



## **Policy Statement for Children Looked After by the Local Authority**

### **Status of Policy**

### **Date**

**Agreed by Trust Board**

**Spring 2018**

**Next Review**

**Spring 2021**

(earlier if there is a change in legislation or guidance)

## **Purpose**

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After.

## **Rationale**

Children Looked After, (CLA), are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers, which can result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population. Fewer Children Looked After (CLA) progress to Higher Education and follow progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20);
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38);
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46);
- 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 (section 21).

The term **‘in care’** refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children’s Home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision.

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are **‘accommodated’** by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children’s home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be **‘Children Looked After’** (CLA). CLA who attend a Trust School may be looked after by Sunderland Local Authority or may be in the care of another Local Authority but living in Sunderland Local Authority.

## **Introduction**

Balmoral Learning Trust aims to promote the educational attainment and achievement and Welfare of Children Looked After (CLA). Each school within the Trust has an identified Designated Teacher for Children Looked After. Each Local Governing Body within the Trust has an identified Governor with special responsibility for Children Looked After. The Trust is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes.

This policy statement includes requirements set out in “Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52

of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of Children Looked After.

### **Aims**

The aims of Balmoral Learning Trust schools are to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children;
- ensure that Trust and school policies and procedures are followed for Children Looked After as for all children;
- ensure that all Children Looked After have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability;
- ensure that CLA take as full a part as possible in all school activities;
- ensure that carers and social workers of Children Looked After by the Local Authority are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment;
- ensure that CLA are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision;
- support each school in the Trust to fulfil their role as corporate parents with regard to CLA.

### **Admission Arrangements**

The Trust recognizes that CLA are an 'excepted group' and will be prioritized in the Trust Schools' oversubscription criteria following the DFE Admissions Code (Admission of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006.)

### **Inclusion**

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our CLA Policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Local Governing Body of each School in the Trust will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all Looked After pupils.

### **Allocation of Resources**

The Local Governing Body of each School in the Trust will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for CLA, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Trust Schools will work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School for Children Looked After and other Virtual Schools for students who are from other Local Authorities, to ensure that Children Looked After receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

### **Monitoring the progress of Children Looked After**

All CLA will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the individual Trust School, the child, the Child's Social Worker which will identify the child's individual needs and the support that they require. PEPs will be reviewed every 6 months.

### **Record Keeping**

The Designated Teacher in each Trust School will know all the CLA in their school and access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Sunderland Virtual School specialist staff, or other Virtual School specialists for those looked after students who are from other Local Authorities, teacher/support worker and social worker. The status of Children Looked After is identified within the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

### **Partnership with parents / carers and care workers**

The Trust believes in individual schools developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable CLA to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being.

### **Links with external agencies / organisations**

The Trust recognises the important contribution that external support services make in supporting CLA. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual CLA:

- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Sunderland Virtual School for Children Looked After
- Other Virtual Schools for Children Looked After from other Local Authorities
- Educational psychologists and others from SEN services
- Medical officers, School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Youth Offending Service

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **The Designated Teacher in each school will:**

- be an advocate for Children Looked After within their school
- be proactive in identifying ways in which their school can raise attainment of Children Looked After
- work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students who are from other Local Authorities, provide termly progress data on the progress of Children Looked After
- know all the Children Looked After in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to Children Looked After, seeking advice from Sunderland Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students from other Local Authorities, when appropriate.
- ensure that Children Looked After receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid year, and offer additional support wherever possible such as a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle

- ensure that all CLA have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- arrange and contribute to PEP Review meetings
- keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- monitor the targets set out in the PEP
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a CLA is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a CLA transfers to another educational placement
- report to the Governing body on CLA in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings and other events
- prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include: the number of CLA on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP.
- attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of CLA.
- ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN.

**All Trust staff will:**

- positively promote the raising of a CLA's self-esteem.
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of CLA.
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a CLA's progress.
- ensure any CLA is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- follow school procedures.
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on Children Looked After by the Local Authority and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a CLA is experiencing difficulties
- work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School, and/or Virtual Schools from other Local Authorities, and other agencies to prevent a CLA's behaviour leading to an official exclusion and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement.
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to the Designated Teacher, Sunderland Virtual School for CLA, and other Virtual Schools for those students who are from other Local Authorities, and professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate

**The Local Governing Body will:**

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritise Children Looked After by the Local Authority according to the DFE Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for Children Looked After
- Identify a member of the Local Governing Body with special responsibility for CLA
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher.
- In the event of an exclusion, ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meeting of the CLA.

**Sunderland Local Authority will:**

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of Children Looked After by the Local Authority
- Provide a specialist team to provide a wrap-around service for CLA as part of Sunderland Virtual School
- ensure that CLA receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ensure that every CLA has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Sunderland from another authority
- make sure that each CLA has a PEP according to national guidance
- provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer including options advice and guidance for Key Stage 3-4 transition.

Balmoral Learning Trust will champion the needs of Children Looked After, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes about them, in order to ensure that they achieve to the highest possible level.

Written by: Mrs. A.Hodgson

Spring 2018