

**NORTHFLEET SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

**POLICY ON  
CHILDREN IN CARE**

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## SCHOOL POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN CARE

### Definitions

The term “Children in Care” (previously known as “Looked after Children”) includes children who are:

- in foster care or children’s homes
- subject to care orders
- “accommodated” on a purely voluntary basis.

### Principles

Nationally, Children in Care significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Children in Care are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well being, in line with Every Child Matters.

Helping Children in Care succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority for Kent County Council and Kent schools. This policy takes account of:

- The County Council’s duty under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC).
- The Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (England) Regulations 2006.
- Relevant DfES guidance to Governing Bodies (*Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors*).

Northfleet School for Girls’ approach to supporting the educational achievement of Children in Care is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education.
- Promoting attendance.
- Targeting support.
- Having high expectations.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Early intervention and priority action.
- Listening to children.
- Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability.
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals.

Northfleet School for Girls understands that there are approximately 54,000 Children in Care in England - a figure that is rising. About 2/3 of these are in foster placements, the rest are in residential homes or placed with their parents. Over 80% are of compulsory school age. These children are looked after for a wide variety of reasons - from being victims of abuse, illness or death of a parent or because of a major family upheaval and breakdown of relationships. Less than 2% are looked after because they have committed offences.

The school recognises the widespread concern that the educational attainments of these children falls well below their peers - research shows that 75% of care leavers leave formal education with no qualifications at all; only 15% go into further education, compared with 68% of the general population. Northfleet School for Girls is therefore committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, the "looked after children in its care receive the highest standard of education and every opportunity to reach their full academic potential. We aim to exceed the national target for 75% of such children to obtain at least one GCSE or equivalent..

The school also recognises the national criticism that there has been a failure of the professional agencies to work together in responding to the needs of the "Child in Care". Northfleet School for Girls therefore commits itself to full liaison with all relevant outside agencies to ensure the best support for the "looked after" child both within and without school.

In addition the school recognises the research which shows that many Children in Care are more likely to be affected by problems of homelessness, early parenthood and drug or alcohol abuse. Northfleet School for Girls remains committed to ensuring that all "looked after" children in its care receive the best personal, social and health education to ensure a happy and successful transition into adult life.

At Northfleet School for Girls we recognise that Children in Care are not solely the responsibility of the Social Services Department and that as part of the Local Authority we are part of the "corporate parent" to these children with a joint responsibility to ensure that they have access to all the available opportunities.

### Aims

Our aims therefore are to:

- prioritise education in the lives of Children in Care
- promote social inclusion and equal access
- achieve continuity and stability for the child
- have high expectations of them
- practise early intervention and the taking of positive action
- listen to the child.

The school will champion the needs of Children in Care, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes about them, in order to ensure that they achieve to the highest level possible.

In order to meet, or satisfy, these aims the school will implement the following practices:

### Practices

- The school will appoint a “designated teacher” to act as advocate and a resource for Children in Care. In line with Government Guidance, this Designated Teacher will be “someone with sufficient authority to make things happen...”
- The Designated Teacher will act as a link, or liaison point, to other professionals for named children within the school. The Designated Teacher (or their representative) will attend all formal review meetings on the child whether these are at school, home or the Social Services Department (SSD). The Designated Teacher will also be the first point of contact at the school (by phone, letter or interview) with foster carers, social workers or any other professional involved in the welfare of the child.
- The Designated Teacher will be responsible for the school input to the overall “care plan” and “placement plan” for the Child in Care. The Designated Teacher will therefore be responsible for ensuring the educational provision of these plans which will include a Personal Education Plan which ensures access to services and support, minimises disruptions to education, identifies unmet needs and sets clear targets for progress and achievement. For Kent CIC this will be in the form of an E-PEP; for CIC from other authorities their formats will be used. Where the child is seen to have special educational needs it will be the responsibility of the Designated Teacher to ensure close co-operation with the SENCO in meeting the child’s needs. In this some flexibility with the curriculum might be needed and the school will follow the guidelines of the DfEE circulars 10/99 and 11/99 *Social inclusion: Pupil Support* for detailed arrangements for any dis-application of the curriculum and alternative educational programmes that might be deemed necessary.
- As research shows that the “looked after” child is six to eight times more likely to suffer emotional and/or behavioural problems it will be the responsibility of the Designated Teacher to ensure prompt referral to relevant agencies for ESBID support.

- The Designated Teacher shall be responsible for collating the names and details of all Children in Care and obtaining all relevant information on them from other professionals. The Designated Teacher (or representative) shall be responsible for liaising with colleagues in the school when the child is admitted and the speedy and efficient transfer of educational information when children change school.
- In line with government guidelines there will be as far as possible a policy of positive discrimination towards named children to give them the best possible chance of success within the school.
- For as long as the child is part of the school the Designated Teacher shall disseminate all relevant information to staff on a “need to know” basis.
- The Designated Teacher will support the principle of continuity of education for the Child in Care despite their being moved to different foster carers.
- The Designated Teacher will liaise with the Assistant Head Teacher of Virtual School Kent and shall be the point of liaison with Virtual School Heads of all relevant placing authorities.
- The Designated Teacher will liaise with social services and all other relevant parties in the implementation of a Personal Education Plan as outlined in the “Education of Young People in Public Care” folder produced in 2000 by the DfEE and the Department of Health. In line with new guidelines issued in September 2009 the Designated Teacher will be responsible for the PEP meetings (subsequent to the initial meeting). This may involve calling the meeting; inviting delegates, chairing the meeting, completing the PEP documentation and finally ensuring its dissemination to all. This will vary according to the procedures of each placing authority. The aim will be to hold this PEP meeting at least 2 weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- The Designated Teacher shall work with the Virtual School and the Social Services departments at the PEP meeting to agree on the use of the Pupil Premium Plus to ensure that the educational progress of the child is enhanced.
- The Designated Teacher shall attend “update training for Designated Teachers” as provided by Virtual School Kent to ensure that the PEP process and other responsibilities are carried out effectively.
- The Designated Teacher is responsible to the head teacher for the implementation of the above practices.

### Responsibility of the Head Teacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Children in Care, whose role is set out below. It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of Children in Care and take action where progress, conduct or attendance are below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Children in Care.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

### Responsibility of the Governing body

- Identify a nominated Governor for Children in Care.
- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Children in Care.
- Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Children in Care.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Children in Care.
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.

#### *Procedures: the Governing Body will:*

- Monitor the academic progress of Children in Care, through an annual report (see below).
- Ensure that Children in Care are given top priority when applying for places in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria.
- Work to prevent exclusions and reduce time out of school, by ensuring the school implements policies and procedures to ensure Children in Care achieve and enjoy their time at the school, by recognising the extra problems caused by excluding them and by not excluding them except as a last resort.
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Headteacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Children In Care are recognised and met.
  - Receive a report once a year setting out:
    1. The number of Children in Care on the school's roll (if any).
    2. Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
    3. Their CAT scores, GCSE results, and other qualifications achieved, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
    4. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
    5. The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
    6. The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

All our staff will:

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Children in Care, as for all pupils.
- Maintain the Child in Care's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond positively to a pupil's request to be the named member of staff whom they can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable Children in Care to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all Children in Care.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Children in Care.
- Be aware that 60% of Children in Care say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Designated Teacher, the Head Teacher and the CIC Governor will discuss the progress of all Children in Care at a regular review meeting.
- At this meeting, anonymous data on Children in Care shall be discussed. This data will include attainment grades, effort grades, behaviour management indicators (sanction and achievement data, exclusion records) and intervention levels
- The review meeting will recommend any changes to practice in light of the discussions.
- Once a year the annual, aggregated data, will be discussed at a Governors' curriculum committee and then reported to the full Governing Body.

Advice and support is available from Virtual School Kent:

<http://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/>

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## **RESOURCES:**

DfE Pupil Premium Grant 2013-2014: Conditions of Grant (2013-14)

Education of Looked After Children - FAQ's (DfE 2011)

Children in care give their messages for Munro (OFSTED 2011)

Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children - statutory guidance for local authorities (DfE Mar 2010)

Children's messages on care 2010 (OFSTED 2010)

The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory guidance for school governing bodies (DfE Nov 2009)

Improving the attainment of looked after children in Primary Schools - guidance for schools (DfE Nov 2009)

Improving the attainment of looked after children in Secondary Schools - guidance for schools (DfE Nov 2009)

Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (DfE May 2009)

Looked After Children - good practice in schools (OFSTED 2008)

Supporting Looked After Learners: A practical guide for school governors (DCSF 2005)