



Children in Care/ Looked After Children Policy

Introduction

Our Mission is to develop the whole person in a Catholic learning community, to provide a loving Christian environment and to strive for excellence, equality, justice and fairness.

At St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School we aim for our young people to be:

- strong and committed in faith
- confident of their personal worth
- active in response to Christ's call to care for others
- responsible members of society

Hence we strive to:

- achieve excellence in all aspects of our life and work
- foster the spiritual growth of each member of our community
- create a happy and successful learning environment
- develop the full potential of each individual
- prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life
- work in partnership with home, parish and the wider community

Introduction

Who are our Looked after children? Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection
- children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement.

The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children's home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be 'Looked after children' - LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours. LAC will have a care manager who



arranges their care plan. All schools have a designated officer for LAC.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body of St Bernadette School is committed to providing quality education for all its students, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. The Governing Body recognises that, nationally, there is educational underachievement of Looked after children, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in the statutory guidance, “The roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked after children” and “The Children and Young Persons Act 2008”, also the “Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulation 2009. Also, the guidance of “Improving the attainment of looked after young people in Secondary Schools”. The Children Act places a duty to safeguard Looked after children, to promote their educational achievements and to ensure that they are able to “achieve to and reach their full potential”.

The Improving Attainment Guidance recognises the collective responsibility of Local Authorities and schools to support looked after young people by setting out these principles:

1. Doing the things they do for all young people but more so
2. Balancing high levels of support with real challenge
3. Skilfully linking each young person to a key person they relate well to
4. Making it a priority to know the young people well and to build strong relationships
5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies
6. Making things happen and seeing things through
7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility
8. Actively extending the horizons of each young person
9. Planning for future transitions

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rationale for roles and responsibilities: Looked After Children – LAC - are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.

This may result in:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- Under-achievement in further and higher education.

The Role of the Designated Teacher

The designated teacher has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked after child on the school’s roll. The role should make a positive difference by promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked after child matters and their personal,



emotional and academic needs are prioritised. In promoting the educational achievement of looked after pupils the designated teacher should:

- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Looked After Children at a disadvantage;
- Make sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school
- Procedures are in place to support a looked after child's learning. Particular account should be taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what he or she can achieve;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Be a source of advice for teachers at school about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are looked after;
- Make sure the school makes full use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of Looked After Children and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there;
- Make sure that Looked after children are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition and that they have access to academic focused study support;
- Promote good home-school links through contact with the child's carer about how they can support his or her progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers. In particular, they should make sure that carers understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary. Further information on the role of the designated teacher and the PEP is set out in the guidelines mentioned at the beginning of this policy.
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual student.

The designated person will report on:

- The number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a PEP
- Their attendance compared to other students
- Their attainment compared to other students
- The number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- The destinations of students who leave the school

Good practice for all staff:

The designated teacher will have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how Looked after children learn and achieve. Everyone involved in helping Looked after children achieve should:

- Have high expectations of Looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress and adapt their teaching approaches to best meet the child's needs;



- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- Understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children but the teacher should not allow this to be an excuse for lowering expectations of what a child is capable of achieving;
- Understand how important it is to see Looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- Appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status;
- Appreciate the central importance of the child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them to achieve their potential;
- Have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, virtual school heads (or equivalent) in local authorities and how education – and the function of the PEP – fits into the wider care

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the DfE Admissions Code of Practice
- Ensure all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC.
- Appoint from their Body a link Governor for Looked After Children.