

# ROWAN GATE PRIMARY SCHOOL



## POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

### POLICY REVIEW

This policy has been reviewed in line with the following: (Reviewer please tick box)

a) Ensuring the policy is up to date and meets mandatory requirements

☐

b) Ensuring the policy is fit for purpose and that practice adheres to the policy.

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*Reviewed and Updated in November 2023 by Julia Coles*

***Policy will be reviewed again in November 2024***

# ROWAN GATE PRIMARY SCHOOL



## **POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

*This school policy reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole teaching and support staff and has the full agreement of the governing body.*

*"This policy reflects the philosophy of the Equality Policy, the Mission Statement and the School Aims in relation to the whole curriculum".*

### **Statement of intent**

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Children in Care (CiC) and previously LAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.

Rowan Gate Primary School endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our pupils. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for CiC realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

Rowan Gate's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all CiC.
- Prioritising education- All CiC will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education.

- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of CiC

## **AIMS**

As for all our pupils, Rowan Gate is committed to helping every Child in Care/Previously Looked after Child to achieve the highest standard they can, including supporting aspirations to achieve in further and higher education. This can be measured by improvement in their achievements and attendance.

We are committed to equal opportunities for all our children. We expect to provide a high quality educational experience for each child, regardless of race, gender or disability, through the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of all our children.

We recognise that due to care arrangements Children in Care /Previously Looked after Children may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. The school recognises that Children in Care are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise LAC in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

## **STRATEGY**

1. All staff are made aware of the care arrangements for our children in public care as appropriate. They are kept informed of any change in circumstances affecting individual children. This enables staff to deal empathetically with any difficulties or queries that may arise. The Designated Teacher for Children in Care will facilitate communication with the following agencies:
  - (a) Social Services
  - (b) Children and Families
  - (c) Virtual School Teams
  - (d) The school considers that it is essential that good links are made and maintained with all agencies. We actively promote an inter-agency approach to enable the needs of children in public care to be met. Nationally, Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children 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, healthy, staff safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Helping Children in Care /Previously Looked after Children succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority at Rowan Gate. This policy takes account of:

## **Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2023) 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

## **Definitions**

“Children in Care” are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children’s residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

“Previously LAC (PLAC)” are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

The Headteacher will facilitate school attendance where there are difficulties/emergencies, which Social Care & Health cannot meet. All other attendance matters are referred to the Children in Care Social Worker/Virtual School Team

### **Record keeping and information sharing**

The Designated Teacher will keep an up-to-date record of CiC and Young People/Previously Looked after Children in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff. A Personal Education Plan will be initiated within 20 school days of the Children in Care or Young Person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the CiC /YP. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.

Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition. It is vital that Children in Care or Young Person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of CiC and PLAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on CiC and PLAC and how data will remain secure.
- How pupils and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

## **HOME / SCHOOL LINKS and Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)**

The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the CiC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.

The school will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard CiC and PLAC.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher for CiC and PLAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.

Through the designated teacher, the school will work with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay. The designated teacher will communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.

PP+ for PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. The school will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of CiC, or PLAC, and according to their needs. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding CiC who are absent without authorisation.

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of CiC and PLAC.

### **Staff development and training**

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of CiC and PLAC will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions and Suspensions
- Homework
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with CiC /Previously Looked after Children, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. Provision will be put into place to support those.

CiC /Previously Looked after Children who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs.

All training will ensure staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep CiC and PLAC safe.

## **MONITORING**

The Governors will be made aware of numbers of Children in Care /Previously Looked after Children in school. The Headteacher will update the Governors termly, via the Headteacher's Report, on the situation regarding any Children in Care /Previously Looked after Children in school.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

- The Governing Body of Rowan Gate is committed to providing quality education for all pupils and will:
- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for CiC and PLAC.
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs, reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensure Children in Care are prioritised in the school's oversubscription criteria, in line with the Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (England) Regulations 2006. (These require admissions authorities to give top priority for admission to CiC in their oversubscription criteria.)
- Ensure a Designated Teacher for Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children is identified and enabled to carry out the responsibilities set out below
- Ensure a Personal Education Plan is put in place, implemented and regularly reviewed for every Child in Care, in line with DfE's guidance on Personal Educational Plans.
- Identify a governor as Designated Governor for Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children.
- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children.
- Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children.
- Support the Head teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of CiC /Previously Looked after Children are recognised and met.
- Work to prevent exclusions and suspensions and reduce time out of school, by ensuring the school implements policies and procedures to ensure Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children achieve and enjoy their time at the school, by recognising the extra problems caused by excluding/suspending them and by not excluding/suspending 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 Deputy Head Teacher in her role as Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children are recognised and met.
- Monitor the academic progress of all Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children, through an annual report (see below.)
- Receive and review report once a year setting out:
  1. The number of Children in Care pupils/Previously Looked after Children on the school's roll (if any.)
  2. Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
  3. Their Achievement and Attainment scores as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
  4. The number of suspensions and exclusions (if any.)
  5. The destinations of pupils who leave the school.

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 virtual school head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's CiC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to CiC and PLAC.
- Working with the school to ensure all CiC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for CiC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of PLAC as effectively as possible.
- Managing the school's allocation of pupil premium plus (PP+) for CiC
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
  - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the CiC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
  - Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
  - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP.
  - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all CiC.
  - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.



- Ensure the education achievement of CiC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of CiC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEAD TEACHER**

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children, 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
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the governing board **annually** on the following:
  - The number of CiC and PLAC in the school
  - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
  - The attendance of CiC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups
  - The level of suspensions and exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- Ensuring PP+ for PLAC is managed effectively.

## **THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER**

Government Guidance says that the Designated Teacher should be “someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, should be an advocate for Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them.”

Governors should be aware that all schools are required to have a designated teacher for CiC /Previously Looked after Children. It is strongly recommended that this person should be a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Training for Designated Teachers has been and will continue to be available through the Virtual School. Governors should also be aware that OFSTED will focus on Children in Care, monitoring how the School has promoted their inclusion and attainment and the effectiveness of joint working with other services involved with them.

The designated teacher for CiC and PLAC is responsible for:

- Working with the headteacher to submit an **annual** report to the governing board, which details the progress of all CiC and PLAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of CiC and PLAC at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.

- Set up timely meeting with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of suspension or exclusion.
- Ensure the speedy transfer of information between individuals, agencies and – if the pupil changes school – to a new school.
- Be pro-active if supporting transition and planning when moving a new phase in education.
- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Ensure that the audit on attendance and numbers is returned to the LAC Education Advisor every term as requested
- Attending training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding CiC /Previously Looked after Children.
- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Maintaining an up-to-date record of the CiC /Previously Looked after Children in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Ensure that each Child in Care/Previously Looked after Children has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes. *Members of staff who take on this role may need to be supported by someone from the school's pastoral staff. They should also be alert to any child protection issues, any disclosures that pupils may make, and know what action to take. They should link closely therefore with the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection.*
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored.
- Co-ordinate any support for the Child in Care/Previously Looked after Children that is necessary within school liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage CiCs/Previously Looked after Children may face..
- Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
- Ensure, as far as possible, attendance at planning and review meeting.
- Act as an advisor of staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of CiC's respective social worker and VSH.

- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding CiC and PLAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.

### **The responsibility of all staff**

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of CiC /Previously Looked after Children, as for all pupils.
- Maintain CiC /Previously Looked after Children confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable CiC/Previously Looked after Children to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all CiC /Previously Looked after Children.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of CiC /Previously Looked after Children.
- Be aware that 60% of CiC say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding CiC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible

### **PUPIL PREMIUM**

Pupils who have ever been looked after are entitled to receive additional funding called pupil premium plus. This is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers.

Pupil premium funding is available to both mainstream and non-mainstream schools, such as special schools and pupil referral units.

The Designated Teacher for Children in Care/Previously Looked after Children will consider their learning needs and arrange for each child to have additional support specific to their needs.

At Rowan Gate Primary School the majority of Children in Care have additional support in reading, some have 1:1 sports coaching to improve and boost their self-esteem, some have speech and language therapy if this is what is needed.

Schools are held accountable for the way in which pupil premium funding is used and have to show the impact of pupil premium funding in the following ways:

- performance tables, which show the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared with their peers
- requiring schools to publish details online each year of how they are using the pupil premium and the impact it is having on pupil achievement
- the Ofsted inspection framework, where inspectors focus on the attainment of pupil groups, and in particular those who attract the pupil premium

## **Safeguarding**

The school recognises that many CiC and PLAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

- All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst CiC and PLAC as soon as possible.
- Where a CiC or PLAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.
- The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of CiC and PLAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.
- Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over CiC or PLAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a CiC or PLAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

## **Pupil mental health**

CiC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

- The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on CiC and PLAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.
- The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst CiC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with CiC or PLAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

## **Suspensions and Exclusions**

Past experiences of CiC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy and Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' and, recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

- Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a CiC to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour and improving this behaviour.
- As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusions will only be used as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy, or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of being suspended or permanently excluded, the school will engage with the designated teacher and the pupil's parents, or other individuals involved in the pupil's care. The designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible to work together, and with other relevant individuals, to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the pupil's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid Suspension and Permanent Exclusions.
- Where a child in care is excluded, the school will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP

## **Pupils with SEND**

Although all pupils at Rowan Gate Primary School have an EHCP it should be noted that if a child were to be placed in the school without an EHCP then support for the CiC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that CiC and PLAC are supported in line with the SEND Policy.

**Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on an **annual** basis by the designated teacher and the headteacher.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **NOVEMBER 2024**

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

This policy was ratified in November 2023 and will be reviewed in November 2024