



Shine as Lights in the World Philippians 2.15

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Children We Care For Policy

Purpose

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children We Care For (formerly known as Looked After Children).

Introduction

Oxfordshire Virtual School believes that all Children We Care For (CWCF) should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and be able to achieve at a similar level to all Oxfordshire children. It is recognised nationally that there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers.

All staff and governors at Wychwood CE Primary are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Children We Care For by ensuring that:

- Staff are aware that being or becoming 'looked after' has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and/or behaviour, due consideration will be given.
- Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher
- School staff and governors are aware of the DfE statutory guidance: *Duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children* and *The Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children: statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities* (Feb 2018)
- School staff and governors are aware of The Virtual School (VSLAC) guidance: *School Policy for the Inclusive Education of Looked After Children* (October 2019)
- There is a dedicated Governor to monitor the work of the school in supporting its looked after children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable 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 (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- 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 (section 21).

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) or Children We Care For (CWCF). They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

Previously looked-after children are those who: Are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is: Katy Gent, Headteacher

The dedicated Governor to monitor the work of the school in supporting our looked after children is: Victoria Martin, Inclusion Governor

The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for CWCF within school.

- Ensure the pupil premium is used effectively to ensure Children We Care For make progress, especially in English and Maths.
- Be familiar with the **statutory** guidance on the role of the designated teacher.
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for CWCF on both the CWCF and the rest of the school community.
- Know all the CWCF in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required.
- Attend relevant training about CWCF.
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to CWCF, seeking advice from the CWCF team when appropriate.
- Ensure that CWCF receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- Ensure that all CWCF have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care (see guidance on PEPs) and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan.
- Ensure that all data on CWCF is made available for meetings between the Headteacher, governors and the school improvement partner.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals.
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a CFCW is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil.
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to CWCF
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events.
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for CWCF.
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a CWCF transfers to another educational placement.
- Contribute information to CWCF reviews when required.

Report to the Governing Body on CWCF in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development.

Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to Parents' Evenings etc.

Prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include:

- The number of CWCF on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan.
- Their attendance compared to other pupils.

- Their attainment compared to other pupils.
- The number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
- Attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of CWCF.
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. CWCF are six to eight times more likely to have an Educational Health Care Plan than the general school population.

Good practice suggests that all school staff will:

- Follow school procedures.
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a CWCF's progress.
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of CWCF.
- Positively promote the raising of a CWCF's self-esteem
- Ensure any CWCF is supported sensitively, and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on CWCF and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a CWCF is experiencing difficulties.
- Give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement.
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times.
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate.

Good practice suggests that the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises CFCW according to the DfES Admissions Code of Practice.
- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for CWCF.
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for CWCF.
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of CWCF are met.
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for CWCF who links with the Designated Teacher.
- Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher.

- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give CWCF equal access in respect of admission to school:
 - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
 - out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
- Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for CWCF.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings for CWCF.

The Local Authority will:

- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for CWCF.
- Ensure that the education for this group is as good as that provided for every other Oxfordshire pupil.
- Ensure that CWCF receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible.
- Ensure that every CWCF has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Oxfordshire from another authority.
- Make sure that each CWCF has a PEP according to national guidance.
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for CWCF and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training.
- Alternative educational provision where appropriate.
- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2, and at any mid-phase transfer
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of CWCF and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs.

Documentation and Monitoring of Progress

In-line with the recommendations of Oxfordshire Virtual School:

- We contribute to the process whereby all Children We Care For have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting at our school or becoming looked after. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (Student profile, IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need or Education, Health and Care Plan.)
- PEP targets will reflect the outcomes everyone, most importantly the child, aspires to. These will determine the need for pupil premium plus for the child or young person.
- The child's views will be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

- If appropriate the child will attend the PEP and contribute.
- Following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by staff in order that, the child has the opportunity to achieve his or her targets.
- The school should assess each child's attainment either on entry to the school or on becoming looked after to ensure continuity of learning. These baselines should be recorded in the PEP.
- The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals and report this to the Virtual School. Where a child is underachieving, a PEP review will be arranged to discuss how this underachievement will be addressed.
- The Designated Teacher will know all the CWCF in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker.
- The Designated Teacher will also know about any CWCF from other authorities.
- We will flag CWCF status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

Joined Up Working

In the best interest of CWCF we will work closely with Oxfordshire Virtual School.

The Virtual School will:

- Send representatives to any review held for the child where appropriate.
- Send reports to any review held for the child and ensure any additional information is also forwarded.
- Take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our looked after children.
- Liaise with other agencies as appropriate so that each looked after child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

At school, we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and caseworkers to enable CWCF to achieve their full potential. We will ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

Training

- We will attend Local Authority training regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the education of Children We Care For.
- The Headteacher and Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Governance

- We have a governor designated to lead on children in care and other vulnerable groups.
- We ensure that the designated teacher report at least once a year to governors on the training they have received and the safety of children in care.
- Governors have good knowledge of the impact of the pupil premium for Children We Care For and challenge leaders.

Admissions

- The Governing Body endorses council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against CWCF pupils.
- Due to care placement changes, CWCF may enter school mid-term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle.
- Where an application is received for a place for an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, the school will give due attention to the agreed protocol ensuring that these vulnerable young people are swiftly admitted and integrated in to school.

Inclusion

- This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced and broadly-based curriculum.
- Our CWCF Policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive.
- The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all CWCF pupils.
- In the few instances where we review whether a child is still appropriately placed in a school we will:
 - Contact the LA education inclusion service and, if appropriate, the SEN Officer to discuss appropriate alternative arrangements.
 - Involve the child, the social worker and the carer at all stages of decision making.
 - We will consider all alternatives to exclusion, recognising that exclusion for a Child We Care For has far broader implications than for those of other children.

CWCF Policy Review and Evaluation

We consider the CWCF Policy to be important and we undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year.

September 2025