



Children in Care Policy

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'In the light of Christ we will shine together'

Jesus said: I am the light of the world. John 8.12

Live as children of light – for the fruit of light is all that is good and true and right. Ephesians 5.8-9
Our ambition is to serve our community by providing an excellent education, which is inclusive and distinctive within the context of Christian belief and practice, upholding our values in the daily life of the Academy and in our relationships with others.

INTRODUCTION

Nurturing Children in Care to help them succeed in all areas of their development is a key priority for our school. We believe that schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Children in Care reach their full potential and are enabled to be healthy, feel secure, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, have confidence and a sense of self-worth as well as make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being. We take a nurture based approach to developing the whole child and use individual Thrive assessments to identify ways in which we can support a child's development. Further information on the Thrive approach can be found at <https://www.thriveapproach.com/>

1. RATIONALE

- 1.1. In March 2023 there were just over 83,800 Children in Care in England. This number is 23% higher than in March 2013. In 2024 around 38792 children and young people will enter the care system in the UK. There are around 104808 children in the UK who are looked after away from home. In July 2024 there were 59308 fostering households in the UK. This is an 8% decrease since 2019. In October 2023 there are 2210 children waiting for adoption in England. 48% of these children have been waiting for more than 18 months During 2022/23 69% of children in care had one placement in the year but 10% had 3 or more placements in the same time frame. Nationally, Children in Care significantly underachieve and are at a greater risk of exclusion when compared to their peers. They are a vulnerable group of children who have often been subjected to abuse or neglect and whose academic progress, social, emotional and spiritual development is likely to be affected by their experiences and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. Despite this group of children having as broad a range of abilities as their peers In 2023, 48.9% of Looked After Children had a special educational need, compared to 16% of all children. In March 2022 40.4% of Looked After Children had Emotional, social and mental health needs as their primary area of SEND compared to 13.3% of all children with EHCP. In March 2023 38% of all care leavers aged 19-21 years old were not in education, employment or Training compared to 13% of all 19-21 year olds.
- 1.2. In 2023, 18.3% of England's Looked After Children, in KS4, reached the average attainment 8 score compared to 46% of all children. In 2023 children on a child protection plan (CPPO) and in each of the

CIN social care groups at 31 March were half as likely to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) at Key Stage 2 compared to the overall pupil population.

1.3. In 2023, Government figures reported 65% of all Children in Care were taken into care due to the risk of abuse or neglect. 13% were placed in care due to chronically inadequate parent care. 9% of all Child in care placements were due to there being no parents available to provide for the child. In March 2023 3% of all Children in Care over the age of 10 were recognised as having a substance misuse issue. Children in Care are four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood. Over 63% of Children in Care are looked after due to abuse and neglect and it is estimated that 25-35% of sexually exploited children are Children in Care. 59.8% of CIN at 31 March 2023 were eligible for free school meals. This compares to 23.9% for all pupils. For children in care aged 5 to 16 years (43,390 children), an SDQ score was reported for 75% of them. An SDQ score is used as an indicator of emotional and behavioural health. The average score reported was 14.4 - up from 13.8 in 2021 and slightly up on the 14.2 reported in 2019. Of these 43,390 children:

- 47% had 'normal' emotional and behavioural health (down from 51%)
- 13% had 'borderline' scores (up from 12%)
- 40% had scores which were a cause for concern (up from 37%).

2. DEFINITION

2.1. "Looked after children", or "Children in Care" are terms that refer to children for whom the local authority is sharing parental responsibility.

2.2. This can happen with parental agreement or when a court makes a care order. These children are sometimes referred to as having corporate parenting.

2.3. Under the Children's act 2004 there are 4 main groups of corporate care:

- Section 20 children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
- Section 31 children who are the subjects of a care order from the courts. An interim care order is a Section 38.
- Section 44 and 46 children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection.
- Section 21 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.

2.4. Children in Care may live with Foster Carers, in a children's home, in a residential school, or with relatives. The law requires that children in care reviews take place until an adoption order for the child has been granted. This policy includes requirements set out in the Statutory Guidance on the duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 and associated guidance on the education of Looked after Children.



3. AIMS

- 3.1. St Mary's Church of England Academy recognises that all children are entitled to a balanced broad based curriculum and we believe in providing the best possible provision for pupils of all abilities. We plan our teaching and learning so that each child can aspire to the highest level of personal achievement.
- 3.2. The School and Governing Body welcomes Children in Care who may be looked after by our local authority or those who may be in the care of another authority but living locally to the school. St Mary's Academy encourages and supports the educational and personal achievement of Children in Care based on our school ethos and Christian principles.
- 3.3. Our aims are as follows:
 - Ensuring an appropriately trained designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all children in care and providing all information to the Virtual School staff.
 - Have high expectations for the child and ensure equal access to a balanced and broadly based Education.
 - All Children in Care will have a Personal Education Plan, PEP, drawn up between the school, the child and their Carers which will identify the children's individual needs and the support that they require.
 - Record, monitor and improve the health, wellbeing and academic achievement of the child.
 - Achieve stability and continuity.
 - Prioritise inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
 - Promote good attendance and seek to avoid exclusions, whenever possible.
 - Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life.
 - Ensuring that the child's voice is recognised and heard.
 - Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality whenever possible.
 - Ensuring staff awareness of the developmental and educational challenges facing Children in Care.

4. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL

- Identify a designated teacher whose role is set out below. Provide cover for this role if the designated teacher is absent from the school for any reason.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress and attendance of all Children in Care.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Children in Care to all parties involved.
- Ensure that all staff receive appropriate support and training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy.

5. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the Education of Children in Care.



- Appoint a Governor with specific responsibility for supporting this vulnerable group.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Children in Care.
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures effectively support their needs.
- Support the Principal and designated teacher and all staff in ensuring that the needs of Children in Care are recognised and met.
- Receive a termly report, setting out:
 - The number of Children in Care, and post Care on the school role.
 - Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
 - Their teacher assessment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
 - The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the pupils involved.

6. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and Carer, using the Personal Education Plan, (PEP), to plan for that transition in consultation with all agencies involved.
- Ensure that the pupil's needs are quickly identified and met. This may involve providing basic equipment and uniforms if needed.
- Ensure that a PEP is completed within the first two weeks of each term in consultation with the class teacher, pupil and Carer.
- Ensure that the pupil has a clear understanding of the information recorded in meetings and with whom that information is shared.
- Ensure that an up to date record which tracks the progress of all Children in Care is provided to the Virtual school following the E-Pep termly review process.
- Ensure that each Child in Care has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated teacher and should be based on the pupil's wishes.
- Coordinate any support for children in care that is necessary by liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure that they are aware of the difficulties and challenges that a child in care may face.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with Carers and all involved agencies.
- Ensure that the pupil voice of the Child in Care is included in all decisions regarding their care or education.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life including extra-curricular activities.
- Provide training opportunities for all staff regarding children in care and the specific challenges that they may face.
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of all Children in Care.
- Maintain confidentiality for Children in Care ensuring that staff have an understanding of the key issues affecting each individual pupil.
- Ensure that Children in Care have support during transitional periods and that their needs are recognised in all transition planning.
- Ensure that the attendance of Children in Care is closely monitored.
- Attend training, as provided by the Virtual school, to remain fully informed of developments regarding Children in Care.
- Provide a termly written report for the Governors.



7. HOME SCHOOL LIAISON

- 7.1. The School recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school, and will work towards developing a strong partnership with all agencies supporting Children in Care to ensure that these pupils reach their full potential.
- 7.2. Each Child in Care will require a personalised approach to support their specific needs. The school recognises that being placed into care can be a traumatic experience and the wellbeing of each Child in Care must be supported by the school as well as Carers.

8. EXCLUSIONS

- 8.1. St Mary's Church of England Academy recognises that Children in Care are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where this is the case the staff will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school.
- 8.2. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together the expertise of all those involved with the child to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.
- 8.3. The PEP will reflect strategies to support the pupil and all relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and prevent an exclusion from happening.
- 8.4. The Governing body will ensure that the school allocates resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for Children in Care, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

9. ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

- 9.1. We recognise that due to care arrangements Children in Care may enter school mid term and that it is important that they are given a closely monitored period of transition.
- 9.2. Where appropriate a period of additional support or phased entry to school is available to help them settle.
- 9.3. We recognise that Children in Care are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise this group in the school's oversubscription policy in accordance with the DfE Admissions code and Regulations March 2022 . Please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code-2>

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

- 10.1. The SENDCo will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. It will be reviewed annually by the Community, Ethos and Mission Committee; or before at any time, if there is new relevant legislation or guidance.