

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School



Looked After Children in Education Policy

Looked after Children and Education: A general overview from Cardiff LA

'We owe it to all young people to give them the best chance to succeed in life. This is especially true of children that, often for no fault of their own, have found themselves placed in the most challenging of circumstances.'

Huw Lewis, *Minister for Education and Skills (Feb 2015).*

Welsh Government data shows that the educational performance of children who are looked after is significantly below that of other mainstream pupils at all Key Stages. Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves. Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

Definition of Looked After Children

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis. Furthermore, the term “looked after”, which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term “in public care”, which has been adopted by the DfES in their publication, “The Education of Young People in Public Care”.

Aims

At St Mary’s we aim to:

- raise the educational aspirations of children who are looked after, and adopted, and of those who care for them;
- reinforce accountability and leadership across our School;
- ensure that education remains a priority even during unsettling periods in a child’s life;
- make better use of data to aid practice, policy making and monitoring or educational outcomes;
- to promote and share good practice.

Our School’s Commitment

Helping looked after children succeed and providing opportunities that enable them to have a better future is a key priority at St Mary’s. This is planned for by:

- having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access and opportunities to participate fully in a balanced and broadly based education with extra-curricular activities and the opportunity to enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles;

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School – Building Positive Relationship Policy

- prioritizing the recording and monitoring of the academic achievement of the looked after child in addition to their health and wellbeing;
- ensuring as much stability and continuity as is possible with regards to staffing and friendship groupings;
- prioritizing reductions in exclusions and promoting attendance and punctuality;
- promoting inclusion through challenging and changing negative attitudes / stereotypes and by promoting a climate of acceptance;
- promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child;
- maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible and ensuring discretion when addressing a child's care status and sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family;
- ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of looked after children;
- ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all looked after children;
- drawing up a Personal Education Plan (PEP) between the School, the child, and the child's social worker, that will identify the child's individual needs alongside the support and resources that they require;
- reviewing all school policies regularly in the light of the LA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, WG and Joint Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care;
- ensuring that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within School and with outside agencies;
- endeavouring to support all looked after children educated in this School to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Link Governor will ensure that:

- the School has a coherent policy for looked after children ;
- the School's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and WG / UK guidance and legislation;
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training;
- looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum;
- the Governing Body receives an annual report on looked after children.

The Head Teacher will:

- appoint the designated teacher;
- ensure that the designated teacher has received appropriate training;
- oversee the development of the Policy on looked after children;
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after children ;
- report to the Governing Body on an annual basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after children in the School;
 - the attendance of pupils compared to other pupils;
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions compared to other pupils;
 - the number of complaints.

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School – Building Positive Relationship Policy

The Designated Teacher will:

- help establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after children of the school by;
- serving as the contact for Social Services;
- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all looked after children and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis;
- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by looked after children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements;
- acting as an advocate for looked after children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances
- set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all looked after children

and will:

- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding LAC;
- maintain records regarding all looked after children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- monitor the educational progress of all looked after children and intervene, in cooperation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern
- will facilitate effective communication by building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue;
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP;
- playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of looked after children;
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings;
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in Social Services and Education;
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties;
- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of the child's PEP

Will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within School by:

- meeting with the looked after children to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role;
- ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (this maybe the class teacher in a primary school); ensuring each child has a PEP;
- requesting support from the ALNCO and/or outside agencies;
- working closely with the ALNCO to ensure all looked after children with additional learning needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning;
- having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions;
- ensuring all looked after children are made to feel a part of the school environment

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School – Building Positive Relationship Policy

Personal Education Plans

At St Mary's, we aim to ensure that each child will have a PEP which their social worker will take the lead in developing. Our school role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and areas to develop;
- their interests, both in and out of School;
- developmental, educational and pastoral needs alongside future plans and how these can be supported;
- issues arising for the child;
- It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting

Admission and Induction Arrangements

At St Mary's looked after children are a priority for admission. On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral. We will ensure the child is made to feel comfortable and welcomed in our school. Records will be requested from the child's previous school. As soon as practicable after they are received, a meeting will be held with the carer/parent, social worker, other relevant professionals and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new PEP and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we would wish for the social worker to inform our school as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.

School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that some looked after children experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, our school will aim to ensure that looked after children enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities

Complaints

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy at our school, they should raise it with the designated teacher and follow the school Complaints Policy.