

THE APOLLO EDUCATION PROJECT

The Apollo Education Project Policy: Looked After Children

Policies at The Apollo Education Project are written in accordance with the five outcomes contained within Every Child Matters:

- Being healthy.
- Staying safe.
- Enjoying and achieving.
- Making a positive contribution.
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

Name of Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Dr Mick Clarke

1. Context

The 1989 Children Act introduced the concept of Corporate Parenting – central to supporting and improving the education of children in public care.

“Corporate Parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of local authorities to achieve good parenting – the whole authority includes the Education Department as well as Social Services and schools also have a key role to play”.

In January 1999, Circular 10/99 identified children in public care as a group at particular risk. In 1999 and 2000 OFSTED inspected a variety of local education authorities following which ‘OFSTED - Raising Achievement of Children in Public Care 1999 – 2000’ was published.

“Children in public care are our children – we hold their future in our hands and education is the key to that future”.

Jacqui Smith, the then Health Minister stated:

“Education protects because in addition to acquiring skills and qualifications, day-to-day schooling provides the chance to build and sustain friendships with peers and adults: to develop positive self-esteem: to receive praise and encouragement and to acquire skills and interests”.

Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care contained five directives for local councils, two of which directly refer to schools:

- provide all children with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of entering care or joining a new school;
- appoint a Designated Teacher in schools to act as a resource and advocate for looked after children; liaise with Social Services and other key partners on behalf of children.

2. Definition of Looked After Pupils

Following the Children Act 1989 there were changes in terminology. The term 'in care' refers solely to children who are subject to care orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'Looked After' by the local authority. However, Children in Public Care and Looked After Children are often used to mean the same thing.

Care Order – Section 30 Children Act 1989 If a child is on a full care order this means that the parental responsibility for that child/young person is shared by parents and Social Services.

Accommodated – Section 21 children Act 1989 If a child/young person is accommodated this means that the parental responsibility for that child remains with the parents.

However, whether a child/young person is subject to Section 30 or Section 21 does not affect where that child lives whilst being looked after by the local authority. This can be with:

- foster carers
- in the residential network
- in a residential school
- with kinship carers.

If a child/young person is in receipt of respite care which exceeds 20 days in one episode or is over 120 days in a year, that child is also considered to be an accommodated, looked after child.

3. Objectives

- to promote the educational achievement of looked after children in the Apollo Education Project
- to promote the educational attainment of looked after children in the Apollo Education Project
- to promote the welfare of looked after children in the Apollo Education Project.

4. The Designated Teacher in the Apollo Education Project:

- familiarises staff of their role as corporate parents
- raises corporate parenting issues with appropriate staff from the Education Department and/or Social Services Departments
- ensures that all staff (teaching and non-teaching) are aware of the difficulties faced by Looked After children
- promotes positive support systems for Looked After children
- maintains a register of Looked After Children
- keeps all relevant education and care information about Looked After children up to date
- ensures education records are received/passed on if a Looked After child transfers school
- ensures Project procedures for welcoming pupils new to the Project are followed when a Looked After child joins the Project, particularly as a mid-year admission

- provides information about websites/resources for Looked After children
- promotes the involvement of Looked After children in extra-curricular activities both during and after the school day
- informs members of staff of the general needs, including educational needs, of Looked After children
- monitors the educational progress, levels of attainment of Looked After children
- intervenes if there is evidence of individual under-achievement
- ensures Connexions are involved with Looked After children in Years 10 & 11

Works with individual Looked After Children:

- to facilitate the child/young person being able to state to whom he/she would like information about his/her care status to be passed on
- to ensure that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained for the child/young person
- to enable the child/young person to make a contribution to his/her Personal Education Plan and/or Care Plans
- to assist the child/young person in identifying an appropriate member of staff in whom they can confide, or who he/she is happy to act as an advocate on his/her behalf, or who attends Social Services' Care Planning and/or Review meetings

Undertakes Liaison/Communication

- to facilitate the setting up and updating of Personal Education Plans
- to attend, or arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways, to Social Services Department Care Planning Meetings and/or statutory reviews
- to monitor attendance of Looked After Children, recording and reporting absence of 10 days or over to the Education Welfare Service
- to facilitate combined Social Services Department Statutory reviews and annual reviews of statements of SEN
- to be the named contact for colleagues in Education and Social Services Departments
- to report to the Education Department on the progress, achievements and levels of attainment of Looked After Children

Undertakes Training

- to develop knowledge of Social Services and Education Department procedures by attending training events
- to disseminate information to Project staff as appropriate

5. The Designated Governor for Looked After Children

The government, in its Quality Protects initiative, recognises the need for children who are in Local Authority Care to have the same support as other children get from their parents. Different people in Social Services, Education and Schools offer this support in different parts of children's lives and it is important they act together as corporate Parents. Social Services and Education Committees have considered how best this support could be achieved. The designated Director acts as a champion for children in Local Authority care, promoting their attainments and their interests if they are at risk of exclusion.

Children in care stay for very short to very long periods and come into care because of a wide range of family difficulties. They are involved with a wide range of people: other children and young people, social workers, foster or residential carers and, in school, a designated teacher. With such a complicated life the number of new people who are directly involved with them is kept to a minimum. Therefore the role of the Director who acts as a champion, is to ensure that the policy and practice in the Project supports children in Local Authority care, rather than in direct involvement with the children themselves.

The questions our Director should be asking are:

- Who knows which children in the Project are looked after? Who should know? What is done with information about looked after pupils?
- How are looked after pupils consulted about what they want other pupils and teachers to know about them and why they are in care?
- Who in Project has an over-view of their educational needs and progress?
- Who is responsible for liaising with Social Services and ensuring that the Project has relevant information about the child's care history?
- How do the Project's policies and ways of working ensure that looked after pupils will be given the same opportunities and encouragement as other pupils?
- What training do the Project's staff need to help them understand and meet the needs of children in care?
- How do test scores, attendance, exclusion rates etc, for children in care, as a discrete group, compare with those of other pupils?
- Who will draw up an educational plan for the child when he/she enters the Project, and monitor progress?
- How does the Project communicate with foster families and residential children's units?

The designated Director should monitor policy and practice in The Project to ensure that:

- There is a designated teacher for children in Bedfordshire's Care
- Children in care have equal access to all aspects of school life, including the National Curriculum, examinations, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience and additional educational support
- There is an ethos of support and acceptance in the Project for children who do not live with their birth families
- Targets for children in care are realistic but aspirations for these pupils shall be high
- Where the child/young person is at risk of exclusion, or excluded, they shall be treated in the same way and offered the same support as any other pupil.

6. The Responsibilities of All Staff / the Whole Project

- be aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibility
- provide an ethos of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes
- ensure appropriately high expectations of Looked After Children
- consult and involve children in the decisions taken about themselves if deemed age-appropriate
- be aware that, for many Looked After Children, bullying is an issue; ensure that the school's anti-bullying policy operates
- consider how extra academic and pastoral support can be provided for Looked After Children if it is needed

- ensure that Looked After Children have every opportunity to participate fully in the national curriculum, examinations, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience and additional educational support
- ensure there is sensitivity to the background of Looked After Children in teaching, especially in work on families and/or family trees
- respect the confidentiality of Looked After Children and ensure that any information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis
- ensure that behaviour management policies recognise and make suitable provision for the needs and difficulties of Looked After Children
- take appropriate action as soon as there may be any problems with behaviour or attendance
- involve appropriate carers/parents in home/school arrangements ensure that any Looked After children who may have learning difficulties are appropriately supported/assessed/resourced

To be reviewed: September 2016