.g. the foster care agency for the CiC (LAC) and social worker. This will be to inform them that the situation is being looked into and further contact will be made following an investigation. The Head of Year for the CiC (LAC) will inform the foster carer of the nature of the incident and will update the foster carer of investigation.
 - b) All Heads of Year and Support Staff involved in the case must pass on the concern involving the CiC (LAC) to the Designated Safeguarding Lead on the day that the incident was brought to the attention and must be dealt with as a priority
 - c) All Heads of Year and Support Staff involved with the case must provide the Designated Safeguarding Lead with a summary of the key points i.e. nature of incident; students involved; actions
- Ensure that the audit on attendance and numbers is returned to the LAC Education Adviser every Term.
- To inform the planning and where relevant, transition for children looked after post 16
- Raise awareness in secondary schools that Looked After Children are automatically entitled to an allowance if they go into the sixth form.
- To have completed the annual Designated Teacher Training

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

All our staff will:

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all students.
- Maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond positively to a student's request to be the named member of staff whom they can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children.
- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy.

School Responsibility

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

It is appropriate for a member of the support team to have knowledge that the young person is in care only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Headteacher or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/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.

Involve 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 carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

It is important that the young person is supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the Personal Education Plan by the Designated Teacher/Welfare Managers to inform the PEP and Care Plan review meetings.

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, e.g. by other pupils in the playground.

Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. 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 parent/s and the Virtual School. A copy should be attached to the child's ePEP. Schools, education and social work colleagues within Children's Services should endeavour to coordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual or EHC plan Review and a Personal Education Plan or ePEP meeting or review.

Good communication is essential between professionals. It is important to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if school is considering an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each pupil in care will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is developed jointly by the Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This now takes the form of an ePEP. This will identify specific areas of focus and include targets and associated actions to improve performance, progress or educational achievement. Areas for consideration will include:

Achievement Record (academic or otherwise);

Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences); and

Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations).

Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages

Effective use of the Pupil Premium and evidence of impact

Extended learning opportunities;

Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities;

Special needs (if any);

Attendance;

Behaviour;

The ePEP will be updated and reviewed each term or at the point of any major change and contribute to the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

The Designated Teacher is accountable for the implementation and review of the educational action to meet the targets within the Plan.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (CHILDREN IN CARE) POLICY

This policy was agreed and adopted at a Governors' Meeting held on

_____ (date)

Signed: _____ (Governor)

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

The policy will be formally reviewed in _____ (date)