

## Guidance on Children in Care (previously in Care)

This document has been updated with reference to Promoting the Education of Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Statutory Guidance for local authorities February 2018 and The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, Statutory Guidance on their role and responsibilities Feb 2018

### Document Control

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Version Number:</b>                     | 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Applicable To:</b>                      | All Academies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Committee:</b>                          | Values Students                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>Review Cycle:</b>                       | Two Years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Date of Next<br/>Review:</b>            | March 2027                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Related Policies:</b>                   | Local Behaviour Policy<br>Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy<br>Pupil Premium Statement of Principles<br>Special Education Needs & Disability Policy<br>Statutory Guidance DfE School Suspensions and<br>Permanent Exclusions: update August 2024 |

### Revisions

| Version | Page/Para No. | Description of Change                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4       | 1             | Title change to Children in care or have been previously in care;<br>additional of statutory guidance<br>reference; additional policies added and amended |
| 4       | 3             | Section 1 rationale changed to aims, principals and definitions                                                                                           |
| 4       | 3             | Main roles have been updated and amended                                                                                                                  |
| 4       | throughout    | All reference to CLA replaced with CiC                                                                                                                    |
| 4       | 5             | Section 4: Admissions updated                                                                                                                             |
| 4       | 5             | New section added in for PP+ section added in                                                                                                             |
| 4       | 6             | Section 7 Attendance and exclusion updated                                                                                                                |
| 4       | 8             | Section 9 staff appointment section fully replaced                                                                                                        |
| 4       | 8             | Section 10 staff development updated                                                                                                                      |
| 5       | 1             | Updated DFE Statutory guidance on suspensions reference                                                                                                   |
| 5       | 4             | Added in the five definitions referenced in Every Child Matters                                                                                           |

## Content's page

| REF | DESCRIPTION                                            | PAGE |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1   | Aims of the policy                                     | 4    |
| 2   | Implementation                                         | 5    |
| 3   | Aims and Objectives                                    | 5    |
| 4   | Admissions to the Academy                              | 6    |
| 5   | Inclusion and allocation of resources                  | 6    |
| 6   | Pupil Premium Plus                                     | 7    |
| 7   | Monitoring the progress of children looked after       | 7    |
| 8   | Attendance and Exclusion                               | 7    |
| 9   | Record Keeping and Information sharing                 | 8    |
| 10  | Appointment of staff and within Academy Council        | 8    |
| 11  | Staff and Academy Councillors Development and Training | 9    |
| 12  | Partnership Working                                    | 10   |
| 13  | Main links and other Local Authority Services          | 10   |

## **Aims of the Policy**

Meridian Trust will champion the individual needs of all care-experienced children enabling them to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

This will be achieved by:

- Placing the highest priority on their education
- Promoting regular attendance
- Having high expectations and aspirations
- Promoting access and inclusion in all areas of school life
- Promoting stability and continuity
- Supporting early intervention
- Valuing the voice of the child
- Promoting social, emotional and mental health and well-being
- Working in partnership with parents, carers, social workers and other professionals

### **1.1 Guiding Principles**

The voice of the child is of paramount importance.

All care-experienced children will receive high quality education, which is inspiring and challenging, resulting in the best possible outcomes, thus closing the educational gap between these children and those who are not care-experienced.

Every care-experienced child will have a positive educational experience which promotes social and emotional learning and wellbeing alongside academic success to ensure readiness for adulthood.

Meridian Trust will meet the needs of care-experienced children through effective liaison and integrated work with all key partners including the relevant Virtual School.

### **1.2 Definitions**

Under the Children Act 1989, children in care are looked after by a Local Authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This can happen under a number of arrangements.

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subject of a Care Order (section 31) or Interim Care Order (section 38)
- Children who are subject to 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).
- Children who have previously been in care include those children that are no longer in care through:
  - Adoption
  - A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
  - A Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

### **Main roles:**

- The Designated Teacher for Children in Care (CiC)
- The Designated Person for Children Previously in Care (PLAC)

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead
- The Designated Academy Councillor for CiC and Safeguarding
- SENCO
- Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health

## **2 Implementation**

The Designated Person for CIC 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 CIC in the Academy and work closely with the Designated Safeguarding 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)
- Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (Feb 2018)
- Care Matters, Time for Change 2007 Guidance (Chapter 4 “A First CiCs 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 (CIC).

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 CIC.

The Academy recognises that the provisions outlined in this guidance must be in place regardless of whether there are any CIC 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 (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: to be healthy, to stay safe, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution, to achieve economic well-being.

- We recognise that CIC 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 CIC.
- To ensure that all CIC 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 CIC receive a full 25 hours of education each week.
- To ensure that students who are CIC 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 CIC are involved and kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- To ensure that wherever possible CIC 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, particularly the Virtual School, to ensure that all plans complement and support the promotion of the educational achievement and well-being of CIC.

## **4 Admissions to the Academy**

- In line with national guidance Meridian Trust prioritises the admission of care-experienced children.
- The Academy Council's support national guidance to prioritise the admission of care experienced children the highest priority for admission to the identified school.
- The Academy will ensure that CIC are named a first priority within our written admissions criteria.
- Sometimes care placement changes lead to CIC 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 CIC will be admitted to the school in a timely manner, even if this would mean that this would increase CIC 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.
- The importance of a thorough and planned transition is recognised and this may include:
  - Transition meetings between schools
  - The swift transfer of information between schools
  - Additional school visits and identification of staff mentor and/or peer buddy
  - Additional support and planning for care-experienced children at times of transition
  - Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

## **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 CIC 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 CIC. Resources are allocated to support CIC 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 CIC's social worker.  
Additional funding allocated to CIC 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 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)**

Where a care experienced child is allocated pupil premium plus, it is to be used for the benefit of their educational needs. Meridian Trust will ensure that:

- The allocation of PP+ promotes high aspirations and seeks to secure the best educational outcomes
- The extra funding provided by the PP+ reflects the significant additional barriers faced by CYP in care
- For children in care, the allocation of PP+ will be linked to clear desirable outcomes as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

## **7 Monitoring the Progress of Children Looked After**

- Progress for CIC is monitored and supported and is guided by Academy policies for teaching and learning.
- We will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of CIC at regular intervals. This will be formally reported to the Virtual School • We will ensure that the Academy assesses 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 CIC
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will ensure there is an EPEP in place for all CIC in the Academy.
- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will ensure an EPEP takes place within 20 days of a CIC joining the school or becoming Looked After.

## **8 Attendance and Exclusion**

- The Academy recognises that CIC are statistically much more likely to have a poor attendance record and are up to five times more likely to be excluded than their non-looked after peers.
- The Academy will take specific steps to monitor the attendance of CIC and will notify all appropriate partners at an early stage if there is an indication that problems with attendance might occur.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

- School attendance procedures will reflect the specific needs of care-experienced children. This may include reasonable adjustments such as celebrating 100% attendance despite incidents of nonattendance due to care placement moves.
- Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality each Meridian Trust lead will speak to the child, carer / parent, social worker and other relevant professionals including the Virtual School where a child is in care.

### **Exclusions**

- Each Meridian Trust Academy will make every effort to avoid excluding a care-experienced child, in recognition of the impact of their early experiences and what their behaviour may have been communicating. We also recognise there may be increased risk of disengagement from school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss.

If the child is in care, before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the relevant Virtual School. The Virtual School may be contacted for advice if the child was previously in care, with consent from the carers / parents. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion and ensure that educational provision is in place from day one (for children in care). Exclusion will not be used as a sanction, but instead will be used to plan successful access, inclusion and reintegration.

## **9 Record Keeping and Information Sharing**

- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After will co-ordinate record keeping for all CIC 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.
- CIC 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 CIC review process.

## **10 Appointment of Staff and within Academy Council**

Meridian Trust is committed to promoting improved educational life chances for all care-experienced children. We will ensure that the Designated Teacher for children in care has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority and sufficient time and experience to fulfil this statutory role. A named Academy Councillor will be nominated to link with the Designated Teacher and all Academy Councillors will be fully aware of the statutory guidance for care-experienced children.

The Head Teacher and nominated Academy Councillor will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all care-experienced children make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff have relevant skills, knowledge and understanding.

Regular communication between the Head Teacher and Academy Council and the Designated Teacher should include:

- The number of care-experienced children on roll

- Compliance and quality of individual children's Personal Education Plan (for Children in Care)
- The use and impact of the Pupil Premium Plus grant in raising educational outcomes
- Attendance and exclusion data (in comparison to children who are not care-experienced)
- Progress and attainment data (in comparison to children who are not care-experienced)
- Destinations for care-experienced children that leave a Meridian trust school

### **The Designated Teacher for Children in Care (DT)**

### **The Designated Person for Children previously in Care (DP)**

Each Meridian Trust Designated Teacher and Designated Person will:

- Have a full understanding of relevant statutory guidance and attend relevant training as required
- Have a lead responsibility in promoting and raising the educational achievement of every care-experienced child on the school roll
- Ensure every child in care has a high quality up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) and regularly monitor the progress towards desirable outcomes
- Monitor the effective spend of the pupil premium plus grant to maximise educational outcomes for children in care
- Ensure the social, emotional, mental health and well-being needs of care-experienced children are recognised and prioritised
- Take the lead responsibility for helping all school staff to understand the factors that can affect how care-experienced children learn and achieve, any barriers they might face and the impact of trauma and poor attachments
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals in relation to care-experienced children
- Share confidential and personal information on a need-to-know basis only
- Actively encourage and promote home learning and extra-curricular activities
- Recognise the impact of transition and plan accordingly

### **Meridian Trust School staff**

Our staff will ensure their part in embedding a 'care-experienced children friendly culture' which is attachment aware and trauma-informed. This may include attending training, referring to the Designated Teacher for advice and sharing accurate information and data with the Designated Teacher.

Our staff will hold high expectations of and aspirations for care-experienced children.

## **11 Staff and Academy Councillors' Development and Training**

- Meridian Trust and each Academy Council will ensure that the Designated Teacher and Designated Person are trained for the role when they come to post and will continue to support them to access ongoing professional development pertinent to the role.
- All staff are encouraged to participate in training that will enable them to meet the needs of care-experienced children more effectively and the Designated Teacher will raise awareness of typical issues and barriers for these children at a whole school level

- The Designated Teacher for Children in Care makes particular efforts to develop good awareness and understanding of issues, guidance and developments associated with the CIC context. The Designated Person for CIC 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 CIC 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 CIC will attend appropriate briefings and relevant development opportunities provided by the Local Authority and the Virtual School.

## **12 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 CIC. 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:

## **13 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.

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