

Children in Care Policy

Staff Member with Responsibility:	A Shakespeare, Vice Principal
Reviewed by:	Board of Trustees
Reviewed Date:	Spring 2017
Next Review Due:	Spring 2020

Context

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.

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 become 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 Child in Care and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed once a term.

The Children's 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;



The role of a Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care 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.

A. Role & Responsibilities of the Principal and Senior Leadership Team

- We 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.
- We will appoint a Designated Teacher for CiC
- We will empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities (This will include the provision of time to undertake the role; supporting training needs and providing opportunities for the cascade of training to all staff and advisors in the school)
- We will ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them (a young person's ability to engage in learning can be undermined by feelings of loss, rejection, confusion, insecurity and low self-esteem – being or becoming 'in Care' has a major impact on children's lives)
- We will recognise the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other School Policies and the school's Development Plan
- 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. The Surrey VS website contains all contact details – see www.surreyvirtualschool.org.uk)

B. Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for CiC

- to have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress
- to monitor the educational progress of all Children in Care in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community

- 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 Children in Care
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children in care
- to promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning
- 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 child in care has a current Personal Education Plan that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard
- 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 Local Advisory Board, including an Annual Report
- to access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement)
- to cascade training to school staff and advisors as appropriate

C. Role and Responsibilities of the Local Advisory Board

- We will ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations (Designated Teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team).
- We will ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role.
- We will monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care
- We will ensure all advisors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the role, advisory boards 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 CiC to achieve their full potential.
- 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 children in care
- We will champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher on a more regular basis.
- The advisory board has identified a nominated Advisor for Children in Care

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