

School Guidelines

The Education of Children and Young People in Public Care

Revised 2010



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Policy Statement

National and Local Context

At any one time there are around 39,000 children of statutory school age in the care system nationally and about 400 of those are looked after by Buckinghamshire. However, there are also approximately 80 pre-school children and approximately 50 post 16 young people who are also in care. For most children, care is intended to be time limited with the aim of returning home as soon as possible. Although there are many reasons why children are looked after by local authorities, they are all likely to have undergone distressing experiences. It is important that schools, the Local Authority, carers and parents (where appropriate) work together and intervene early to support these particularly vulnerable children to achieve their educational potential, thus improving their life chances.

Nationally and locally there has been a drive to improve educational outcomes for this group of children and this has brought some success locally. **The Education of Children in Public Care (ECPC) Virtual School** is a joint agency team whose purpose is to work with schools, social workers, foster carers and other agencies, in supporting the children to achieve well. Working together has greatly improved outcomes but there remain challenges, including encouraging higher aspirations.

The Every Child Matters Agenda requires us to ensure that all children benefit from the 5 Outcomes. Under Section 52 of the Children Act (2004) government has placed a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after. Statutory guidance has been produced against which BCC is mapping its strategies and support systems. However, schools are the children's main route to success in education and individual teachers will recognise the crucial role they have in helping these particularly vulnerable children to gain self esteem and achieve their potential.

Definition of Public Care

Children and young people in public care or looked after may either be:

- On **care orders** made by a court. This means that the Local Authority has gone to court to assume parental responsibility because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm'. Children on care orders may be cared for by foster carers, in residential homes, in residential schools, by relatives or occasionally still living at home. Whatever the arrangement they are likely to have ongoing contact with their parents;
- Or **accommodated** by councils with the agreement of their parents e.g. if the parents are ill or otherwise unable to care for their child. In such cases parents retain full parental responsibility. These children may live in any of the settings listed above, except at home.

- **All children in care will have a Care Plan** which details how roles and tasks concerning their education and other aspects of a child's life will be shared between carers, parents, social workers and school.

Potential Barriers to Success

The Social Exclusion Unit's report 'A Better Education for Children in Care' (SEU 2004) identified five key reasons why children in care underachieve:-

- Their lives are characterised by instability
- They spend too much time out of school
- They do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development
- They have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education.

Key Elements of the Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities and Schools (2009)

- Every school must have a designated teacher to act as an advocate for children in care;
- Each looked after child or young person must have a Personal Education Plan;
- Any child in care who is underachieving educationally is entitled to a Personal Education Allowance;
- Local Authorities must have a protocol for sharing information;
- Care placements are only to be made when education is secured – except in emergency situations;
- All children in public care must have educational arrangements in place within 20 days of entering care;
- Each admission authority must give children in care priority in their admission arrangements;
- Local Authorities must include children in care as a priority within their Fair Access Protocol.

Aims of the Guidance

'Corporate Parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the whole Local Authority to achieve good parenting. We recognise that we are an essential partner in this process and as such, we aim to:-

- act as an effective advocate for any child in public care attending our School;
- implement the relevant statutory elements of the Guidance;
- have high expectations;
- develop and implement effective inclusive strategies;
- intervene early and appropriately to support any child in public care who is experiencing difficulties, liaising promptly with other professionals;

- work in partnership with parents, carers and social workers to gather and share information to plan and monitor achievement; and
- listen to the child or young person, respecting their rights of confidentiality.

Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

We believe that children in public care are individuals, with distinct identities and needs shaped by their racial origins, religious beliefs, their gender and sexuality and whether or not they are in any way disabled. They all have the potential and equal right to succeed.

School Responsibilities

Designated Teacher

It is a statutory requirement that all schools designate a teacher for children in public care. This teacher must understand about care and its impact on education; they should preferably be a senior member of staff who will act as an advocate for children in care, and who will be critical to tackling underachievement (See Appendix 1 for details of the role)

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

It is a statutory requirement that every child in care who is of statutory school age has a Personal Education Plan; this forms part of their statutory Care Plan. The child's social worker should initiate the PEP working with relevant teachers/education professionals. It is a record of what needs to happen for the child to enable him/her to fulfil their potential and it reflects any existing education plans, such as a statement of special educational needs and Individual Provision Map. The child should be involved in this process and the PEP should be reviewed regularly. Although it is not statutory for a child in an Early Years setting to have a PEP, it is good practise and a specific Early Years PEP is available to use. (See Appendix 1, page 13 for more detail on PEPs)

Attendance

School ensures that all pupils attend regularly; continuity and stability are known to promote educational success for children in public care. Often school can be a lifeline when care placements are changing. However, where non-attendance is identified, early intervention is essential. It signals to the young person the importance of their education and that because they are in care of the Local Authority they are a priority. Working in partnership with the Social Workers, Foster Carers, Education Welfare Officers, and/or ECPC, school will take positive action quickly to avoid unauthorised absences.

Narrowing The Gap

The school sets challenging targets for children in care and has high expectations of them, both with regard to attainment and also participation in broader school activities. It recognises, however, that there are often additional hurdles for them to surmount because of their early life experiences; support will be offered where appropriate to help them achieve their potential and 'narrow the gap' between their attainment and that of their peers.

Teachers also recognise that sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum which deal with family values and experiences which are likely to either rekindle distressing memories or put the spotlight on the child.

Data on Children in Care

It is the responsibility of the school to inform The ECPC Virtual School (See Appendix 3 for contact details) on any new children in care joining the school, or any leaving the school. Through termly Designated Teacher liaison group meetings, PEP meetings and the annual conference, ECPC staff will ensure that systems are in place to support the young people, to discuss their progress and to confirm their willingness to help the school resolve any issues which may arise. Other LA teams, including advisers and School improvement Partners will also be aware of the names of children in care and may also enquire about their progress.

Admissions

School understands the importance of ensuring continuity of education for children in care. It works in partnership with the Local Authority to try to achieve suitable outcomes in terms of admission for these children, including those who are hard to place and / or who move into the area on an emergency placement. When the school is over-subscribed top priority is given to children in care, and consideration is given to going over numbers in line with the Council's Fair Access Protocol which can be viewed at:
http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/adm_fair_access_protocol.pdf

Exclusions

Continuity is vital for children already suffering disruption in their family life; exclusion from school can place great strain on care placements, sometimes resulting in more disruption in the children's lives if these break down. School will always aim to tackle the underlying causes of poor behaviour e.g. through pastoral support programmes, working with support services and giving purposeful help through the SEN framework. Exclusion will be used only as a last resort; wherever possible school will work creatively (with support teams where appropriate) to find other strategies to implement behavioural boundaries.

Early Years

As with all young children, those in public care will benefit from access to a full range of early years experiences within a secure, nurturing, consistent and non-stigmatising environment. Staff in early years settings need to have an understanding of:-

- how the care system works, including an awareness of the effects of separation on very young children in public care;
- the importance of contact with siblings and other family members;
- their role in ensuring successful planning and intervention.

Identifying a key adult is particularly important for young children in public care because of the importance of forming secure attachments in order to develop independence and gain confidence. Young children in care also require adults to advocate on their behalf and to ensure that they have the access to the same life chances as their peers. The Early Years SENCO has a crucial role in:-

- the early identification of and response to special educational needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- effective liaison and co-ordination with other support services and professionals;
- supporting the smooth and informed transition into statutory schooling.

Children and young people in care who have special educational needs

- Like other children, children in care may at some time have special educational needs. It should not, however, be assumed that all children in public care will have such needs. If they do have learning needs or difficulties accessing learning opportunities they need support and advocacy. The needs of most pupils with special educational needs are expected to be met in mainstream schools through their statement and/or Individual Provision Map.
- The needs of the child in care should be known to the SENCO, the Designated Teacher and their Carer and Social Worker. The PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided. It should be used in conjunction with the statement or Individual Provision Map to monitor and record progress and to indicate any barriers with plans to overcome these.
- Children who are separated from their families will have behavioural and emotional responses to that separation and the often traumatic events which led to it. Schools have an important role to play in helping to ensure that unmet emotional needs do not lead to disaffection, difficult behaviour or exclusion wherever possible.

ECPC 16+

The aim of all professionals working with students considering Post 16 education is to overcome the barriers that contribute to the Further and Higher Educational underachievement of young people in care. Professionals should work creatively with young people in care along with their care providers, in order to ensure that an increased proportion take up places in Further and Higher Education and achieve success in them. Schools should be aware that while young people in public care will usually be in foster care or residential care, they may be in supported lodgings, living with a greater degree of independence and self-reliance. For these young people, their educational placement in a caring sixth-form is crucial to the stability of their life and to their success in the future.

Young people in care require the following:

- A key adult or mentor whom they can access within school for support
- Teachers and school staff to be ambitious for them, and ensure that they access the same opportunities as their peers
- Continued monitoring of and support for special educational needs, including BESD
- Effective liaison and co-ordination with other support services and professionals
- Focused, personalised support with the transition to University via UCAS, or into further education or employment

ECPC staff help identify potential high achievers among young people in care and aim to support them in their aspirations as appropriate. This could involve support with their study skills and UCAS applications, as well as with academic tuition (subject to continued funding). The residential Summer School in July for children in care to Buckinghamshire is a key aspect of this work.

Links with other School Policies

These guidelines are translated into action through other policies and procedures

- Behaviour policy, including Anti-bullying statement and procedures
- Home School Agreement
- Pastoral Support Programmes
- Inclusion Policy
- Child Protection policy
- Special Educational Needs policy
- Race Equality Strategy
- Personal, Social and Health policy
- Exclusion procedures
- Citizenship policy
- Multi-cultural Policy- valuing diversity
- Assessment and Achievement policy
- Admissions policy
- Attendance policy
- All curriculum policies

Appendix 1

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care

Please see attached DCSF document for information for governing bodies and PEPs also.

Appendix 2

Achievement & Learning Division

The ECPC Virtual School

Who are we?

The ECPC Virtual School is a small, joint agency, countywide team of specialist staff from education and social care set up in 2000 to improve the educational achievement and experience of Buckinghamshire's children in care.

Background

- There are approximately 400 children in care in Buckinghamshire and about 280 of these are of statutory school age.
- 50% of children in care nationwide reach school leaving age with no educational qualifications and a significant percentage are unemployed a year after leaving care.
- Educational underachievement and social isolation are clear issues for this very vulnerable group.

'The Education of Young People in Public Care' DfES/DH 2000 and updated in 2005 stresses the need for local authorities to act corporately and advocate on behalf of these children. As corporate parents we are charged to provide the children in our care with 'the education they deserve and...to do at least what any good parent would do' to improve their educational outcomes.

What are our aims?

- To promote good corporate parenting across the county council by implementing the statutory elements of the Guidance and the outcomes of "Every Child Matters,"
 - There must be a Designated Teacher for children in care in every school.
 - Every child in care must have a Personal Education Plan.
 - No care placements are to be made without education secured.
 - No child in care must be without educational provision for more than 20 school days.
- To support Early Years and Post 16 settings, schools, social workers and foster carers in raising the attainment of all Buckinghamshire's children in care and in doing so,
- To promote their educational and social inclusion.

How can we help?

Through effective communication, early intervention and liaison with all relevant services we will offer practical support to implement:-

- Effective training and advice for education and social care staff.
- Efficient tracking and monitoring of the children's educational needs, provision and achievements.
- Successful partnership work for individual children at risk of exclusion, underachievement or without a school place.

How are referrals made?

The ECPC virtual school tracks and identifies children at risk and needing support via a number of procedures including,

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- Termly attendance and attainment information.
- Teacher/social worker 'Alert' proforma.
- Social care lists of children in care.
- RIG (Reintegration Group).
- Network links with relevant agencies/services.

Please contact us if you have any queries or need further information at:

The ECPC Virtual School Room 1, Old County Hall, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1UA.
FAX 01296 383529 E-mail ecpc@buckscc.gov.uk www.bucksqfl.org.uk/ecpc

Chris Elsbury	Inclusion Manager Office 01296 383171 Mobile 07921 406090 celsbury@buckscc.gov.uk
Jean Hadder	Support Teacher Office 01296 383730 Mobile 07834 531614 jhadder@buckscc.gov.uk
Tess Hancock	Early Years Education Lead Office 01296 387060 Mobile 07921 492963 thancock@buckscc.gov.uk
Heidi Misseldine	Administrative Assistant 01296 387047 hmisseldine@buckscc.gov.uk
Stuart Mogridge	Headteacher 01296 387576/ 07900 052382 smogridge@buckscc.gov.uk
Janice Moloughney	Team Leader 01296 383166 jemoloughney@buckscc.gov.uk
Jo Purdy	Specialist Support Assistant 07738 024938 jpurdy@buckscc.gov.uk
Viv Simister	Specialist Support Assistant 07738 024939 vsimister@buckscc.gov.uk
Barbara Smith	Office Manager 01296 383163 basmith@buckscc.gov.uk
Jenny Stuart	Specialist Teacher 07738 501289 jstuart@buckscc.gov.uk
Penny Todd	Liaison Teacher Office 01296 387126 Mobile 07921 406089 ptodd@buckscc.gov.uk
Dawn Wells	Social Worker Office 01296 383930 Mobile 07921 406091 dwells@buckscc.gov.uk
Lucy White	Higher Education Lead Office 01296 382068 Mobile 07921 492964 luwhite@buckscc.gov.uk

* Please note, apart from Barbara Smith & Jennifer Carr, this team works term time only; some members are part – time.

Appendix 3

Useful Contacts

Social Care

Please ring in the first instance the Referral Teams who will advise you on which social care team you should talk to if its not themselves:

Aylesbury	01296 387932
	01296 387957
	01296 383962
High Wycombe	01494 475211
	01494 475037
	01494 475246

Admissions Team 01296 383250

Aimhigher

Lynda Moorcroft 01494 601619

Early Years Development and Childcare 01296 382098

Education Psychology Service

Aylesbury Office 01296 383219

Amersham Office 01494 732187

Education Welfare Service 01296 387382

Exclusions and Reintegration Team 01296 382879

METAS (Multi Ethnic and Traveller Achievement Service)

Aylesbury 01296 415038

High Wycombe 01494 473046

National Youth Advocacy Service 0800 616101

Safeguarding in Education Team 01296 382912

Bridget Day LADO / Team Manager 01296 382070

Specialist Nurse for LAC

Cherry Gregory 01296 504788

Special Educational Needs Team 01296 383544

Youth Offending Service Aylesbury 01296 434624

High Wycombe 01494 463443

Appendix 4

Glossary of Terms

Accommodation – (Section 20 Children Act 1989)	Some children are looked after by the Local Authority by agreement with, or at the request of, their parents, perhaps because of problems within the family which are making it hard for them to cope. Under Section 20 of the Children Act, it is the duty of all local authorities to make accommodation available for such children in need. Children may be accommodated (in residential or foster care) for a short or longer period. No court proceedings are involved, and the parents retain full parental responsibility. Their continued involvement with their children's education should be encouraged wherever possible.
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
Children in Public Care / Children in care	The two terms mean the same and are used interchangeably in this document.
Care Order (Section 31 Children Act 1989)	<p>A Care Order is made by the court (under Section 31(1)(a) of the Children Act), placing the child in the care of a designated Local Authority, with parental responsibility being shared between the parents and the Local Authority. It can only be made if the court is satisfied that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm; and- the harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to either:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect of parent to give him;or- the child being beyond parental control.
Children's Guardian	On receiving the application for the Care Order, the court will appoint a Children's Guardian. This is an independent Social Worker working as a Court Officer, to safeguard and promote the interests of the child and young person during court proceedings. This replaces the Guardian Ad Litem.
Corporate Parent	The primary duty of the Local Authority is to act as 'corporate parent' to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or young person in public care, and to make use of services available for children and young people cared for by their own parents as

appears to the authority to be reasonable in the case of the particular young person (Children Act, 1989, 23(3)(b)). In order to act as a 'good corporate parent' we need to base our expectations and aspirations for these children and young people as if they were our own children.

Interim Care Order

The court may make an Interim Care Order (for up to eight weeks in the first instance) where, in an application for a Care Order, the proceedings are adjourned or where a court in any proceedings gives a direction for the investigation of a child's home circumstances.