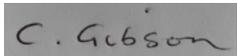




Cared for Children (previously Looked After Children)

Updated: January 2026
Produced by: Mrs T Allen
Headteacher
Ratified by: Board of Trustees
Signed: 
Chair of Trustees
Review Date: January 2027

Purpose

To promote the educational attainment, achievement, progression and welfare of Cared for Children.

Rationale

Cared for Children (CfC) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of Cared for Children have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers, which can result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population with fewer Cared for Children progressing to Higher Education and following progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being.

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 a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of 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).

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.

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.

All these groups are said to be '**Cared for Children**' (CfC). They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

A '**previously Cared for Child**' is no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well 2 An 'eligible' child is a child who is looked-after, aged 16 or 17 and has been looked after by a local being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Introduction

Ryhope Infant School Academy in partnership with the Sunderland Virtual School aims to promote the educational attainment, progression, achievement and welfare of Cared for Children and is committed to providing quality education for all cared for pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes.

This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children.

The Designated Teacher for Cared for and Previously Cared for Children is Mrs T Allen.

The Governor with special responsibility for Cared for and Previously Cared for Children is Mr S Anderson.

The governing body is committed to providing quality education for all cared for pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes.

Ryhope Infant School Academy aim to contribute towards achieving positive outcomes for all children whatever their background or circumstances. We aim to ensure that our students:

- Stay safe
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

As Corporate Parents, Sunderland Virtual School believes in the principles of good parenting by providing opportunities for Cared for Children and young people:

- 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

Aims

The aims of Ryhope Infant School Academy in partnership with the Sunderland Virtual School are to:

1. Provide targeted high-quality learning opportunities, timely and imaginative approaches to learning intervention, and effective personalised support to improve attainment and progression.
2. Collaborate and work in partnership with carers and other agencies to improve attainment and progression of Cared for Children and young people.
3. Listen to and consult with Cared for Children young people, carers and schools to improve services for CfC.
4. Collaborate and work in partnership with other professionals to ensure that Cared for Children and young people gain their educational entitlements and learning opportunities in staying safe, having a healthy lifestyle, enjoying and achieving, positively participating and being given the information, advice and guidance for their future choices and economic well-being.
5. Attend continued professional training and development opportunities for designated teachers and other professionals.
6. Monitor the progress of Cared for Children and young people through data management, high quality recording and reporting procedures, and regular review of PEPs.
7. Work with other professionals (SVS) to develop high quality PEPs that meet the needs of the child.
8. Work closely with relevant data colleagues to ensure the availability of robust data which can be accessed and shared effectively to track the educational progress of Cared for Children.

9. Provide regular information, advice and guidance on educational provision for carers and other professionals and celebrate the achievements and successes of students.
10. Respect and follow safeguarding procedures, confidentiality and sharing information protocols.
11. Support the improvement of the Virtual School in ways that develop the skills and knowledge of each member of the Team.

Admissions Procedures

Ryhope Infant School Academy work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School to promote and endorse the Sunderland City Council Policy for the admission of Cared for Children and young people.

Due to care placement changes, Cared for Children may enter a school mid-term. Ryhope Infant School Academy believes that it is vital that we give each Cared for Child the support for a positive introduction and induction programme, and work with the school to help them settle and be part of their new learning community.

Inclusion

Ryhope Infant School Academy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our Cared for Children Policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. Ryhope Infant School Academy will work in collaboration and partnership with Sunderland Virtual School to make appropriate provision for all looked after pupils.

Allocation of Resources

Sunderland Virtual School will ensure that it allocates resources, support or guidance to ensure appropriate provision for Cared for Children and young people, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Ryhope Infant School Academy will work in partnership with SVS to ensure that Cared for Children and young people receive the full range of support to which they are entitled, to enable them to make progress and achieve.

Monitoring the progress of Cared for Children

The social worker for the Cared for Children initiates a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the pupil joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the child or young person is actively involved. (Where the child is placed in an emergency the PEP should be initiated within 10 working days of their becoming Cared for)

A PEP should be linked to but not duplicate or conflict with information in any other plans. Targets in the plan should be reviewed frequently and at least every 6 months (3 after an initial PEP).

This school assesses each Cared for Child's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning.

Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated person is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP Review meetings and to provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, specialist teacher from Sunderland Virtual School, or other Virtual School where the child is from another Local Authority, Designated Teacher Link School and other agencies.

Record Keeping

The Designated person knows all the Cared for Children in school and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Sunderland Virtual School specialist staff, or other Virtual School specialists

for those Cared for students who are from other Local Authorities, teacher/support worker and social worker. The Designated person works closely with the Designated teacher to ensure plans are bespoke to the particular child and that academic targets are SMART.

The status of Cared for Children is identified within the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

Staff Development

Relevant staff attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support Cared for Children. (Part of Sunderland Virtual School's role is to raise awareness across all schools and disseminate information of issues associated with Cared for Children and young people.)

Partnership with parents/careers and care workers

Ryhope Infant School Academy believes in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable Cared for Children and young people to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being.

Direct correspondence and phone calls to carers, one-to-one meetings with students, teaching and learning sessions, contact with designated teachers and social workers, PEP meetings and multi-agency meetings are opportunities to further this partnership and collaborative working.

Links with external agencies/organisations

Ryhope Infant School Academy recognises the important contribution that external support services make in supporting Cared for Children and young people. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with an individual child who is Cared for:

- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Fostering Officers
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers

CfC Policy Review and Evaluation

We undertake a thorough review of both the Cared for Children Policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Designated Teacher is expected to:

- be an advocate for Cared for Children within school

- be proactive in identifying ways in which the school can raise attainment of Cared for Children
- work in partnership with Sunderland Local Authority providing termly progress data on the progress of Cared for Children
- give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for Cared for Children on both the Cared for Children and the rest of the school community
- know all the Cared for Children in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- attend relevant training about Cared for Children and disseminate information and good practice to other staff
- Influence school policy and practice for Cared for Children
- act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to Cared for Children, seeking advice from the Sunderland Virtual School when appropriate
- ensure that Cared for Children receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid year, and offer additional support wherever possible such as a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- ensure that all Cared for Children have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- arrange and contribute to PEP Review meetings
- keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- monitor the targets set out in the PEP
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a Cared for Children is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal 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 Cared for Children
- 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 extracurricular activities for Cared for Children
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when Cared for Child transfers to another educational placement
- report to the Governing body on Cared for Children in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings and other events
- prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include:
 - the number of Cared for Children on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP
 - their attendance compared to other pupils
 - their attainment (SATs) compared to other pupils
 - the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
 - the destinations of pupils who leave the school
- attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of Cared for Children

- ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN

All School Staff expectations:

- positively promote the raising of a Cared for Child's self esteem
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of Cared for Children
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a Cared for Child's progress
- ensure any Cared for Children is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- follow school procedures
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on Cared for Children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a Cared for Children is experiencing difficulties
- work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School and other agencies to prevent a Cared for Child's behaviour leading to an official suspension/exclusion and only use suspension/exclusions in line with the school's suspension/exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to the Designated Teacher, Sunderland Virtual School for Cared for Children and other professionals/parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required

Head Teacher and School Governing Bodies are expected to:

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises Cared for Children according to the DFE Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Cared for Children
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for Cared for Children
- liaise with the headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of Cared for Children are met
- Identify a governor with special responsibility for Cared for Children
- nominate a governor with responsibility for Cared for Children who links with the Designated Teacher
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher.
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give Cared for Children equal access in respect of:
 - admission to school
 - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
 - out of school learning and extra curricular activities
 - additional educational support
 - work experience and careers guidance.
- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for Cared for Children.

- In the event of a suspension/exclusion, ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the suspension/exclusion meeting of the Cared for Child.

Link Policies for Schools:

- Behaviour for Learning
- Equal Opportunities
- Inclusion
- Safeguarding Children and Young People
- SEN
- Vulnerable Children

As part of Sunderland Local Authority, Sunderland Virtual School is expected to:

Monitor the progress of Cared for Children

The social worker for the Cared for Children initiates a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the pupil joining the school, or of entering care, and ensures that the child or young person is actively involved.

Sunderland Virtual School will liaise with the Designated Teacher and other agencies to ensure support is provided for the student to meet the objectives of the PEP.

Keep Records

Sunderland Virtual School knows all the Cared for Children in a school in Sunderland and where students attend schools in other Local Authorities, and has access to their relevant contact details including Parents, Carers, Headteacher, Designated Teacher, Social Worker and other Virtual Headteachers (where students live outside of Sunderland LA).

Sunderland Virtual School keeps records of:

- Case Notes
- Current PEP dates and Review dates
- Phone calls
- Visits to schools
- Meetings with students
- Courtesy phone calls to Designated Teachers
- Courtesy phone calls to carers
- Financial Requests and Payments for Personal Education Allowance
- Attainment data
- Tuition
- Exclusions
- Databases of Virtual School Headteachers, Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers, Designated Teachers, Examination Officers for Sunderland and outside of Sunderland LA.

Sunderland Virtual School will:

- be led by a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of Cared for Children
- provide a wrap-around service for Cared for Children as part of Sunderland Virtual School
- lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for Cared for Children
- ensure that the education for Cared for Children is as good as that provided for every other pupil
- ensure that Cared for Children receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ensure that every Cared for Child has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Sunderland from another authority
- make sure that each Cared for Child has a PEP according to national guidance
- ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for Cared for Children and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- keep and maintain accurate and up-to-date records
- work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer including options advice and guidance for Key Stage 3-4 transition.
- be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special educational needs of Cared for Children and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs.

SVS Cared for Children Policy Review and Evaluation

Sunderland Virtual School undertakes a thorough review of both the Cared for Children Policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the Sunderland Virtual School Improvement Plan.

Contact Details at Sunderland Virtual School:

virtuelschool@togetherforchildren.org.uk