



Chertsey and Dorking Nursery Schools and Mole Valley Family Centre

CHILDREN IN CARE POLICY

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 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.

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 to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles;

1. Prioritising education
2. Having high expectations and aspiration
3. Inclusion – changing and challenging attitudes
4. Achieving continuing and stability
5. Early intervention – priority action
6. 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

- We will promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire without being labelled or singled out
- We will appoint a Designated Teacher for CiC, this is currently Donna Harwood-Duffy
- We will empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities
- We will 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

- We will recognise the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other policies and in the Centre Development Plan.
- We will ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- We are committed 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 current Designated Teacher for CiC is the Headteacher

- To have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress
- To monitor the educational progress of all Children in Care in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the community
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible
- To act as an advocate for Children in Care
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children in care
- To promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning
- To 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
- To 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
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings if appropriate
- To provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate
- To present regular Reports to School Governors, including an Annual Report
- To access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement)
- To cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate

C. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

- We will ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations We will ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role.
- We will monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care
- We will ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the role, governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher
- We will 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
- We will 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
- We will champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher on a more regular basis.
- We will appoint a Named Governor for CiC –this is Jackie Smith.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Children in Care, as for all children
- Maintain CiC confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information
- Work to enable CiC to achieve stability and success
- Promote the self-esteem of all CiC
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning and development of CiC

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

Approved by the Governing Body: September 2022

Review by: September 2024

This policy is relevant to:

Nursery staff - yes	Centre staff - yes	Parents - yes
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***Based on Surrey Virtual School Model Policy**