HEADLANDS SCHOOL
SINCE 1965

Children Looked After Policy

Written By	Headteacher		
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Headlands School

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Rationale

> *"Children in public care are our children. We hold their future in our hands, and education is the key to that future".* (Education of Young People in Public Care Joint DfEE/ Department of Health Guidance 2000)

Headlands School recognises that Children Looked After have the same entitlement as all other children in the school. We also recognise that in many cases the personal circumstances of Children Looked may hinder their ability to gain full and equitable access to an appropriate Curriculum.

We seek to ensure that Children Looked After gain maximum life chance benefits through access to high quality educational opportunities, appropriate to their individual needs. We further aim to safeguard and promote the education of children and young people in public care, enabling them to achieve their full potential in the broadest sense.

Principles

1. The term 'looked after' refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are accommodated.

2. All children and young people are individuals with their own identity needs and aspirations. Many children entering care will have had damaging experiences and be separated from their families and friends due to family upheaval.

3. In the vast majority of cases parents retain parental responsibility for their children until their children attain adulthood. Even when a court order is made and a child or young person is in the care of the Local Authority parents retain some responsibility - which is then shared. The Social Services Department has a duty to work in partnership with parents, with the emphasis being clearly on joint decision making, properly informing parents of choices and development and working together in the best interests of the child. Social Workers will need to ensure that, for Children Looked After, we know and fully understand the legal status of the child and the status of parents re decision-making. In the majority of cases, the day-to-day responsibility for the promotion of a child's educational achievement rests with their carers.

4. All staff must be aware of that there are a number of potential barriers to educational success which Children Looked After may meet, for example:

    ◊ They may experience numerous, and often unplanned, moves of home.

- ◊ They may experience unnecessary moves of school or be out of school for prolonged periods.
- ◊ They may find that making and sustaining relationships with peers is particularly difficult due to lack of continuity in care and schooling.
- ◊ They may find it difficult to build relationships with adults whom they trust to advocate for their needs, due to lack of continuity in care providers and teachers.
- ◊ They may have low self-esteem, be more vulnerable, and have a perhaps justifiable mistrust of adults from pre-care and care experiences; this can act as a barrier to enjoyment of schooling and educational success.
- ◊ They may experience bullying, racial abuse or harassment.
- ◊ Social Services departments, LA's and schools may not gather and share information that would help them to plan effectively.
- ◊ Local Authorities may not effectively monitor the educational progress or needs of young people in public care individually or as a discrete group.
- ◊ Social Services and LA's, individual schools, carers, social workers and teachers may be unclear about their respective roles and responsibilities.
- ◊ Those responsible for the day-to-day care of young people in public care may not place sufficient value on education.
- ◊ Schools and carers sometimes display lower expectations of young people in public care, which can contribute to underachievement and failure.
- ◊ Schools and social services may not act quickly and sensitively to help students in public care catch up when their education is disrupted.
- ◊ Students in public care are over represented amongst students excluded from school.
- ◊ The special educational needs of some young people in public care are not identified or addressed.
- ◊ The needs of black and ethnic minority children are not always adequately considered in the care placement or educational placement.

5. The number of Children Looked After at Headlands School at any particular time is likely to range from around 10 to up to 20 across all ages. This means that the numbers in any one-year group may be few. It is essential that the needs of these students are recognised and catered for, as the achievements of each individual student must be paramount in everything we do.

6. It is vital that we:

   - ◊ Utilise Adoption Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium funds to maximise effect to secure outstanding achievement for these children, coupled with appropriate support for their emotional well-being.
   - ◊ Listen to young people.
   - ◊ Challenge negative attitudes.
   - ◊ Provide equal access to education and opportunities.
   - ◊ Meet individual needs sensitively and promptly.
   - ◊ Make children and young people welcome.
   - ◊ Champion their needs.
   - ◊ Ensure all policies encompass their needs.
   - ◊ Raise aspirations and have high expectations.
   - ◊ Be sensitive to discrimination.
   - ◊ Promote achievement.
   - ◊ Provide continuity and stability.

7. Due to the potentially turbulent nature of the lives Children Looked After may experience it is essential that the school environment can be a source of continuity and stability.

   Corporate parenting means 'good parenting' with high expectations and aspirations. It is essential that we play our part in a seamless service which meets the care, education and health needs of young people.

Structure

1. The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After is the deputy SENCO, Clare Ingram.

2. The Designated Teacher has the following responsibilities:

   - ◊ To ensure that Children Looked After have a smooth and welcoming induction and, if necessary, provide extra support to help them settle into school.
   - ◊ To act as advocate for Children Looked After in school or ensure that a suitable adult in the school does so.
   - ◊ To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the potential difficulties and educational disadvantage that may affect Children Looked After and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.
   - ◊ To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are looked after, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra curricular activities, home reading schemes, School Councils, etc.
   - ◊ To ensure there is sensitivity to the background of Children Looked After and young people in teaching, especially around work on families, family trees and sex education.
   - ◊ To hold a supervisory brief for all children being looked after, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date.
   - ◊ To keep and update a list of the looked after students in school, with contact telephone numbers. The list should also include details of each child's legal status and the name of their social worker, carer and details of parental responsibility.
   - ◊ To monitor the educational progress of all children who are looked after in order to inform the school's improvement planning.
   - ◊ To intervene if there is evidence of poor behaviour, attendance or individual underachievement.
   - ◊ To develop and monitor systems for liaising with the Local Authority, carers and the Social Services Department (SSD) for reporting and recording absence from school and by acting to address these issues through early and positive intervention.
   - ◊ To ensure that the confidentiality of Children Looked After is respected and that information is shared strictly on a need to know basis.
   - ◊ To ensure that the in-school Careers Leader is aware of children in Years 9, 10 and 11 who are looked after, and are working with those students when appropriate.
   - ◊ To work with individual children, possibly through a carer, to arrive at a statement about their circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or students.
   - ◊ To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan.
   - ◊ To ensure that each student has a Personal Education Plan.
   - ◊ To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register.
   - ◊ To liaise with the SENCO in respect of those students with identified Special Educational Needs.
   - ◊ To be involved in the co-ordination of Local Authority education and SSD review meetings, so that any Personal Educational Plans can inform the child’s Care Plan.
   - ◊ To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to SSD’s care planning meetings.
   - ◊ To be the named contact for colleagues in the Local Authority and SSD.
   - ◊ To report on the progress of all Children Looked After to the Local Authority.
   - ◊ To develop knowledge of SSD/Local Authority procedures by attending training events.
   - ◊ To attend relevant training on Children Looked After and their needs.
   - ◊ To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

- ◊ To ensure that staff in school have relevant information/training on Children Looked After to enable them to promote their education.
- ◊ To act as advisor for other staff in school and for governors on issues relevant to Children Looked After.
- ◊ To ensure that each looked after child has a member of staff in school they can talk to.
- ◊ To ensure speedy transfer of educational information between different agencies and individuals.

3. School records should clearly state the legal status of the child. Most children and young people in public care retain strong links with their family and return home to them after long and short periods being looked after. This is the responsibility of the person conducting the admission of the child to this school (Social Worker or LA Representative).

4. On admission, records will be requested from the student's previous school. A meeting will be held with carer / parent / social worker, as appropriate to complete base line information to inform the student's Personal Education Plan and clarify contact arrangements. A home-school agreement will be drawn up with the primary carer. An appropriate school induction will take place.

5. PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPs)
   Statutory guidance states that:

   "Every child and young person in public care needs a Personal Education Plan which ensures access to services and support; contributes to statementing, minimises disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs, establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement".

   - ◊ A PEP is an important opportunity to communicate to the young person, their carers and others involved in corporate parenting that their education is a priority.
   - ◊ PEPs provide an opportunity to raise expectations and self-esteem, value a wide range of achievements and establish targets.
   - ◊ The process of planning should inform all those responsible for the individual young person's needs and experiences, identifying barriers to accessing services.
   - ◊ PEPs include the input of the young person. This is an opportunity for those involved to listen and involve the student in the planning process.
   - ◊ Carers, young people, social workers and schools should know who is the named person with day to day responsibility for managing the plan.
   - ◊ Designated teachers should ensure that each looked after child has a PEP and assume management at school level.
   - ◊ The PEP should be initiated within 20 school days of a child going into care or joining a new school by Social Services.
   - ◊ The PEP should be reviewed concurrently with the Care Plan, at the 28-day review, 3 months and 6-month review, and then at a minimum of every 6 months.

The Designated Teacher therefore has the responsibility to ensure that each Child Looked After has an up-to-date PEP. If this is not the case, they must liaise with the appropriate Social Services Department to ensure that one is in place as soon as possible.

The Plan should focus on the actions required for students to fulfil their potential and may include targets related to:

- ◊ Academic achievement
- ◊ Personal achievement
- ◊ Behaviour
- ◊ Development needs
- ◊ Educational needs
- ◊ Reintegration

- ◊ Planned change
- ◊ Preparation for option choices
- ◊ Careers guidance
- ◊ Work experience Plans
- ◊ Links to Pathway Plan.

6. The SENCO will identify those Children Looked After with identified Special Educational Needs and plan and monitor appropriately. It is important that close liaison is maintained with the Designated Teacher. The SENCO will ensure that children with learning difficulties are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning. The Educational Psychology and Behaviour Support Team and/or other agencies will be involved as necessary.

7. School Governors have an important role in supporting the school in making sure that Children Looked After and young people are given the same opportunities as all children. The Governing body has a Designated Safeguarding Governor. The SENCO will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

    - ◊ The number of looked after students in the school
    - ◊ A comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other students
    - ◊ The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other students
    - ◊ The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions
    - ◊ Student destinations

8. The SENCO should:

    - ◊ Look at all the policies and procedures within the school to ensure that Children Looked After have equal access to all aspects of education, including: the national curriculum; examinations and tests; careers guidance; extra-curriculum activities; work experience and additional educational support.
    - ◊ Ensure the school liaises with Social Services on a regular basis with regard to looked after children and young people within school.
    - ◊ Assist school in looking at whether the policies and practice on behaviour, admissions, exclusions, attendance and special educational needs adequately address the needs of Children Looked After and young people.
    - ◊ Create (with fellow Governors) 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.
    - ◊ Ensure that the targets for Children Looked After and young people set in LA Development Plans or Behaviour Support Plans are realistic, but that aspirations for these children are high. These targets should be monitored regularly.
    - ◊ Check that the school has a designated teacher for looked after children.

9. All teaching staff should be aware of any student that they teach whom the Local Authority looks after. It is appropriate for any Learning Tutor or other classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is being looked after only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person.

    Teaching staff should:

    - ◊ Provide an ethos of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
    - ◊ Have appropriately high expectations of looked after children.
    - ◊ Ensure that requirements of the PEP are considered in planning lessons
    - ◊ Be aware that for many Children Looked After and young people bullying is an issue and therefore be alert to this and respond appropriately if bullying occurs
    - ◊ Consider how they can offer extra academic or pastoral support if this is needed.

- ◊ Ensure that Children Looked After and young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the national curriculum, examinations, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience and additional educational support.
- ◊ Ensure that they are sensitive to the background of looked after children and young people in planning lessons, especially around work on families and family trees.
- ◊ Respect confidentiality of Children Looked After.
- ◊ Ensure that classroom management practices recognise and make suitable provision for the needs and difficulties of looked after children and young people.
- ◊ Take appropriate action as soon as there are any problems with behaviour, attendance or academic progress
- ◊ Ensure that children with special needs or disabilities are appropriately assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning.

10. 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 Designated Teacher.

11. 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 carer(s) 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 named teacher/carer prepares the child for situations when they are asked about home, e.g. by other pupils in the playground.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Children Looked After will be monitored carefully to ensure that they do have the same educational opportunities as other students. In particular, we will monitor attendance, achievement, interventions, exclusions, the involvement of other agencies and participation in school activities (trips, visits, productions etc). The term 'monitoring' is used in the sense of both analysing trends, setting targets and also ensuring that where focused provision is required, wherever possible, it is provided. Particular attention will be paid to students from authorities outside of the East Riding who may not receive as much input from that authority as local students receive.

2. The SENCO will monitor those looked after students with identified Special Educational Needs and pass details of their progress to the Designated Teacher.

3. Children Looked After will be consulted to ascertain their views about their education and the extent to which they feel safe.

4. Staff, Parents, Carers and Governors will similarly be consulted to ascertain their views about safeguarding, the extent to which they feel children at this school are safe and the effectiveness of our policies and procedures.

5. The school will consult with other agencies including the LCSB concerning the effectiveness of our policies and procedures.

6. The Policy will be reviewed and approved regularly by the Full Governing Body.