



The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust

Looked After Child Policy

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Signed: 
Chair of Trust Board

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1	AF		March 2022
2	AF	Updated details for Wiltshire Virtual School	March 2023

This policy applies to all academies within the DCET

At The Dunstan Educational Trust we believe that all Children in Care, and those previously in Care, should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all children. As a community we aim to be champions for Children in Care and those previously in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development. To do this we commit to:

- Ensuring that Personal Education Plan is up-to-date and of a high standard.
- Supporting Children in Care to raise their aspirations and ambition.
- Giving children and young people a sense of the control they have over their own lives.
- Ensuring that the Designated Teacher (DT) contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the schools who may be involved in supporting Children in Care to achieve, so that each staff member keeps Children in Care in mind.
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours.
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption.
- Ensuring that they have a trusted adult who they feel they can go to for support during the school day.
- Ensuring they have the best provision the school can offer to help them make good progress in all areas.
- Working closely with the Virtual School, Carers and Social Workers.
- Ensuring a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent.
- Providing a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Bringing the educational attainments of our Children in Care in line with those of their peers.
- Making sure that Children in Care have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Balancing high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress.
- Having a Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with Carers, parents (as appropriate) and Social Workers on a wide variety of educational and Care issues.
- Working alongside the Social Worker, Virtual School Advisory Teacher and other professionals to ensure that each Child in Care has a current, good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and numerical progress targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person and helps them make excellent progress.
- Ensuring that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan for LAC.

- Closely monitoring each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes.
- Ensuring there is a well-planned and coordinated approach to meet the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented.
- Planning for future transitions effectively including planning for transport.

Definition: Who are our Children in Care?

Most Children in Care will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the Care of the Local Authority if they are provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- (a) Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
- (b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- (c) Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child.

Definition: Who are our Children Previously in Care?

A Previously Child Looked After (PCLA) is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO – where a child has previously been in care) or Child Arrangements Order (CAO) which includes arrangements as to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been Adopted from state care outside England or Wales and; A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if they are in the Care of, or accommodated by, a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation, the sole or main purpose of which, is to benefit society.

Legal Framework

From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children's' and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care; The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Children in Care was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes; Previous legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Children in Care; The 2018 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities which extended some responsibilities to Children Previously in Care. These responsibilities are not as extensive as those for Children in Care but the expectation is that there is a Designated Teacher and the likelihood is that it would be the same person as for Children in Care.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the academy have effective policies and processes for supporting and promoting the education of LAC and previously child looked after (PCLA).
- Reviewing the academy's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and previously-CLA has received the appropriate training.
- Ensuring LAC and previously-CLA have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC in the academy.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the Headteacher/Designated Teacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the Designated Teacher for LAC and previously CLA.
- Allowing the Designated Teacher, the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Local Governing Committee on the following:
 - a) The number of LAC and PCLA in the School
 - b) An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other learner groups
 - c) The attendance of LAC and PCLA, compared to other learner groups
 - d) The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other learner groups
 - e) Engagement in the wider life of the school - Celebrating success of this key group.
 - f) Trust LAC Governors Annual Report template to be completed.
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring Pupil Premium Plus for LAC and previously-CLA is managed effectively (processes will be dependent on the child's home authority and the Designated Teacher must be aware of the variation in allocation of Pupil Premium Plus)
- Promoting a culture that actively challenges negative stereotypes of LAC.

The Designated Teacher provides a central point of contact within the school and should have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which affect how Children in Care learn and achieve. The Designated Teacher should:

- promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for looked after children and previously children looked after learn.
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting their own targets.

- Be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Assessment for Learning.
- Make sure that Children in Care are prioritised in one to one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Being first point of contact for school based inquiries for looked after and previously children looked after.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan within the school.
- Make sure there is an agreed process in place for how the school works with others.
- Focus on how everyone contributes to promoting the child's educational achievement; liaising with the SENCO to ensure all pupil's needs are met.
- Communicate school policies (e.g. around Home School Agreements) to social workers and carers.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the Virtual School understand the support available to LAC and previously CLA.
- Ensure the school does everything possible to maximise educational stability for the child, especially by finding ways of sharing information through the Personalised Education Plan Document and in providing advice to the Local Authority about the impact of disrupting education.
- Including following local guidance on recording accurately eligibility of all LAC/PCLA/Adopted/SGO and CAO for the school census.
- Working with the Head teacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all LAC and previously-CLA.

The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously CLA.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-CLA.

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and previously-CLA and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and previously-CLA.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and previously-CLA.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

We will:

- Host a PEP meeting each term for every Child in Care that involves the Social Worker, Foster Carers, child and parent (if appropriate). Additional attendees may include Virtual School Advisory Teacher, Careers advisors, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare Officer, etc.
- Ensure that the views of the child are central to the PEP meeting and encourage them to attend.
- Ensure that PEP is of a high quality for each child and includes appropriate targets.
- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in the PEP will be shared with all appropriate staff, in order that all our Children in Care have the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set.
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the Child in Care and used as identified in the Personal Education Plan.

It is the social worker's responsibility to initiate the meetings (Somerset only) and the date for the next term's meetings should be agreed by all concerned and confirmed in the PEP document. Once a meeting date is confirmed, thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk or virtual.school@n-somerset.gov.uk or virtualschool@wiltshire.gov.uk should be notified at the earliest possible point so that paperwork can be sent out to school, social worker and Virtual School Advisory Teacher (Somerset) for checking and preparation ahead of the meeting.

Previously Children Looked After

Schools should be aware that Children Previously Looked After may well experience many of the same issues as LAC and will need thoughtful support and encouragement. Successful adoption or moving into a SGO/CAO will not erase earlier experiences which may communicate themselves in behaviours at school.

Children Previously Looked After may be adopted, subject to a Special Guardianship (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO).

Children Previously Looked After do not require a Personal Education Plan (PEP) but it can be useful to bring together school, parents/carers and Children's Social Care to plan to support Children Previously Looked After and there is a document to scaffold this meeting (Education Plan for Previously Looked After Children Key Stages 1 – 4 including Reception)

Admissions and Transitions

We will:

- Prioritise the admission of Children in Care, and those who have been adopted or who have a Special Guardianship Order, within our own Admissions procedures in order to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Children in Care.
- Ensure that all Children in Care meet the Designated Teacher regularly who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral.
- Ensure a warm welcome to our school by providing appropriate induction for all Children in Care, so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes Carers and parents where appropriate.
- Meet with the Virtual School Advisory Teacher and social worker (where appropriate) to make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are obtained at the outset.

- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition (where the receiving school is made known) including organising transition meetings where needed.
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.
- Where appropriate, ensure that Children in Care receive timely and high-quality advice and guidance to support the transition into Post-16 provision.
- Liaise with Carers, previous schools and other professionals to help to effectively manage transitions.
- We recognise that Children in Care often need higher levels of transition support.

Attendance

We will:

- Promote the attendance of Children in Care, make attendance a priority in any education meeting, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.
- Inform the Carer / VS Advisory Teacher / Education Safeguarding Service / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance.
- The attendance of LAC should be closely monitored and support put in place if issues begin to arise that impact on regular attendance.
- Appointments including those for therapeutic intervention, contact and pre-adoption activities should not routinely be scheduled during the school day. Holidays should not be requested during term time.
- The Virtual School commissions an attendance monitoring service to monitor the attendance of all Somerset LAC. This service will make daily contact with schools to gather the attendance data for all children/young people on the roll of Somerset Virtual School. This data is used by the VS team to monitor and intervene as necessary.
- The Virtual Schools for Wiltshire and North-Somerset will track and monitor attendance, exclusions, progress and personal achievements
- Part-time timetables should not be agreed without the involvement of the Virtual School. A clear plan for review, explicit intended outcomes and details of all safeguarding arrangements for time not on the school site should be discussed, shared and recorded.

Exclusions

We recognise that the challenging behaviour of some Children in Care and those previously in Care is strongly related to traumatic life experiences.

We will:

- If a LAC is at risk of being excluded, a support plan should be agreed with Virtual School.

- Any period of exclusion should be carefully weighed up as the impact for LAC is significant and may be counterproductive. Schools to inform Virtual School and Social Worker of any period of exclusion.
- Aim to use alternatives to exclusion as a sanction for Children in Care, for example restorative approaches or develop a relational support plan.
- Actively follow the LA guidance for supporting children in care and DfE Promoting the Education of LAC and PCLA.
- Engage with interventions provided by the Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service to avoid exclusion.
- After any period of exclusion, the VS should be invited to the reintegration meeting and the school will need to develop a planning document intended to avoid further instances of exclusion.

Pupils with SEND

If a LAC has an EHCP, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND) will need to help determine the right school for a LAC. If a school move is needed for a LAC with an EHCP, it can take a considerable amount of time for the SEND team to consult and identify the right provision to meet the requirements of the EHCP. Particular care will, therefore, need to be taken in the planning of any move for a LAC with an EHCP.

A LAC does not need an EHCP simply because they are a LAC but a request for assessment can be made by schools or by social workers where the LA has parental responsibility there is evidence to suggest the LAC may have a special educational need. This should be done in consultation with the Virtual School. Submitting a request does not inevitably lead to a plan being issued.

An EHCP does not necessarily mean a LAC will need to attend a special/specialist provision nor that additional funding will be allocated. Many children/young people with EHCPs are extremely successful in mainstream schools. (See Somerset only, 'What to do if' document on LAC with SEND which includes links to Somerset Choices on the virtual school website www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk North Somerset virtual school website <https://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Page/11720> Wiltshire virtual School Website <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/virtual-school>)

Information sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-CLA are understood and met.

The arrangements set out:

- Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured.
- How pupils and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the academy and relevant LA departments.

- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the Trust when pupils move.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that Children in Care enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible.

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