STEEL RIVER
ACADEMY TRUST

CIOC

(Children in Our Care)

Review Date	Sept 2026
Review Frequency	Annually
Date for Next Review	Sept 2027
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SCHOOL POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE AND PREVIOUSLY IN CARE

Purpose

To promote the educational attainment, achievement, progression and welfare of Children In Our Care whether they attend a Redcar and Cleveland school or an Out-of-Authority school and for all Looked After Children in the care of other local authorities who attend Redcar and Cleveland schools. The local authority has a statutory role to play for all children in its care and acts as a Corporate Parent.

In light of the extension of the role of Designated Teachers and The Virtual School Head this policy will also make reference to previously looked after children who are adopted, have a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order (previously residence order).

Rationale

Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of looked after children have suffered a disrupted childhood and experienced adverse experiences. It is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational under-achievement when compared to their peers. Looked after children often achieve poor exam success rates in comparison to the general population. Fewer looked after children progress to Higher Education or follow progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being. Experimental data from the DfE suggests that previously looked after children are also not achieving in line with their peers.

Our Aims to Support the Education of Children In Our Care:

- To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a genuine belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
- To support our Children In Our Care and give them access to every opportunity to achieve their potential and to enjoy their learning.
- To narrow the achievement gap and bring the educational attainments of our Looked After learners in line with those of their peers.

Steel River Academy Trust's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Children In Our Care is based on the following key principles:

- prioritising education;
- promoting attendance;
- targeting support;
- having high expectations and aspirations;
- promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes;
- achieving stability and continuity;
- early intervention and priority action;
- listening to children;
- reducing exclusions and promoting stability;

- working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals;
- "doing what we do for all children – but more so".

Legal Framework

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is 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. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (Sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)
- 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 are cared for on a voluntary basis are "accommodated" by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children's Home or in a residential school.

The term "in care" refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 – they may live with foster carers, in a Children's Home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision.

For all children who receive more than 75 days of 'short breaks' in every 12 months LAC status applies and an Independent Reviewing Officer is appointed. As the care arranged is not continuous academic attainment does not have to be reported in the same way to the DfE. A Personal Education Plan is not required for these children and they do not qualify for pupil premium plus, however schools will attend a child's Looked After Review and provide a report in relation to their education.

Nationally all these groups are said to be "Looked After Children" (LAC). In Redcar and Cleveland we know these children as Children In Our Care (CIOC). They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

For the purpose of this policy, previously looked after children include those:

- that were adopted from care
- that left care under a Special Guardianship Order

- that left care under a Residence Order on or after 14 October 1991 (under the Children Act 1989);
- that left care through a Child Arrangement Order
- that were adopted from abroad but were in state or church care in their country of origin

a) The Name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children is:

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b) **The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children**

Within School:

- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and that staff understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them;

- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.;

- To act as an advocate for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children;

- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals and the Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School;

- To hold a supervisory brief for all Looked After Children, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up-to-date. It is important to be aware that some children in care do not want all adults or peers to know about their accommodation or care status;

- To monitor the educational progress, attainment and attendance of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

- To intervene if there is evidence of individual under-achievement, absence from school or internal truancy;

- To celebrate the success of all Looked After Children.

Work with Individual Looked After Children

- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their care plan;

- To help ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's social worker from the Authority responsible for them). The PEP sets out appropriate targets and support available;

- To consult with the child or young person and ensure they have an appropriate adult who will attend school events e.g. parents' evenings; sports; drama events to provide support and encouragement.

Work with Individual Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

- Ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus is targeted at improving attainment and achievements.

Previously Looked After Children and Pupil Premium Plus

- Ensure that the parents and guardians of previously looked after children are aware of the Pupil Premium Plus and how they can enable the school to apply for it. This means either a letter needs to go out to all parents or information is collected on admissions data collection forms. Parents / guardians will need to provide documentary evidence (such as the legal order) to prove the pupil was previously in care. The pupil is then recorded on the January Census each year.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Many Children in Our Care and Previously Looked After Children have experienced trauma, loss, separation, neglect or abuse.

Staff will adopt a trauma-informed approach by:

- building positive, trusted relationships;
- providing emotionally available adults;

- understanding behaviour as communication;
- using restorative approaches where appropriate;
- promoting emotional regulation and resilience;
- avoiding unnecessary sanctions where difficulties are linked to trauma experiences.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The school recognises that Children In Our Care and Previously Looked After Children may have increased emotional and mental health needs.

The school will:

- monitor wellbeing carefully;
- provide access to pastoral support;
- engage with health professionals where necessary;
- take account of emotional wellbeing within PEP discussions;
- support access to specialist services when required.

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

The school recognises that Children In Our Care are particularly vulnerable to suspension and exclusion.

Every effort will be made to avoid suspension through:

- early intervention;
- graduated support;
- restorative approaches;
- behaviour support plans;
- involvement of the Virtual School.

The Designated Teacher and the Virtual School will be informed of any suspension at the earliest opportunity.

Liaison with other Partners

- To liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensuring all looked after and previously looked after children in school are safeguarded;

- To help an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) co-ordinate education and Looked After Children review meetings, so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan;

- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Looked After Children at care planning meetings and PEP meetings;

- To be the named contact for colleagues in the Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School and other local authorities as appropriate;

- To ensure the speedy transfer of information and school records between agencies and other schools;

- To ensure the school admits Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in line with the Admissions Code of Practice; schools should admit all looked after children separate to 'In Year Fair Access Protocols'.

- To ensure that the Head Teacher considers a range of strategies before exclusion for a looked after child, which should be a last resort. This includes contacting the Head of The Virtual School and securing First Day Response provision.

Training

- To develop a knowledge of Vulnerable Children / Education Inclusion procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority and other providers;

- To attend training for Designated Teachers as appropriate;

- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

Responsibility of our Head Teacher:

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Children In Our Care (under Regulations 2009, the Designated Teacher must be a qualified teacher, or Head Teacher or Acting Head Teacher of the school). Ideally the Designated Teacher should be a member of the school leadership team and "of sufficient seniority to make things happen….".; **The Designated Teacher is:**

- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of Children In Our Care and take action where progress, attendance and behaviour is below expectations;
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibilities of all our school staff:

- Value the education of Children In Our Care and have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievements.
- Maintain confidentiality and appreciate sensitivity about who needs to know of their Looked After status.
- Respond positively when a Children In Our Care requests them to be their named person to talk to when they need support.
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, and the potential impact this can have on their learning and ability to make and maintain trusting relationships.
- Understand the reasons that may be behind a Child In Our Care's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children.
- Appreciate the central importance of the child's Personal Education Plan in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and the child, him/herself.
- Have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, Manager for the Education of Children In Our Care, and carers in supporting the child's education in partnership with school.

c) **The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children**:

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d) **The role of that Governor:**

- The named governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis (unless it will be easy to identify individual children whereby work on behalf of all vulnerable groups may be more appropriate):

Governors should specifically monitor:

- spending of Pupil Premium Plus;
- impact on progress and attainment;

- participation in wider school life;
- attendance;
- exclusions/suspensions.

- The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that looked-after and previously looked after pupils have equal access to:

  - The national curriculum (if appropriate);
  - Public examinations (if appropriate);
  - Careers guidance;
  - Additional educational support;
  - Extra-curricular activities;
  - Work experience

e) **Responsibility for Looked After Children in School**

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

It is appropriate for Learning Support Assistants to have knowledge that the young person is being looked-after only when they are directly involved in the teaching of the young person or the direct supervision of them during breaks and lunch times.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

f) **Admission Arrangements for Looked After Children**

Admissions authorities of all mainstream schools must give the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria to looked-after and previously looked-after children, as defined in the School Admission Code. Due to care placement changes CIOC may enter school mid-term. It is vital that as a school we ensure that they are given a positive welcome in order that they feel secure. If necessary we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help a new pupil settle.

On admission, records (including the PEP) will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/social worker. A date will be agreed for a new Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of a new looked after children being admitted. An appropriate school admissions meeting will take place. In some cases it may be helpful to provide a mentor from within or external to the school community to support transition.

g) **Involving the Young Person**

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. It is good practice to consult and share with a young person appropriate records that are held by school and the local authority. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the social worker, and their carer(s) are working together to help them achieve in school.

h) **Communication with Other Agencies (Looked After)**

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year reports) should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the Foster Carer or Residential Social Worker. It should be agreed at the PEP meeting what information parents will receive, this needs to be in line with the legal framework. A Social Worker will be able to advise on correspondence with parents and approaches to normalise consent for routine school activities.

i) **Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures for Looked After Pupils**

Each looked-after pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a coordinated document that involves collaboration between the school and social worker. The Designated teacher will take responsibility for the educational plan. This will identify, success, specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The PEP developed by Redcar and Cleveland is age group specific. Areas for consideration will include:

- Essential pupil information
- Contact and care information
- Education/(Provision)
- SEND
- PEP meeting and attendance log
- Attendance records
- Attainment and progress
- Pupil views
- Parent/Carer views
- Careers planning

- Post 16 planning
- PEP outcomes (SMART targets) and use of pupil premium plus
- School change planning
- Next PEP arrangements

The PEP will be reviewed and updated termly, as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by Children's Social Care. The PEP will be stored on the Welfare Call system and hard copies circulated to relevant parties. School will circulate to carer, social worker will circulate to parents if appropriate

Redcar and Cleveland will:

- Provide a Virtual Head Teacher who has responsibility for championing the education of CIOC and Previously Looked After Children
- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for CIOC
- Ensure that the education for this group of pupils is as good as that provided for every other pupil
- Ensure that CIOC receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- Ensure that every CIOC has a school to go to within 20 school days of coming into care or of coming to Redcar and Cleveland from another authority
- Make sure that each CIOC has a PEP according to national guidance
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible for CIOC
- Be available to provide advice and information for schools and parents / guardians for Previously Looked After Children
- Provide advice and guidance for those CIOC and Care Leavers in Further and Higher Education
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special education needs of CIOC and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs
- Hold events that celebrate the achievement of CIOC
- Consider the views of all CIOC through a variety of strategies including Let's Take Action, Positive Activities and primary and Secondary Hubs

Further information available on The Virtual School Website: http://ntvs.org.uk/

DfE Statutory Guidance:

Statutory Guidance for Designated Teachers for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Statutory Guidance for Local Authority and Virtual School Head

Local Authority contact details for the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are:

Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School

Head of the Virtual School: Joanne Johnson

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Related Documentation:

- Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities – DfE 2018;
- The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children – DfE 2018;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE 2026;
- Policy for the education of Children Looked After by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council – 2015;
- School Admission Code – DfE 2014;
- Other relevant whale Hill Primary School Policies (including Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and Procedures).
- Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker and Children in Kinship Care – DfE (latest version)
- alongside:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (latest DfE version)

Monitoring and Review:

The Head Teacher or Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff members are aware of the school's Policy for the Education of Children In Our Care.

This Policy will be reviewed by the School's Governing Body on an annual basis, and the educational progress of our Children In Our Care will be monitored by the Governing Body at least once a year, assisted by a report provided by our Designated Teacher.