



## School Policy for the Inclusive Education of Children We Care For and Previously Cared For Children

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Queensway School is committed to providing a high-quality education for all our pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. We recognise that children we care for are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. We also know that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential care, foster care, kinship care and those who have previously been in care compared with their peers. For example, they may experience a high level of disruption and changeable school placements, reduced opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities, and inconsistent or no attention paid to homework. This may result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population, and underachievement in further and higher education. These issues may also affect adopted young people.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. To date the outcomes achieved by children we care for have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting through:

- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Promoting early years experiences
- Celebrating success

Children we care for may (or may not) have some or all of the following needs and difficulties:

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

We are determined to ensure that our children we care for experience respect, kindness and resilience in every aspect of their school journey, in line with our school values and our commitment to promoting pupils' personal development alongside academic achievement.

## 1.1 Definitions

A child is 'a child we care for' in Oxfordshire if they are:

- Provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (Children Act 1989, Sections 20 and 21)
- Subject to a care order (Children Act 1989, Part IV)
- Subject to a placement order

A child stops being a child we care for when they are adopted, return home or turn 18 years of age; they are considered to be a previously cared for child. However, Local Authorities in the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21 years of age. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

## 2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Advocacy

All our staff are aware that being or becoming 'cared for' has a major impact on children's lives and when considering children's learning and / or behaviour, due consideration will be given. The Designated Teacher and staff working with and supporting children we care for, understand and are enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher. All staff actively model respect and kindness in all their interactions with children in our community and support them to build resilience through consistent encouragement and high expectations.

All staff and the Governing Body are aware of the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance: Duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children we care for. There is a nominated Governor to monitor the work of the school in supporting its children we care for and previously cared for children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

### 2.2 Documentation and Monitoring of Progress

- We contribute to the process whereby all children we care for have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting at our school or becoming cared for. This is completed via an electronic system and it includes SMART educational targets linked to the child's Care Plan and any other documentation resulting from assessments (e.g. an Education, Health and Care Plan).
- PEP targets should reflect the outcomes desired to reach individual goals. Targets will be aspirational and have academic rigour. They will determine the need for pupil premium plus funding for the child or young person.
- The child's views will be captured and are documented on the PEP. We will ensure that PEPs also reflect the child's social and emotional development, including resilience-building strategies, and that their voice is heard respectfully and acted upon.
- The child may attend PEP meetings (where appropriate). If attending, they will have a 'pre-meeting' to talk through who will be there and what to expect. They will be supported to share any concerns and anxieties.
- Any educational recommendations detailed in a PEP will be shared with relevant stakeholders, upholding confidentiality.

- We will assess each child's attainment either on entry to our school or on becoming a child we care for to ensure continuity of learning. These baselines are recorded in the PEP.
- We will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. Where a child is underachieving and / or there are significant concerns, we will discuss this with the allocated Virtual School and an early PEP review may be called.
- The Designated Teacher will know all the cared for children and previously cared for in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and Social Worker. The school will flag children we care for status appropriately (e.g. via our electronic systems, so that information is readily available as required).

### **2.3 Joined up (multi-agency) working**

The Designated Teacher or a school-based representative will attend all review meetings held for the child where appropriate / possible. We will also provide information reports as needed. We will ensure that multi-agency working is conducted with professionalism and sensitivity to family circumstances, with a clear focus on the child's development and wellbeing, and with robust systems in place to evidence impact and accountability in line with statutory requirements.

We will forward documents to link professionals / agencies for the child when requested and, in a timely manner. The allocated Virtual School will assist and will ensure any additional information is also forwarded.

We will take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our children we care for. We will liaise closely and professionally with other agencies as needed so that each child we care for has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

At Queensway School, we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents / carers and caseworkers to enable children we care for to achieve their full potential. We will ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

### **2.4 Training (including continuing professional development)**

Staff will attend training provided by the Local Authority and Virtual School regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the education of children we care for. Training will be responsive to pupil needs and will equip staff with strategies that enable them to provide effective, inclusive support and ensure all children can access learning and thrive. The Headteacher and Designated Teacher are responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

### **2.5 Governance**

We have nominated a governor with responsibility for children we care for. The Head Teacher ensures that the Designated Teacher reports at least once a year to governors on the training they have received and the safety of children we care for.

Our governors have good knowledge of the impact of the pupil premium for children we care for and question / challenge accordingly. The nominated governor attends training where appropriate to support understanding of children we care for and other vulnerable groups.

## **2.6 Admissions**

Our nominated Governor ensures that our admission criteria and processes do not discriminate against children we care for. They also ensure that the school's policies and procedures give children we care for equal access to the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Due to placement care changes, children we care for may enter school mid-term. We understand how vital it is to give them a positive welcome. It may be necessary to offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help with their transition and to develop a sense of belonging, stability and safety. Transitions will be designed to provide stability and continuity, ensuring that every child experiences a sense of safety, belonging and value.

## **2.7 Inclusion**

This policy recognises that all pupils at Queensway School are entitled to a balanced and broad curriculum. The policy also reinforces the need for teaching and learning support that is fully inclusive. We will ensure that inclusion is not only about access to learning but also about fostering respect, kindness and resilience across the school community, reflecting our commitment to pupils' personal development.

The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all children we care for and previously cared for children. We encourage each child we care for to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.

If we need to review whether a child is still appropriately placed in our school, we will seek advice from the Local Authority (e.g. through our link SEN Officer) to discuss appropriate alternative arrangements. We will involve the child, the social worker, the carer and, where appropriate, the parent/s at all stages of decision-making. We will consider all alternatives to expulsion, recognising that for a child we care for, this has broad implications.

## **3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **3.1 The Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The management of all aspects of the School's work, including provision for children we care for
- Keeping the Governing Body informed about all issues relating to children we care for in the School
- Working closely with the Designated Teacher, for example with regard to liaising with support services and other professionals
- The deployment of all personnel within the School to support children we care for
- Suspension or expulsion decisions in line with the School's exclusion policy, and relevant local authority and national guidance, being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement

The Head Teacher also has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Governing Body about the implementation of this policy and the effect of inclusion programmes within the school as a whole.

### 3.2 The Governing Body

In addition to duties outlined in sections 2.5-2.7 above, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for children we care for
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for children we care for
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for children we care for who links with the Designated Teacher
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and any other staff as required to ensure the needs of children we care for are met
- Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for children we care for

### 3.3 The Designated Teacher

At Queensway School, the Designated Teacher is the Inclusion Manager.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for Children We Care For within school
- In conjunction with the Pupil Premium Co-ordinator, ensure pupil premium plus funding is used effectively to enable children we care for to make progress in learning, as well as socially and emotionally
- Be familiar with the statutory guidance on the role of the Designated Teacher
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for children we care for on both the children and the rest of the school community
- Know all the children we care for in school, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- Attend relevant training about children we care for
- Link effectively with other agencies and carers in relation to children we care for, seeking advice from the children we care for team when appropriate
- Ensure that children we care for receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- Ensure that all children we care have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care (see guidance on PEPs), the child contributes to this, and it is reviewed at 6 monthly intervals
- Ensure that all data on children we care for is made available for meetings as required
- Ensure confidentiality, sharing information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to children we care for
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for children we care for
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information and records, when a child we care for transfers to another educational placement
- Report to the Governing Body on children we care for in the school, to inform school policy and practice development. Attend governor meetings as appropriate
- In conjunction with the Home School Community Link Worker, review and instigate opportunities for additional support if needed, e.g. through nurture provision, (in or out of class), counselling and therapy-based support

- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN, and there is affective provision where English is an additional language and / or there are medical needs.

### **3.4 All staff**

All staff will:

- Follow school procedures
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about the progress of a child we care for
- Have high aspirations regarding the educational and wider personal achievements of children we care for
- Positively promote the raising of self-esteem of a child we care for
- Ensure any child we care for is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- Be familiar with this policy and guidance on children we care for, and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- Liaise in a timely manner with the Designated Teacher where a child we care for is experiencing difficulties
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other link professionals, and keep carers fully informed at all times
- Keep accurate records as necessary, and make these available to other professionals, parents, carers, and / or the pupil as appropriate

### **3.5 The Virtual School**

The Virtual School is not a building but a group of professionals who work closely with the child's school, social worker and carer to support their education. Initially their role is to secure a suitable school placement for a child that meets their educational and pastoral needs. The Virtual School also helps to ensure every CWCF has access to wider enrichment activities that develop their interests, strengths and skills. They monitor attendance, attainment and achievement at school, ensuring that education remains central to care planning and both academic progress and personal development are consistently promoted and evidenced.

Since 2021-22, the Virtual School has had an additional extended non-statutory duty to promote the education of children subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan, aged from 0 up to 18 in educational settings and those who have previously had a Social Worker. This includes children who are disabled and have, or have had, an allocated Social Worker, but who are not in care.

CWCF receive additional funding to support the targets or outcomes set out in their PEPs. This is called Pupil Premium Plus and is administered by the Headteacher of the Virtual School.

## **4.0 RELATED SCHOOL INFORMATION AND POLICIES:**

- Accessibility Policy and Plan
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy
- Equality Policy
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) information and Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

- Positive Handling Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Report and Policy
- Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition Policy

**5.0 USEFUL WEB LINKS:**

Oxfordshire Virtual School

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/virtual-school-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-0-25>

Carer Leavers Local Offer

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/childrens-services/local-offer-care-leavers>

**6.0 REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years – or sooner if legislation, guidance and/or context changes – by the Head Teacher and the Quality of Education Committee.

Chair of Committee ..... Date .....

Head Teacher ..... Date .....