

Westfield Arts College

Looked After Children Policy

Reviewed by committee		Policy type: Statutory
Adopted by Governing Body	Summer 2022	Review cycle: annually
Date for next review	Summer 2023	Signed by Chair: 

Looked After Children Policy and Guidance

Rationale

At Westfield Arts College we aim to provide a safe, secure, therapeutic environment where everyone is valued and respected equally. We aim to provide an inclusive education where children develop independent learning skills and are supported according to need whatever their age, gender, background, beliefs or abilities. National legislation regarding disabilities, special education needs, equality, race relations and related aspects underpin this policy which also reflects other national, local and internal policies and guidance.

Westfield Arts College are committed to supporting children in care to achieve their full potential alongside other pupils, to enjoy their learning and to have opportunities for positive experiences in school.

Who are Looked After Children (LAC) or Children in Care (CIC) ?

Children and young people who are placed in the care of local authorities are one of the groups most likely to underachieve nationally. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is considered 'looked after by' a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours. 'Children in care' is the term which many children and young people prefer to be used however the term 'In Care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the Court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989

Looked After Children fall into four main groups:

- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38) - they may live with Foster Carers, in a Children's Home, in a Residential School, with relatives or with parents under supervision.
- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20) – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' (LAC). They may be looked after by the Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in Dorset.

Aims

To work together with the Local Authority, Social care (including Children Who Are Disabled Team), Foster Carers, Medical and Nursing Services, Therapy Services and all other stakeholders in an effective partnership to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our Looked After Children and Children in Care

To contribute to the provision of a successful and integrated service for Looked After Children and Children in Care

To ensure that Looked After Children and Children in Care have equality of opportunity in school, enabling them to access, experience and benefit from education alongside peers and respecting their right anonymity if this is their wish

To comply with the LA guidelines on the education and care of Looked After Children and Children in Care

To work in partnership with the Virtual School to effectively meet the needs of Looked After Children and Children in Care and to access appropriate funding, such as the Pupil Premium.

Roles and responsibilities in school

The Governing Body (GB) will fulfil their responsibilities to through:

- Ensuring that this policy is implemented
- Nominating a governor to maintain interest in the well-being of Looked After Children and Children in Care
- Ensuring that the GB takes up suitable training opportunities
- Monitoring appropriate training for school staff

The Head Teacher (HT) will fulfil responsibility through:

- Ensuring that this policy is approved by the GB and that it is reviewed annually
- Ensuring that any practical guidelines needed to ensure the well-being of any particular child are identified
- Liaising with teachers to take pastoral responsibility and ensure the well-being and education of Looked After Children and Children in Care
- Monitoring and informing of the legal position with regard to parental access, provision of schools reports
- Ensuring sensitivity relating to the child's past experiences
- Ensuring appropriate training opportunities are taken up and promote and maintain good working relationships with other key personnel on other agencies
- Reporting to the Governing Body on:
 - The admission of any Looked After Children and Children in Care
 - Progress and achievement of Looked After Children and Children in Care
 - Significant issues, events or incidents relating to Looked After Children and Children in Care
 - The level of attendance in relation to school averages

The Designated Teacher (DT) will

- co-ordinate the education of Looked After Children and Children in Care to ensure that staff in the school are aware of the children, know each carer and understand individual circumstances including parental rights and access.
- liaise effectively with other agencies involved with the child, attend Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting. Class teachers, tutors and/or pupil and parent support workers will also attend review meetings where possible.
- ensure all staff work in partnership with carers, parents and others with parental responsibility to ensure that Looked After Children and Children in Care receive their full entitlements including provision and access to school news and information.
- ensure that all records are kept and maintained appropriately. The DT will schedule PEP meetings with the Virtual School Lead and complete electronic Personal Education Plans (ePEPs) .
- provide information to the Governing Body and LA about the progress and outcomes Looked After Children and Children in Care on the school roll and complete the Annual Report
- set up regular training for staff to ensure that the school can meet the needs of Looked After Children and Children in Care, ensuring staff are attachment aware and trauma informed.
- attend regular update training provided by the LA Virtual Schools.

Monitoring the progress of Looked After Children and Children in Care

All children are assessed on entry to Westfield Arts College to ensure a baseline from which progress and achievement can be measured. Progress is assessed and recorded for Looked After Children and Children in Care in the same way as for all other pupils. The Virtual School Lead for the child/young person initiates an electronic Personal Education Plan – ePEP - within 10 days of the pupil joining the school, or of entering care, and ensures that the young person is actively involved. Following the initial PEP meeting, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with the Virtual School Lead to arrange further PEP review meetings. Copies of the ePEP are sent to stakeholders. The allocation and purpose of the Pupil Premium (PP) will be included within the PEP. All PEPs are completed according to the wishes of the child's home authority.

The DT works alongside the class team and Pupil and Parent support workers to produce a 'Roots and Fruits' document for each child and follows the Dorset Steps approach to support each individual.

The PEP for each individual is filed within their ALPs Folder on the Media drive and stored on the web-based ePEP system managed by the Dorset Virtual School and Welfare Call Ltd.

Students over the age of 16

At Westfield some young people may attend our setting up to the age of 19. Young people can leave care at 16, if it is in their best interests. Once a young person reaches their 18th birthday, they are legally no longer a 'looked after child' and their placement with a foster family can no longer be classed as a foster placement.

Some of our young people will need ongoing support and care beyond the age of 18. At Westfield we work with external agencies to ensure there is a smooth transition from children's to adult services. We continue to maintain records on living arrangements be it supported living, Shared Lives or accommodation in a residential home and liaise closely with named carers. The Virtual Schools remain involved until the age of 18 if the young person and carers are in agreement.

Relevant documentation:

Children Act 1989 and related updates

Dorset Virtual School Handbook 2021/22