

BURFORD SCHOOL



Burford School

Policy on The Education of Children and Young People in Public Care



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE





Burford School

POLICY ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PUBLIC CARE

This policy was approved by the governing body on 9th May 2007

This policy will be reviewed Summer 2009

Introduction

In May 2000 the Government issued guidance on the **Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH)**. Its purpose is to tackle the serious underachievement of children in residential and foster care and to bring their attainment closer in line with that of their peers. It sets out a number of measures to help local authorities and schools, in their role as 'corporate parent', to promote the education of children and young people in public care. It is part of a wider government strategy to raise educational standards for all children, to tackle the causes of social exclusion and to transform children's services.

Definition of Public Care

Children and young people 'in public care' are either:-

- On care orders made by a court, in which case parental responsibility is shared between the local authority and the natural parents. These children may live in foster homes, residential homes, residential schools, with relatives, or occasionally continue to live at home;
- Or accommodated by the local authority at the parents' request (e.g. if they are ill, or otherwise unable to care for their child). In this case parents can resume care of their child at any time, and they retain full parental responsibility. Children who are accommodated may live in all the above places except at home.

Background

Some of the barriers to educational success of children in public care include:

- lack of effective advocacy;
- lack of stability and continuity due to moves of placement and school;
- prolonged periods out of school;
- low expectations;
- the failure of relevant agencies to gather and share information which would help them to plan effectively; and
- pre-care experiences and unmet emotional needs which contribute to low self-esteem.

Implementation of the Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care

It emphasises **Corporate Parenting** and the role of the whole authority in promoting the children's education.

Five elements of the Guidance are statutory:-

- Every school must have a designated teacher to act as an advocate for children in care;
- Each young person must have a Personal Education Plan;
- Local Authorities must have a protocol for sharing information;
- Care placements are only to be made when education is secured – except in emergency situations;
- All children in public care must have educational arrangements in place within 20 days of entering care.

Aims

'Corporate Parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the whole local authority to achieve good parenting. We recognise that we are an essential partner in this process and as such, we aim to:-

- act as an effective advocate for any child in public care attending our Schools;
- implement the relevant statutory elements of the Guidance;
- have high expectations;

- develop and implement effective inclusive strategies;
- intervene early and appropriately to support any child in public care who is experiencing difficulties, liaising promptly with other professionals;
- work in partnership with parents, carers and social workers to gather and share information to plan and monitor achievement; and
- listen to the child or young person, respecting their rights of confidentiality.

Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

We believe that children in public care are individuals, with distinct identities and needs shaped by their racial origins, religious beliefs, their gender and sexuality and whether or not they are in any way disabled. They all have the potential and equal right to succeed.

Responsibilities

Two key measures to bring about better multi-agency co-ordination and improve educational life chances for children in public care are:

Designated Teachers who understand about care and its impact on education and who will be critical to tackling underachievement.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) – *“Every child and young person in public care needs a Personal Education Plan which ensures access to services and support; contributes to stability, minimises disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs; establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement”.*

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children in Public Care

The designated teacher is Mrs Angela Mathieson.

The designated teacher should ensure:

- he/she maintains a register of children in public care (see Bucks pro-forma);
- he/she acts as an advocate for the children within school;
- he/she attends any relevant training on children in public care and their needs, and passes on key messages to other school staff;
- each child has a Personal Education Plan (see Buckinghamshire’s pro-forma and guidelines);
- staff are encouraged to have high expectations of the children, while also

- being aware of possible obstacles to achievement;
- there is good liaison with Social Services and other agencies;
- there is an induction meeting for every child, in order to support their transition;
- educational information is passed on promptly between establishments/agencies;
- any relevant personal information is shared sensitively and with the child's knowledge;
- there is good communication between teachers and carers;
- there is sensitivity in choice of curricular topics and approaches, to avoid embarrassment or distress of children not living with their natural families;
- the child is encouraged to take advantage of study support, and the full range of clubs and activities in and outside school;
- the child has a member of staff that they can talk to easily.

Personal Education Plans

Young people in care, like all pupils, should have access to the full National Curriculum. Their PEP should set out their achievement targets related to Key Stages. Some pupils, particularly older ones, may benefit from curricular flexibility as set out in guidance on *Social Inclusion: Pupil Support*. Sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum which deal with family values and experiences which are likely to either rekindle distressing memories or put the spotlight on the child.

- PEPs encourage dialogue between social workers, carers and schools underline the importance attached to the young person's education.
- The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP in partnership with the child, designated teacher, parent, carer and any other relevant person.
- The PEP should be an integral part of the Care Plan and becomes the parent plan for any other existing educational plans which should be attached to it to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- The PEP should be agreed as soon as possible and at least within 20 days of entering care or joining a new school. The PEP will normally be reviewed

just before the Care Plan so that it can feed into the latter. No more than six copies should be held to maintain confidentiality, although the PEP is a working document and should reflect any changes. Those who hold copies will be :-

the child or young person

the parent

the carer

the social worker

the designated teacher

the ECPC team

The Role of the Governing Body

The Governing body should ensure that:-

- The school has a designated teacher
- The designated teacher has attended training and understands their role (see attached sheet)
- The school has a policy on the education of children in public care (help to be provided by ECPC)
- Each child in public care has Personal Education Plan
- The Governing Body receives regular reports on the educational progress of the children as a group
- Systems are in place for School to liaise on a regular basis with relevant social workers
- The Governing body has regard to any briefings updating them on this issue.

Attendance

Schools ensure that all pupils attend regularly and continuity and stability are known to promote educational success for children in public care. Often school can be a lifeline when care placements are changing. However, where non-attendance is identified, early intervention is essential. It signals to the young person the importance of their education and that because they are in care of the local authority they are a priority. Working in partnership with the Social Workers, Foster Carers and the Education Welfare Officers, schools should take positive action quickly to avoid unauthorised absences.

Early Years

As with all young children, those in public care will benefit from access to a full range of early years experiences within a secure, nurturing, consistent and non stigmatising environment. Staff in early years settings need to have;

- an understanding of how the care system works;
- the affects of separation on very young children in public care;
- the importance of contact with siblings and other family members;
- their role in ensuring successful planning and intervention.

Identifying a key adult is particularly important for young children in public care because of the importance of forming secure attachments in order to develop independence and gain confidence. Young children in care also require adults to advocate on their behalf and to ensure that they have the access to the same life chances as their peers.

The Early Years Senco has a crucial role in;

- the early identification of and response to special educational needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- effective liaison and co-ordination with other support services and professionals;
- supporting the smooth and informed transition into statutory schooling.

Children and young people in care who have special educational needs

- Like other children, children in care may at some time have special educational needs. It should not, however, be assumed that all children in public care will have such needs. If they do have learning needs or difficulties accessing learning opportunities they need support and advocacy. The needs of most pupils with special educational needs are expected to be met in mainstream schools.
- The needs of the child in care should be known to the SENCO, the Designated Teacher and their Carer and Social Worker. The PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided. It should be used to monitor and record progress and to indicate any barriers with plans to overcome these.

- Children who are separated from their families will have behavioural and emotional responses to that separation and the often traumatic events which led to it. Schools have an important role to play in helping to ensure that unmet emotional needs do not lead to disaffection, difficult behaviour or exclusion wherever possible.

Links with other School Policies

These guidelines are translated into action through other policies and procedures, e.g.

- Behaviour policy, including Anti-bullying statement and procedures
- Home School Agreement
- Pastoral Support Programmes
- Inclusion Policy
- Child Protection policy
- Special Educational Needs policy
- Personal, Social and Health policy
- Exclusion procedures
- Citizenship policy
- Multi-cultural Policy- valuing diversity
- Assessment and Achievement policy
- Admissions policy
- Attendance policy
- All curriculum policies

Signed: Headteacher

Date:

Signed: Chairman of Governors

Date: