# Children in Care Policy
# St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School

Date of Review: 12 July 2017
Reviewed annually

**Overall aims**
We at St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School (St Bonaventure's) will do for children in care what we do for all our children. We aim to ensure that children in care excel, as we aim for all our children to excel: *Striving to be the best we can, guided by the light of Christ.* We aim to overcome any barriers they may have to learning and enable them to leave us happy and secure in themselves, understanding that they do have control over their destiny and that education does matter. We will listen to what children in care tell us about what they want from their education and try to address any concerns or issues raised through various means including The HOPE (Bristol's Virtual School for children in care), Student Council and surveys.

Primary Schools should be a safe place for all children, but it is essential that they are a haven for children in care. St Bonaventure's strives to ensure continuity and 'normality' for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption. A place where they can learn, be themselves and make friends.

**Definitions**
The terms Looked After Child (LAC) and Children in Care (CiC) are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy we are using the term CiC. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They include the following:

(i) children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
(ii) children who are the subject of a care order or interim care order;
(iii) children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child;
(iv) children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement.

A child in care may be in residential care, a foster placement or could be living with their parents. If living with their parents, this could be on a part time basis or possibly before returning home permanently after a care placement.

**Legal Framework**
From 1 September 2009 the governing bodies of all maintained schools are required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) to appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children in care who are on the school roll. This policy follows the statutory guidance for school governing bodies outlined in "The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children" 2009.

**Objectives**
St Bonaventure's will support children in care by:

- Doing the things we do for all our children;
- Ensuring an effective induction when joining the school or when coming into care whilst already on the school roll;
- Balancing high levels of support with challenge and high expectations;
- Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility;
- Working alongside social workers and other professionals to ensure that each child has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging targets and is an effective tool to help us do everything possible to support the young person's educational progress;
- Linking each child to a key person they relate well to;
- Making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships;
- Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities, the HOPE Virtual School Head and specialist agencies;
- Encouraging and supporting CiC to take responsibility for their learning;
- Engaging CiC children in learning outside the classroom and after-school activities;
- Intervening promptly if a problem emerges such as with behaviour or attendance;
- Giving integrated but low profile support in school for each child in care so that they are not made to feel different from other children;
- Planning for future transitions effectively e.g. to secondary school;
- Closely monitoring the academic, social and personal progress of all CiC;
- Prioritising all CiC children for additional tuition and support as provided by the Department of Education;
- Ensuring that the pupil premium money is used to provide additional, personalised support to improve outcomes for CiC;
- Challenging negative stereotypes;
- Ensuring discretion when addressing a child's care status and the background and family history of CiC, especially surrounding teaching and learning relating to the family; and
- Ensuring a clear protocol is followed in the sharing of information, both within school and with outside agencies.

**Roles and responsibilities – see Appendix 1 for full details**
The designated teacher at St Bonavenure's is Stephanie Woolley. The Governor with special responsibility for CiC at St Bonaventure's is Sarah Paul.

**Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**
All CiC must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority which looks after them. The care plan must include a Personal Education plan (PEP), which forms part of the child's official school record. Where they are used effectively, PEPs improve the educational experience of the child by helping everyone gain a clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the child's education needs and how that will be provided. The school and the Local Authority have a shared responsibility for making sure that the PEP is a useful document and for helping children in care to achieve and enjoy. Discussion about how together they can make that happen through the content, implementation and review of the PEP should be done through a meeting involving the young person, carers, the social worker, a teacher and others such as, where appropriate, staff from the HOPE Virtual School for CiC. If the young person has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health and Care Plan this should be reviewed in line with school requirements and should, where possible, tie in with the PEP. Full guidance on PEP meetings and how to use the PEP is provided on the CiC education webpages.

The Local Authority will:

- Notify the school's designated teacher if a child on the school's roll becomes a child in care and ensure that they receive the PEP paperwork, which should already include any information, which the school will need to know.

The Social Worker will:

- Initiate the PEP as part of the wider care plan. A new PEP will be needed at least two weeks before each Local Authority review and whenever there is a change of circumstances, for example, change of school or placement or where there are concerns arising in school;
- Arrange the meeting and ensure that all the relevant people are invited:
- Bring the previous PEP and a PEP form to the meeting with relevant sections completed.

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure all CiC have a current PEP which sets high quality expectations of rapid progress and put in place additional support, which the child needs in order to succeed;
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's PEP within school in partnership with others where necessary;
- Ensure each child eligible for Personal Educational Allowance (PEA) has this discussed at the PEP meeting and an application is made once a year:
- Ensure arrangements are in place for the speedy transfer of a child's PEP if they change schools;
- Attend PEP meetings prepared with relevant sections of the PEP completed and attendance and current attainment information for the child;
- Agree who will chair the PEP meetings and who will take notes:
- Circulate completed forms and appendices after the PEP meeting.

The be an effective tool the PEP should set long and short term educational attainment targets, agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate. It will identify the developmental and educational needs of the child. It will be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in wider activities and it will provide information which helps all those involved in supporting the child know what does and does not work for them. It will provide accountability and be a record of planned actions; identifying who is responsible for carrying out each of these actions. It will consider the child's strengths and weaknesses, their interests, both in and out of school and their developmental, educational and pastoral needs. It will consider their aspirations, their future plans and how these can be supported as well as any issues arising for the child.

**One to one tuition**

All children in care are entitled to one to one tuition in English and/or maths as part of the government scheme even if they appear to be reaching expected levels. St Bonaventure's is committed to prioritising all children in care for one to one tuition.

**Pupil Premium**

All CiC children who are of compulsory school age are entitled to pupil premium money in order to help improve their outcomes. St Bonaventure's is committed to using this funding to ensure accelerated progress in order to improve outcomes. St Bonaventure's is responsible for reporting on how the money has been spent and the impact. The appropriate use of allocated funding is to be assessed through the PEP. The HOPE Virtual School for CiC expects 80% of the LAC Pupil Premium money to be spent on improving outcomes in English and/or Maths.

**Personal Education Allowance (PEA)**

All children in care who are of compulsory school age and at risk of not making expected national levels are entitled to a Personal Education Allowance of up to £500 a year to help improve their outcomes. These allowances are to provide additional, personalised support, and are accessed through the Personal Education Plan meeting. St Bonaventure's is committed to ensuring

effective use of PEAs where available for all children in care on roll.

**Admission/Induction Arrangements**
CiC are a priority for admission and, as such, St Bonaventure's will follow the statutory guidance on school admissions. On admission to the school or to care, carers will be given an introductory booklet about the school's expectations and processes and the child will meet with the designated teacher for CiC. The designated teacher will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel supported in our school. Consideration will be given to giving the child a peer mentor. On admission, records will be requested from the child's previous school. As soon as practicable after the records are received, a meeting will be held with the carer/parent, social worker, other relevant professionals and the child, as appropriate, to put together a new Personal Education Plan. This early meeting will ensure that communication systems are established early. If records are not received promptly we will undertake our own assessment to make sure that the teaching and support received are appropriate. We will endeavour to meet the statutory time scales for PEPs as outlined in guidance.

When children already on the school roll enter care the school will ensure that the child meets with the designated teacher as soon as possible and is fully informed of the school procedures and additional support arrangements available. A meeting with other parties will be arranged and a PEP prepared as soon as possible in the same way as for those children already in care admitted to school.

At the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances).

Many CiC do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However we recognise that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

**School Trips and Special Activities**
We aim to ensure that CiC enjoy as many extra curricular opportunities as possible by reserving placements for them on trips or enrichment activities which they are eligible for and allowing sufficient time to gain the necessary consent. The responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities is that of the social worker, although they often delegate this to foster carers. The person who may give permission will be clarified at the first PEP meeting. If in doubt we will always send consent forms to the social worker.

Given the delays that CiC experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that children in care enjoy the same extra curricular opportunities as other children by reserving places for them on trips or on activities.

**Complaints**
If a young person, parent/carer or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation alongside the carer and the social worker.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days, unless the formal complaint is about the conduct of the Head teacher, in which case the complaint will go straight to the chair of governors.

Any issues that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head teacher's response.

Pupils who wish to make a formal complaint against the school or about their care will be advised of the support available for children in care through Reconstruct and encouraged to look at the page on the Bristol's children in care RVoice website.

**Leaving Arrangements**

When a child in care leaves the school we will find ways to say goodbye. We will also ensure the swift transfer of information to the next school.

**Appendix 1 - Roles and Responsibilities**

*The Role of the Governing Body:*

- Ensure the appointment of a designated teacher and named governor in accordance with published regulations;
- Ensure that the school has a coherent policy in place for CiC;
- Ensure that the designated teacher and the named governor undertake appropriate training;
- Ensure that the designated teacher is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Governors will consider an annual report from the designated teacher covering attainment, attendance, progress, Personal Education Plans, CiC with Special Educational Needs or who are gifted and talented, impact on school development plans and how the school supports the work of The HOPE (Bristol's virtual school for children in care).
- The governing body, Head teacher and school leadership team will act on any issues raised in the report and will ensure that:
    - The school has a clear overview of the educational needs and progress of CiC on roll;
    - The school's policies are effective in reflecting the needs of CiC;

Resources are allocated to support the designated teacher to carry out this role effectively for the benefit of CiC;

*The role of the Head teacher:*

- to ensure that, in partnership with the Governing body, the designated teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of children in care;
- to make sure that the designated teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting children in care to achieve;
- in partnership with the Governing body, monitor the effectiveness of the role of the designated teacher;
- oversee the development of the policy on children in care;
- evaluate the standards and achievement of CiC and report these to the governing body and discuss them at HOPE and MECP meetings and where necessary report them to and discuss them with any other local authority which is responsible for the CiC;
- ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to attend training courses etc that help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to support children in care.

*The role of the designated teacher within the school*:

The designated teacher has lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how CiC learn and achieve. The designated teacher will:

- promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how CiC learn;
- promote the educational achievement of every child in care on the school's roll;
- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put children in care at a disadvantage;
- make sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures in place to support children in care's learning;
- make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets;
- be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Assessment for Learning (AfL);
- make sure that CiC are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home;
- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within the school;
- set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children in care and establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;

- act as the named contact for colleagues in social care and health and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how children in care learn and achieve;
- Ensure that the school file for CiC holds all the essential information, a template for which can be found **in the Headteachers Office**;
- Arrange for a mentor or peer mentor for each child in care on the roll of the school;
- Have due regard for the 'Expectations' document produced by The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care.

*The role of all those involved in supporting children in care:*

- ensure that all children in care are made to feel welcome and included;
- have high expectations of children in care's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a child in care's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children;
- understand how important it is to see children in care as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child in care's status;
- understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

## Appendix 2 - Sources of guidance and support

### National policy/statutory guidance

- Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools - DCSF 2009
- The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children - DCSF 2009
- Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children: statutory guidance for local authorities – DfE 2014
- Department for Education website
- Pupil Premium information

**Bristol policies and guidance –** all available at https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/guidance-policies-and-procedures unless otherwise shown

- Admissions protocol and operational process
- Attendance plan for CiC example
- Exclusion Procedural Guidance
- Induction and leaving processes for children in care (CiC)
- Model confidential school file for CiC - Some schools requested a template of what a school's file for a CiC should contain. Several designated teachers contributed to this model document
- Model policy for CiC for primary schools - This is intended to be a template for primary schools to adapt according to their own circumstances
- Monitoring and Tracking Pupil Progress - This document shows the processes that are in place in addition to what schools do
- Personal Education Plan Guidance
  - Glossary for PEP guidance
  - Free resources for CiC
- Process for agreeing part time timetable
- Process for new children in care/CiC moving
- Pupil Premium policy
- When a child comes into care Guidance for schools on social care processes when a child comes into local authority care
- Children in care education website

### St Bonaventure's school policies

- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-bullying Policy;
- Confidentiality Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Equality Policy;
- Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship Policy (PSHE&C);
- Teaching and Learning Policy.