

Looked After Children

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Who are Looked After Children (LAC)?

Children and young people become 'Looked After' either if they have been taken into care by the Local Authority, or have been accommodated by the Local Authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most LAC will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their natural parent(s).

For the Education of Looked After Children Nationally, Looked After Children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well being, in line with Every Child Matters.

The governing body of St Christophers Academy are committed to providing quality education for all its children, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. This governing body recognises that, nationally and locally, there is considerable underachievement of children and young people in public care, when compared with their peers. It is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in DfEE circular 0269/2000 and DfEE/DOH Guidance 2000 and the Children Act 2004. 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".

Helping Looked After Children succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority for St Christophers Academy. The guidance recognises the collective responsibility of local authorities and schools/centers to achieve good parenting and sets out the following principles:

- Prioritising education.
- Promoting attendance.
- Targeting support.
- Having high expectations.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Early intervention and priority action.
- Listening to children.
- Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability.
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals.

The Guidance introduced two key measures:

- To ensure designated teachers are nominated in every school
- To ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are in place for all Looked After Children.

This governing body is committed to ensuring that Designated Teachers and staff are enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for Looked After Children;
- ensure a smooth and welcoming induction for the child and carer/s (and parent/s where possible). Note any specific requirements, including care status;
- ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed (within 20 days of entering care or joining a new school). This should be prepared with the child and the carer/s (and parent/s if possible), in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies. Where appropriate, the PEP should take account of any Special Educational Needs Provision Maps, Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) or any other relevant plans. The PEP should inform and be reviewed with the local authority;
- ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to;
- co-ordinate support for the child in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary;
- ensure staff and governors receive relevant information and training
- ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis;
- provide written information to assist planning/review meetings and ensure attendance as far as possible;
- encourage Looked After Children to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning;
- seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

- as with all children, have high aspirations and celebrate the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children;
- ensure entry to examinations for Looked After Children;
- be familiar with the Guidance on Looked After Children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- liaise with the Designated Teacher where a Looked After Child is experiencing difficulty;

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body of this school will:

- ensure that admission criteria prioritise LAC, according to the Code of Practice on Admissions;
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Looked After Children;
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Looked After Children;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body;
- for child protection and confidentiality reasons, ensure that information will be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity, and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.
- ensure that the school's other policies and procedures give looked after children equal access.

TRAINING

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