



Children in Care Policy

Review Period: Annual

Status: Non Statutory

Next review Date: Autumn 2020

CONTEXT

The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' are often used to define the same group of young people. In documents produced by Surrey's Virtual School the use of Children in Care (CiC) is the preferred term.

When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then undertaken by the local authority – who become their 'Corporate Parent'. Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most children in care will be living in foster homes but some may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). It is important that as the school they attend we are fully aware of their Care status, as many children and families are supported by social care without the use of Care Orders. Foster carers will very rarely hold parental responsibility – this is assumed by the social worker. Children placed for adoption remain looked after by the local authority until the Final Order

A Personal Education Plan is required for every Child in Care and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed at least every six months.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'achieve and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles;

- Prioritising education
- Having high expectations and aspirations
- Changing and challenging attitudes to inclusion
- Achieving continuity and stability
- Providing priority actions and early interventions
- Listening to children

The role of a Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care is now statutory for every local authority.

Virtual Headteachers will scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all children in care and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

A. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEADTEACHER AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The team will

- Promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out

- Appoint a Designated Teacher for CiC –Della Wilson (SENCo) until December 2019 and Lucy Palmer from January 2020.
- Empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities
- Provide the Designated Teacher time to undertake the role; supporting training needs and providing opportunities for the cascade of training to all staff and governors in the school)
- Ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- Recognise a young person’s ability to engage in learning can be undermined by feelings of loss, rejection, confusion, insecurity and low self-esteem (being or becoming ‘in Care’ has a major impact on children’s lives)
- Recognise the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other School Policies and the school’s Development Plan
- Ensure consistency across policies
- Provide Behaviour support and liaise with the Virtual School
- Provide sufficient information on a need to know basis to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- Provide automated texting to carers from school information systems
- Commit to working with local authority Virtual Headteachers to promote the achievement of children in care

B. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CiC

The Designated Teacher for CiC will

- Have high expectations of Children in Care and their involvement in learning and the educational progress
- Monitor the educational progress of all Children in Care in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community
- Intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement or absence from school, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible
- Act as an advocate for Children in Care
- Inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children in care
- Promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning
- Be the named contact for liaising with carers, local authority children’s services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners
- Develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children’s services and the Virtual School of the caring authority
- Ensure every child in care has a current Personal Education Plan that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the ‘voice of the child’ to be heard and
- Attend, or arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings
- Provide a programme of transition support where appropriate
- Present regular Reports to School Governors, including an Annual Report
- Access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School
- Cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate
- The name of our Designated Teacher for CiC at Sunnydown is: Della Wilson until December 2019 and Lucy Palmer from January 2020.

C. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body will

- Ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations (*Designated Teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team*)

- Will ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role
- Monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care
- Ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Designated Teacher. Governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher
- Examine whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for CiC to achieve at least two levels of progress within a key stage
- Champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher on a more regular basis by identifying a nominated Governor for Children in Care

The name of our Governor for CiC at (name of your school) is: Teresa Parkinson

The Headteacher and Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in the Policy.