



The Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools



Children Looked After Policy

Scope:		Federation
Date Adopted:		Spring 2020
This Review:		Spring 2023
Next Review:		Spring 2026
Approved	EHT:	<i>S. Hawkes</i>
	Governor:	<i>S. Morris</i>
		Every 3 years or when regulations change
		Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee



The Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools



'With God all things are possible'

'Where there is love, there is God'

The Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools will give every child the best possible education because each individual is uniquely created and precious to God. As a Catholic community, guided by the Holy Spirit, we will follow the example of Jesus Christ in all aspects of daily life.

With the help of God's love, the Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools will seek to develop the whole child. Each child is uniquely created and precious to God and it is the Federation's mission, guided by the Holy Spirit, to nurture each child's spiritual, moral and academic growth.

Inspired by the teachings of Christ we will...

- Develop our children's faith, spirituality and joy in the love of God
- Educate our children to the highest standards thus realising their own potential
- Instil in our children the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed and take pride in their achievements recognising we each have special gifts and talents
- Encourage everyone to be more than they thought possible, in a secure and loving environment
- Promote a caring community where we will all behave well. We will be dignified in our actions, demonstrating good manners, tolerance, kindness and generosity to ourselves and others
- Prepare our children today to become tomorrow's responsible and independent individuals equipped to face life's challenges
- Ensure our Federation is a happy, safe and welcoming place where we all enjoy learning, work hard, support one another and do our best
- Create an active partnership of love, joy and high expectations between children, parents, carers, staff, governors, parishes and the wider community

Inclusion statement

The school community will ensure that ALL children irrespective of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender (including those who identify as transgender), sexual orientation, ability, special educational need, disability, faith or religion, age, culture, socio-economic or home background will have equal access to the breadth of this policy.

The achievements, attitudes and well-being of all our children matter and the school will endeavour to promote their individuality. Children with learning disabilities and gifted and talented children will be allowed to express themselves according to their ability. Work will be differentiated to meet their needs and achievements will be celebrated.

This Policy will be implemented through on going consultation with all members of the school community and developments in law or statutory guidance.

Rationale

The governing body of The Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. This governing body recognises that, nationally, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in "Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children" (February 2018), "The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children" (February 2018) and the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989.

Children who are "looked after" may be "Accommodated", "In Care" or "remanded/detained" as follows:

Accommodated (Section 20)

This is a voluntary arrangement, because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.

In Care

A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A care order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority, or shares this with the parents.

Remanded/Detained

A child can be remanded or detained as in the following:

- an emergency protection order
- removed by police using their powers of protection
- remanded by a court following criminal charges
- a court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.

The Federation of St Elphege's and Regina Coeli Catholic Schools recognise that even once a child is no longer 'looked after', it is likely that they will continue to face challenges similar to those of children who are currently in care.

For this reason and in line with statutory guidance, the principles outlined in this policy will also be applied with consideration for those children who are 'previously looked after' - those children who have spent time Accommodated (Section 20), In Care or Remanded / Detained.

Looked After Children may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. The governing body of The Federation of St Elphege's is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children
- Personal Education Plans for all Looked After Children
- effective strategies that supports the education of this vulnerable group.
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect looked after children

The Designated Teachers at our schools are as follows:

The Federation of St Elphege's Catholic Schools

Ms Charlotte Wright - 020 8669 6306

Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School

Mrs S Spain - 020 8688 4582

THE ROLE OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The virtual school is part of the local authority. It does not exist in real terms, or as a building - children do not attend it. Their role is to work with schools to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or who have been in care so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Children who are or who have been looked after remain the responsibility of the school at which they are enrolled. The virtual school are responsible for the effective co-ordination of educational services at a strategic level.

Key aspects of the virtual school's role are as follows:

- Influence policy and develop and improve services.
- Promote individual achievement and wellbeing.
- Provide advice, support and training to professionals, schools, colleges and institutions.
- Improve access to specialist services.
- Provide access to professional advice and guidance on education, training and employment.
- Provide additional opportunities for out of school learning and leisure.
- Facilitate access to early education and childcare.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for Looked After Children;
- when new to the school, ensure a smooth and welcome induction for the child and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status;
- closely monitor all aspects of the child's progress and attainment, pastoral needs, the impact of any interventions, behaviour and emotional wellbeing.
- ensure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the child and the carer, in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings, within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least, every 6 months;
- keep PEPs and other records up to date, particularly in time to inform review meetings;
- co-ordinate support for the child in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary;
- ensure staff receive relevant information and training and act as an advisor to staff and governors;
- ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis;

- provide written information to assist planning/review meetings and ensure attendance as far as possible;
- ensure that the child and carer(s) receive early notification of meetings, parents evenings and other events and that communication remains regular and positive.
- encourage Looked After Children to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible;
- ensure speedy transfer of information between individuals and other relevant agencies and to a new school if and when the child transfers;
- seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded;
- ensure that any returns on looked after children are completed - as requested by the LA
- put steps in place to promote a child's smooth transition between classes, phases, schools and care placements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

All staff should:

- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
- as with all children, ensure that no child in public care is stigmatised in any way;
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children
- positively promote the self-esteem of Looked After Children

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Looked After Children;
- be aware of whether the school has Looked After Children and how many (no names);
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Looked After Children;
- liaise with the Head Teacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children;
- support the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met
- receives regular confidential progress reports for looked after children (These reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons)
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- information on looked after children will be shared with school staff on a “need to know basis”
- the Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

TRAINING

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

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP) COMPLETION

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which the Virtual School and their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

Local authorities have different platforms and systems for completing PEPs. However, in-line with statutory guidance, the underlying process in forming and reviewing a Personal Education Plan is as follows:

- Social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after (or a looked after children entering the school)
- Date is set for the completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- A copy of the form is sent to the school to enable completion of educational data. The PEP meeting takes place within 20 days, involving the social worker, designated teacher (or other appropriate staff), carer and young person if appropriate.
- A date is set for the next PEP meeting, the Personal Education Plan is taken to the child's statutory review and discussed within the wider context of the child's life.
- PEP sent by SW to the LAC team

Effective Personal Education Plans will consider:

- the child's strengths and areas for development
- the child's interests, both in and out of school
- the child's developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- any issues that may be impacting negatively on the child's progress
- quantifiable targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting
- best value spend of the CLA PPG

ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

Looked after children and previously looked after children are a priority for admissions and this is reflected in the admissions policies for each of the schools.

On admission, the child and his/her carers and / or social worker will meet with the designated teacher. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our schools. Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (if appropriate a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

SCHOOL TRIPS AND SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Given the delays that looked after children experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that looked after children enjoy the same extracurricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

COMPLAINTS

If the child, parent, carer or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation. If the complainant remains unsatisfied, they may choose to escalate their complaint to the Head of School or the Executive Head Teacher.

Any issue that remains unresolved at this stage should be addressed through the Federation's Complaints Policy and procedures which is available on request of from the schools' websites.