



Tomlinscote School

An Academy within The Prospect Trust



Children in Care Policy

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Children in Care Policy

Committee Responsible:	Academy Quality Council (AQC)
Link Councillor:	Mrs Heather O'Connor
Designated Teacher for Children in Care	Mr Paul Henry
Next Review Date:	September 2027

The Children in Care Policy relates to both Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). Looked after Children (LAC) are those children who have been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care.

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 to and reach their full potential'

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, also refers to as being on section 20) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. If the child is under the age of 16 they have the right to ask them to return home. 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 the school attended by the child is 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.

Types of care

Each UK nation has a slightly different definition of a looked after child and follows its own legislation, policy and guidance. But in general, looked after children are:

- living with foster parents/carers
- living with friends or relatives, through kinship foster care
- living in a residential children's home
- living in residential settings like schools, secure units or semi-independent living accommodation. NSPCC

A child may also be placed under a Special Guardianship Order, Special guardianship is when a local authority places a child or young person to live with someone other than their parent(s) on a long-term basis. It aims to provide more security than long-term fostering for children where adoption is not the best option. Special guardianship orders are not available in Scotland. NSPCC

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 weeks.

The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles:

- prioritising education
- having high expectations and aspiration
- inclusion – Changing and challenging attitudes
- achieving continuity and stability
- early intervention – priority action
- listening to children

A child stops being 'looked after' when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. However, local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

Aims:

- To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
- To support our Children in Care and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential and enjoy learning.
- To fulfil our school's role as corporate parents to promote and support the education of our Children in Care by asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Roles and Responsibilities

The AQC will:

- Ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher and Councillor in accordance with the Regulations. 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 councillors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the role and 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.
- Scrutinise the school's admission procedures to ensure students are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for children in care.
- Champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher.

The Principal and the Senior Leadership 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. (Designated teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team)
- Empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities.
- 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 the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other school policies.
- Ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children.
- Commit to working with the local authority Virtual Headteacher to promote the achievement of children in care.

The Designated Teacher for CiC will:

- Have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and 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, absence from school or internal truancy, 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 and develop and monitor systems 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.
- 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.
- Attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings.
- Provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate.
- Present an annual report to the AQC
- Access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement).
- Cascade training to school staff and councillors as appropriate.

All Staff will:

- Have high aspirations for those students in care.
- Provide necessary data and information to support the PeP process.
- Raise concerns with the Designated Teacher if a LAC/PLAC is experiencing any challenges and difficulties.