

# **Bonner School Policy for Looked After Children**

## **Rationale**

Looked after children are no less able than other children but they often underachieve at school.

All children are entitled to be included in efforts to raise standards and to ensure they are happy at school, enjoy learning and achieve the best they can.

## **Background Information**

See appendix 1

## **Aims**

- To promote the social and emotional well-being of looked after children
- To contribute to their improved educational outcomes and subsequent life chances
- To increase staff awareness of the increased vulnerability of looked after children
- To promote effective collaboration with carers, social workers and others involved to help them achieve the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda

## **The Role of the Governing Body**

Through its designated governor in charge of Child Protection:

- Ensure the headteacher maintains and keeps a record of looked after children in school;
- Ensure the headteacher is aware of how they are performing compared to their peers;
- Ensure policies are reviewed from the point of view of looked after children and that resources match their needs.
- The Headteacher reports to the designated governor.

## **The Headteacher will report to the Designated Governor:**

The designated teacher coordinates the effective day to day implementation of this policy and is responsible for advocating on behalf of looked after children in any matters which may affect their well-being, educational attainments and future life chances.

This means:

- keeping accurate records of numbers of looked after children, carers and key professionals, up-dated at least termly
- keeping the designated governor, headteacher fully informed of matters related to looked after children
- with due regard for confidentiality and sensitivity, informing other school staff, as appropriate, about any matters which could affect a looked after child - eg contact days

- facilitating effective and constructive home school communication, including attending parent and carers meetings
- providing a central point of contact for all professionals
- attending any care, review and planning meetings to ensure the school has relevant information about a looked after child's care history and changing needs, and to provide information from school
- collaborating with social workers and Tower Hamlets Looked After Children's Team, to compile and keep up to date Personal Education Plans
- ensuring agreed admission, settling and transfer arrangements are followed
- maintaining an overview of progress
- promoting high expectations and contributing to planning and early intervention as necessary to help achieve best possible outcomes
- ensuring priority access to out of school hours activities, including school journeys
- when decisions are being made, making sure a looked after child has a voice and is listened to
- challenging stereotypical views

### **Admissions**

The school will ensure there is no unnecessary delay in admitting a looked after child. If the school is oversubscribed, looked after children will have priority.

Special attention will be given to looked after children to help them to settle as quickly as possible. 'Buddies' will be assigned; there will be a key worker during play and lunchtime breaks and there will be close contact with carers.

### **Attendance**

Absences and lateness will be brought to the immediate attention of the designated teacher, who will arrange first day follow-up.

The school's attendance welfare advisor will be kept informed.

Administrative staff will provide information as requested by Welfare Call.

### **Transfers and Transition**

The designated teacher will ensure that all personal details are up to date and that all records, including Personal Education Plans, are transferred to the child's new school without delay.

All relevant agencies will be provided with transfer details.

Whenever possible, face to face transition meetings with a key worker from the receiving school, preferably the designated teacher, will be held prior to transfer. If this is not possible, then telephone contact will be made.

A transition meeting will always be held when a looked after child is transferring from primary to secondary education. The child, carer, social worker and key secondary school staff will be invited, along with members of staff from other agencies as appropriate.

Whenever possible, and in agreement with the child's social worker, transition meetings will be planned to take place alongside Personal Education Plan meetings.

### **Curriculum**

Looked after children will be included in the full school curriculum. Based on information from previous school records, teachers' assessments and professional judgement, strengths and barriers to learning will be speedily identified to ensure appropriate groupings.

Curriculum planning will be flexible enough to allow for access to intervention programmes where these would help the child to 'catch up'.

Staff will be sensitive to aspects of the curriculum which may put the spotlight on looked after children and which may make them feel uncomfortable or upset - for example when talking about families and relationships.

### **Special Educational and Additional Needs**

It will not be assumed that disrupted schooling and under achievement indicates special educational needs, but nor will learning difficulties be solely attributed to looked after children's social and emotional circumstances.

Special educational needs will be identified quickly using information from previous records, carers, other professionals, and teacher assessments. Looked after children's needs will be addressed within typical school routines and through their Personal Education Plan. Overall, SEN and PEP are likely to be the same.

When working with looked after children, staff will be aware and take account that children separated from their families will have emotional and behavioural responses to that separation and events which led up to it. Staff will take steps to try to ensure that unmet emotional needs do not lead to disaffection or difficult behaviour. Strategies employed will be based on individual needs, ranging from Circle Time activities, the support of the school's learning mentor to the involvement of the area CAMHS team.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Looked after children and their carers will be kept regularly informed of the child's progress, their ability to make further progress and how this can be achieved. Non attendance at progress meetings will always be followed up.

Looked after children will be encouraged to acknowledge, talk about and evaluate their own progress, effort and successes; what helps them to attain and achieve, and to recognise positive qualities and attitudes within themselves.

The school recognises the particular vulnerability of looked after children, and will monitor school policies and incident logs to make sure their attainment, achievement, and

enjoyment of school is being promoted and not being adversely affected. Particular attention will be paid to bullying and behaviour.

Participation in out of hours and enrichment activities will be monitored and evaluated within usual school procedure.

Academic attainment and target setting in English and Maths will be monitored through the school's termly pupil progress meetings. This will inform PEP targets as appropriate.

The attainment of looked children as a particular group will be monitored termly against the progress of their peers.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's work with looked after children, their carers and others concerned, will be carried out through formal and informal feedback.

**The designated teacher for looked after children is: Martin Tune**  
**The designated governor for looked after children is: Emma Bortherton**

### **References**

This policy has been written with reference to LEA guidance, government guidance on 'The Education of Children and Young People in Public Care' (DfES/DH May 2000) and 'Supporting Looked After Learners' (DfES January 2006).

**Date of Review: February 2016**  
**Next Review: February 2017**

## **Policy for Looked After Children - Appendix 1 - background information**

### **Nationally**

- At any one time around 39,000 children of school age are in the care system
- 60 - 65% in family settings with foster carers
- some remaining with their birth or extended family
- rest in residential placements

### **Tower Hamlets**

- about 300 children 0 - 18 in public care at any given time
- about 20% will be under-five
- about 200 of these will be school age
- about 45% will be attending Tower Hamlets schools
- the remaining 55% will be attending out of borough schools.

### **Research**

Looked After Children are:

- 6 - 8 times more likely to have an SEN statement;
- 10 times more likely to be excluded;
- 75% of children leaving care have *no* educational qualifications compared with 6% of the general population;
- One in five care leavers go on to further education compared with two thirds of those not in care;
- One in four girls had a baby by 16 and one in two became mothers within 18 and 24 months of leaving care compared to one in 25 of the general population.

There is a clear relationship between poor educational attainment, unemployment, vulnerability to exploitation and high levels of homelessness.

National and Tower Hamlets targets confirm severity of underachievement.

National target: 50% of children to get 1 GCSE at grade G

Tower Hamlets target: 33% to get 1 GCSE, grade G

### **Barriers to educational success**

- lack of effective advocacy;
- lack of stability and continuity due to moves of placement and school;
- prolonged periods out of school;
- low expectations;

- failure of social services departments, local education authorities and schools to gather and share information which would help effective planning;
- pre-care experiences and unmet emotional needs which can contribute to low self-esteem.

Young people themselves report negative attitudes and assumptions as a key barrier to a positive educational experience.

### **Exclusions**

National guidance says looked after children should not be excluded.

Tower Hamlets Education of Children and Young People in Public Care Team is based at Harford Street (020 7364 6459). It comprises advisory teachers and a senior social worker.

Reviewed February 2016

Next Review February 2017

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_