



Looked after children policy

Primary and Secondary Academies

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Definition

For the purposes of this policy a child '*looked after*' by a local authority' is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989. In this context 'child' also refers to 'young person'.

This refers to a child / young person who has been accommodated by the local authority for more than 24 hours and who may be placed in a range of accommodation such as foster care or a children's home. This could be the result of a court order or through the voluntary consent of the parent(s).

A previously looked after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.

Barriers to the well-being and success of a looked after child

We recognise that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers. Looked after children are among the most vulnerable in our society having faced painful life experiences and suffered the deprivation of a stable family life. These hardships may have long term consequences in terms of achievement and success in school and later life.

On average, 27% of looked after children have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with 30% more in need of SEN support.

What the school environment can offer a looked after child

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and in tackling the causes of social exclusion.

Schools can play a crucial role in opening the way to opportunities of education, through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and 'normality' for children and young people who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption.

School can be the place where children and young people maintain friendships, where they feel safe and can be themselves with interested caring adults.

CHAT's commitment to a looked after child

A looked after child has likely faced challenges we would not wish any child to have to deal with.

We believe that such children must be acknowledged as individuals with strengths of endurance and in so many cases working for a positive future despite the odds. They should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and be able to achieve at a similar level to their peers.

We will strive to empower each looked after child to develop and achieve all that they are capable of and deserve to achieve.

Our aim

To ensure all children and young people who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the wide learning curriculum, extra-curricular activities, careers guidance, work experience, and enjoy the school experience

We strive to provide a climate of acceptance and to challenge any negative stereotypes that a child in care may face.

Practical applications of our aim

All staff, governors and Trustees are committed to achieving improved educational life chances for looked after children by ensuring that a number of processes and steps are promoted and monitored, including the following: -

Advocacy

Staff are aware that being 'looked after' or having been previously looked after, has a major impact on children and young people's lives and that when considering their learning and / or behaviour, due consideration will be given to the challenges that many of them have faced and continue to deal with.

The designated teachers and staff accept and are enabled to carry out their responsibilities for this specific group of children, effectively, and with the full support of the Head teacher.

School staff and governors and Trustees are aware of the Department for Education's statutory guidance and the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and those previously looked after.

Governors and Trustees will help monitor the work of the school in supporting its looked after children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable students.

Giving a voice to a looked after child

We believe that in order for any individual to freely express their views and wishes there must be a 'listening culture'. At CHAT Academies, every effort is made to build and maintain such a culture which, for a child or young person in care, is an essential safeguarding matter.

Each child in care will be supported to find a trusted adult with whom they can feel safe and empowered to raise any issues of concern and to whom they can give their own views on what would help to meet their educational and other needs. This adult would be expected to make these views known as appropriate to the relevant person in each school.

Home-school liaison

Carers may need extra help in meeting the needs of some children they care for. This may be offered through informal support, the provision of information or simply through acknowledgement that in the case of foster carers for example, there may have had to work very hard in building the trust of the child(ren) they care for.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that pupils are entitled to a balanced and broadly-based curriculum and aims to reinforce the need for teaching that is fully inclusive for all.

We also encourage each looked after child to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and readiness to learn.

Exclusions

We recognise that looked after children could be vulnerable to exclusions. Where a looked after child is at risk of exclusion, the academy will explore every practicable means to ensure that child remains in the academy. A multi-professional meeting may be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the child to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

The child's personal education plan (PEP) will reflect strategies to support the child. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and perhaps alternative educational packages to prevent exclusions where possible. Our **exclusion policy** is available in on the policy page of the academy website.

Trustees and governors

Whilst additional independent review and scrutiny is provided by the senior management of CHAT Academies central support team, the Trustees / governors with LAC responsibility: -

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises children looked after according to the DfE admissions code of practice
- raises the awareness of legal requirements and guidance for Children Looked After
- familiarise themselves with the names of the designated teacher(s) for Children Looked After and promotes the training necessary for them to meet the requirements of their role.
- liaise with the head teacher, designated teacher, and all other staff to look to meeting the needs of Children Looked after
- receive regular reports from the designated teacher (see below section below)
- review and make recommendations with regard to policies and procedures to ensure they give Children Looked After equal access to all available life chances
- regularly review the effective implementation of the school policy for Children Looked After

Designated teacher

With regard to Children Looked After the designated teacher: -

- is an advocate
- attends relevant training
- acts as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals
- prepares for all looked after children to receive a positive reintegration on entering the school
- ensures that appropriate, up to date Personal Education Plan's (PEP) are in place.
- monitors the PEP so that it is an effective working document.
- will convene an urgent school- based meeting if a looked after child is experiencing difficulties or at risk of exclusion.
- acts as the key advisor for staff, Trustees and governors on relevant issues.
- actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities
- ensures a rapid transfer of information when a child / young person transfers into another educational placements
- oversees relevant policy and practice development.
- provides regular reports to the Trustees and governors which should include: -
 - the number of Children Looked After on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP)
 - their attendance, compared to other pupils
 - their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils
 - the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any)
 - the destinations of pupils who leave the school

Academy-wide staff commitments

We expect out academy staff to: -

- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of Children Looked After
- positively promote the raising of a Child Looked After's self esteem
- ensure any Child Looked After is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained

- be familiar with the Guidance on Children Looked after and respond appropriately to requests for information to support Personal Education Plans,
- liaises with the designated teachers where a Child Looked After is experiencing difficulties
- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions as a last resort.
- keeps appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals as required