



Blenheim

Looked After Children Policy

Committee: Achievement and Learning

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CONTEXT

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The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' are often used to define the same group of young people. In documents produced by Surrey's Virtual School the use of Children in Care (CiC) is the preferred term. **DELETE this paragraph**

When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then undertaken by the local authority – who becomes their 'Corporate Parent'. Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most children in care will be living in foster homes but some may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). It is important the school attended by the child is aware of their Care status, as many children and families are supported by social care without the use of Care Orders. Foster carers will very rarely hold parental responsibility – this is assumed by the social worker. Children placed for adoption remain looked after by the local authority until the Final Order.

A Personal Education Plan is required for every **Looked after Child (LAC)** and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed at least every six months.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'achieve to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles.

- Prioritising education
- Having high expectations and aspiration
- Inclusion – changing and challenging attitudes
- Achieving continuity and stability
- Early intervention – priority action
- Listening to children

The role of a Virtual Headteacher for **Looked after Children** is now statutory for every local authority. Virtual Headteachers will scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all children in care and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

STATEMENT

The Staff and Governors of Blenheim High School believe that it is important to offer a fully inclusive curriculum and approach to all students, creating an ethos of support and acceptance for those who are **Looked after Children**. The school aims to foster effective joint working for all young people in an environment which is safe and healthy. **Looked after Children** are supported in achieving their full potential at school, ensuring that there are high expectations and realistic targets set for their attainment. School policies reflect the needs of **Looked after Children**, enabling access to all aspects of education including admissions, the national curriculum, examinations and tests, all of which are encompassed within their Personal Education Plans. **Our school will not delay in accepting any looked after child on roll.**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** and Anti-Bullying Policy.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEADTEACHER AND GOVERNING BODY

The Head teacher and Governors ensure that:

- Blenheim will promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out
- A Designated Teacher for **LAC** CiC – Mrs D Otter and Mrs C Smith Mrs Denise Mills
- We will empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities and support relevant training
- We will ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by **Looked after Children** and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- We will recognise the particular circumstances of **Looked after Children** and provide for these in all other School Policies and the school's Development Plan
- Designated teacher will provide a weekly **regular** update on **LAC** to Senior Team and Designated Governors.
- We will ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- We are committed to working with local authority Virtual Headteachers to promote the achievement of children in care (www.surreyvirtualschool.org.uk)

ADDITIONAL ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

- We will ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of **Looked after Children**
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the role, governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher
- We will examine whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for **LAC** to achieve at least two levels of progress within a key stage
- We will scrutinise the school's admission procedures to ensure students are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for **LAC**
- We will champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher on a regular basis

The name of our Governor for **LAC** at Blenheim is: **Ms Sandra Balkwill**

The Headteacher and Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in the Policy.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR **LAC**

- to have high expectations of **LAC**'s involvement in learning and educational progress
- to monitor the educational progress of **LAC** in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community and to report back weekly
- to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible

- to act as an advocate for LAC
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of LAC
- to promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning and extra-curricular activities
- to be the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners
- to ensure every LAC has a current Personal Education Plan that includes appropriate educational targets and includes student's wishes and feelings
- to attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings
- to provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate
- to present regular Reports to School Governors, including an Annual Report
- to access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School
- to cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate

STAFFING POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIP WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND RESPONSIBLE ADULTS

This is achieved through:

- Regular liaison and consultation with Social Services, social workers, foster carers, parents and other professionals involved in the child's life
- Taking appropriate action as soon as there are problems with behaviour or attendance, ensuring that the responsible adult(s) and social workers are aware
- Monitoring the attendance LAC and keeping records of absences
- Convening a meeting if necessary with all relevant corporate parents if absenteeism continues and planning the support of LAC in returning to school as swiftly as possible
- Ensuring that LAC with learning difficulties are regularly assessed and appropriate resources used to support their learning
- Ensuring that teaching and support staff are given relevant information and training for LAC