

Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust

Children who are Looked After Guidance

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1 Rationale

The Academy is committed to do all that it can to promote the educational achievement and well-being of Children who are Looked After (CLA). A CLA is a child in care.

Main roles:

- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After
- The Designated Child Protection Lead
- The Designated Academy Councillor for CLA and Child Protection

2 Implementation

The Designated Person for CLA has the responsibility for the day-to-day welfare and achievements of the students at the Academy. They also have a strategic role for overseeing all CLA in the Academy and work closely with the Designated Child Protection Lead to ensure the safeguarding of these individuals.

This guidance describes our approach to meeting the requirements set out in

- the Statutory Guidance of Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (Duty on Local Authorities to promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children)
- Care Matters, Time for Change 2007 Guidance (Chapter 4 “A First Class Education”)
- The Children and Young person’s Act 2008 (Duty on Schools to appoint a Designated Teacher for Children in Care)
- Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (CLA).

In line with our ethos and principles, our guidance aims to identify specific roles and responsibilities within school to promote the learning, progress and well-being of CLA

The Academy recognises that the provisions outlined in this guidance must be in place regardless of whether there are any CLA currently on the school roll.

This guidance was developed in partnership with Local Authority Virtual School staff

3 Aims and Objectives:

3.1 Academy Council and Academy commitment to enhanced support

The Academy Council recognises that it is the corporate parent (any and all adults working for the Council or a school) that has responsibility and accountability for the well-being and future prospects of children in their care. A good corporate parent is expected to offer everything that a good parent would.

We recognise that entering care represents a significant change in a child’s life. At this stage the State takes on an immense responsibility for these children by agreeing to undertake the parental role on a day to day basis. That means that all those working for the State at a local level in this school should demand no less for each child in care than they would for their own children.

- The Academy Council and Academy will ensure that high quality learning opportunities and education are provided for all our students.
- We will ensure equality of access to opportunities and learning outcomes for all.
- We aim to support all students in achieving across the five outcome areas of Every Child Matters, whatever their background or circumstances.
- We recognise that CLA can be especially vulnerable and are sometimes ‘at risk’ of failure in the learning context.

3.2 Aims for our Looked After Learners

Our aims in supporting Looked After Learners in school are:

- To ensure all policies and procedures are followed sensitively for CLA.
- To ensure that all CLA have access to a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum.
- To provide personalised learning and curriculum appropriate to needs and ability.
- To support and monitor social progress ensuring key adults prioritise respectful and responsive relationship building with individual children and provide appropriate support for social development within the peer group.
- To ensure that wherever possible CLA receive a full 25 hours of education each week.
- To ensure that students who are CLA take as full a part as possible in all school activities and strive to reduce and eliminate any barriers that may stop them from taking part.
- To ensure that carers, social workers and parents (as appropriate) of CLA are involved and kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- To ensure that wherever possible CLA are involved in decisions affecting their learning, the plans for progress and future provision.
- To ensure that success is appropriately recognised and reinforced.
- To ensure that any emerging concerns are followed up in a timely way with skill and sensitivity (e.g. changes in patterns of behaviour and attendance).
- To liaise and cooperate with appropriate partners, in particular the Virtual School, to ensure that all plans complement and support the promotion of the educational achievement and well-being of CLA.

4 Admissions to the Academy

- The Academy Council supports the Local Authority's approach to admissions giving CLA the highest priority for admission to the identified school.
- The Academy will ensure that CLA are named a first priority within our written admissions criteria.
- Sometimes care placement changes lead to CLA entering school mid-term or mid-year if this is thought to be in the best interests of the child. This Academy will ensure that in these circumstances CLA will be admitted to the school in a timely manner, even if this would mean that this would increase class sizes above the recommended maximum. As necessary, we will give a positive welcome, plan entry, offer additional support and pre-entry visits as required to help students settle into school.

5 Inclusion and Allocation of Resources

- Our guidance recognises that all students are entitled to a balanced, broadly based, and stimulating curriculum and learning programme.
- For CLA there can often be a need to develop learning opportunities emphasising personalised planning and planned inclusive approaches.
- The Academy Council will ensure the Academy makes all appropriate learning provision for CLA. Resources are allocated to support CLA in line with this guidance and with our wider school teaching and learning policies and good practice.
- The Academy will ensure that a Home to School agreement is signed by the primary carer and a copy is sent to the CLA's social worker.
- Additional funding allocated to CLA students must be ring fenced to meet their needs. An account for the spending of these funds must be kept and made available upon request.

6 Monitoring the Progress of Children Looked After

- Progress for CLA is monitored and supported and is guided by Academy policies for teaching and learning.
- We will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of CLA at regular intervals. This will be formally reported to the Virtual School
- We will ensure that the Academy makes an assessment of the student's needs and attainment on entry, to ensure continuity of learning.
- We recognise the importance of Electronic Personal Education Plans (EPEPs) and understand that they are statutory school documents.

- The EPEP is key to the planning and monitoring of education for a CLA
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will ensure there is an EPEP in place for all CLA in the Academy.
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will ensure an EPEP takes place within 20 days of a CLA joining the school or becoming Looked After.

7 Attendance and Exclusion

- The Academy recognises that CLA are statistically much more likely to have a poor attendance record and are up to 5 times more likely to be excluded than their non-looked after peers.
- The Academy will take specific steps to monitor the attendance of CLA and will notify all appropriate partners at an early stage if there is an indication that problems with attendance might occur.
- The Academy will take all reasonable steps to ensure that exclusion is rarely used for CLA and then is always only as a last resort, after all other avenues have been explored.
- The Academy will make arrangements for first day provision for any excluded CLA as it would for any pupil after day 6 of exclusion.
- The Academy will ensure that should a CLA be identified as at risk of exclusion, then contact is made with the LA Inclusion Officer and the named contact within the Virtual School immediately, to enable early intervention / preventative strategies to be instigated.

8 Record Keeping and Information Sharing

- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will co-ordinate record keeping for all CLA in school.
- Records will include individual learning plans, up to date progress and attainment records, EPEP planning records and personalised information relating to care context as appropriate. These records will be maintained in a single place, having regard to the statutory nature of some of these documents and the confidential information that they contain.
- CLA status is appropriately 'flagged' in school management information systems, ensuring information and planning records are readily available as required.
- The Academy will ensure there is ready access to information and up to date contact details for carers, parents (where appropriate), social worker and the named contact in the Virtual School.
- All appropriate records will be forwarded to the receiving school promptly if there is a transfer to another school.
- Sensitivity is a priority in sharing information with members of the Academy staff team. We are guided by best practice and on the 'need to know'. Wherever possible students' wishes are taken into account in sharing information within the staff team.
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will attend, or arrange for someone else to attend, or contribute in other ways to the statutory CLA review process.

9 Appointments of Staff and within Academy Council

- The Academy recognises that there is a statutory requirement to appoint a Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.
- All staff and Academy Councillors have a responsibility for the educational achievement and well-being of CLA as a corporate parent. The work of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After is to lead in this area, but they do not hold sole responsibility.

10 Staff and Academy Councillors' Development and Training

- All Staff and Academy Councillors are encouraged to develop via reflective processes. We encourage ongoing engagement with relevant CPD to maintain and extend individual and team expertise in supporting CLA to progress.
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After makes particular efforts to develop good awareness and understanding of issues, guidance and developments associated with the CLA context. The Designated Person for CLA disseminates knowledge and skills to colleagues in school as appropriate

and necessary. Partnership working and collaboration with the Local Authority and the Virtual School is essential here.

- There is a specific statutory expectation that the Designated Person for CLA will be released to attend a programme of training each year to maintain and extend his or her personal expertise.
- The Designated Academy Councillor for CLA will attend appropriate briefings and relevant development opportunities provided by the Local Authority and the Virtual School.

11 Partnership Working

- Our Academy values the views of carers and parents. We firmly believe in developing strong partnerships with carers, parents and residential care workers to enable students to achieve their potential.
- We will develop close relationships and collaborative work to promote the learning and well-being of individual children, both in and out of school.
- EPEP meetings, other school liaison and consultation processes and informal day to day dialogue are all seen as good opportunities to enhance our partnerships.
- We recognise the essential contributions that external support services make in assisting CLA. We commit to developing positive partnerships with all involved. Our partnerships with community partners are extensive; some of our key partners for these children include:

12 Main links

Foster carers, residential key workers, social workers, family support workers, Head of Virtual School

Other Local Authority Services

Educational psychologists, SEN team, behaviour support, learning support, medical officer, school nurses, CAMH, Education Welfare Officers, social care sessional staff, community care workers, residential care staff, youth offending service, locality team workers, independent review officers, advocacy services.