



Child in Care / Designated Teacher Policy

Date of last review by Local Governing Body	March 2025
Review cycle	2 years
Policy due for review by Local Governing Body	March 2027

Who this policy is for

This policy is for children or young people who are currently or have previously been in care or looked after. It is also for the wider network of professionals who are involved in supporting such children or young people.

Definitions

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes to terminology. The term 'in care' now 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 Children' (LAC), 'Children In Care' (CIC), or 'Children Looked After' (CLA) by the Local Authority. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days in a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Service

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home
- In a residential school

These arrangements include:

- Children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subject of a care order (section 31 (1)) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child (section 44)

Parental Responsibility:

It is also important to note that Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents and responsibility for day-to-day decisions may be delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. This must always be confirmed.

This policy reflects the requirements set out in the statutory guidance on the duty in local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 and the Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher – statutory guidance for School Governors (2009).

This policy also takes account of the following documents:

- Promoting the education of looked-after children: statutory guidance for local authorities (DfE July 2014)
- The role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for looked-after children: statutory guidance for school governing bodies (DCSF 2009)
- Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools: guidance for schools (DCSF 2009)

It reflects the shared aims and ethos with our partners across the different Virtual Schools with which we work.

Estuary Academy North's aims for Children In Care:

At Estuary Academy North (EAN), we recognise that there is nationally considerable educational underachievement of children in residential or foster care, when compared to their peers. This alongside the fact that students needing support of alternative provision often have poor attendance, significant gaps in their learning and use behaviour to mask other learning needs. Therefore, at EAN all staff and governors are committed to ensuring improved educational outcomes for Child In Care (CIC) attending our school. EAN works hard to create the right supportive environment for each CIC as a unique individual, building secure relationships with both the Designated Teacher and members of the SEMH team.

At EAN we work to ensure we meet the following aims to implement the key qualities of effective practice:

- Focusing on ensuring CIC access and utilise the opportunities offered to all students.
- Ensuring there is a balance between high levels of support and real challenge.
- Skilfully linking each young person to the right team of staff to support including them having a key person.
- Building on our 'Pupils as People' priorities and ensuring CIC are well known and have the opportunities to build strong and secure relationships.
- Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies.
- Ensuring that when there is a suggestion of support or opportunity for a CIC that action happens and is followed through.

- Ensuring there is consistency in our approach but there is the relevant and discrete flexibility needed to support a CIC fully.
- Actively working to extend the horizons of each young person and ensuring full access to the cultural capital activities available.
- Planning and supporting future transitions, ensuring positive ending processes happen.

These aims are regularly reviewed using the 'Useful Questions in Developing Effective Practice' as an auditing tool.

Role of the Designated Teacher, other staff and governors

The Designated Teacher will:

- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations on how CIC learn and develop their self-belief.
- Have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how CIC learn and achieve, ensuring that happens at an individual level rather than treating them as a homogenous group.
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets (both PEP and BESP) and be an advocate for CIC within the school.
- Know who all the CIC are 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.
- Be aware of any student on the school roll who has been CIC.
- Have regard to the impact of relevant decisions for CIC on both the CIC and the rest of the school community by contributing to the development of whole school policies.
- Be a source of advice for staff about strategies to support CIC's educational outcomes, including providing or sourcing appropriate training.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the school, including monitoring progress.
- Be involved in any discussions related to decisions about potential exclusions of CIC on roll, including making contact for advice and support with the relevant Virtual School.
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. Recognising that CIC students are more likely to have an EHCP, the DT will ensure that applications are supported when needed and if an EHCP is in place all strategies are followed with the SENCO.
- With the DSL team, act as a point of contact for carers to ensure good communication between care placement and the school.
- Liaise closely with the Virtual School and the student's Social Worker to ensure that the PEP and other plans are effective, working with a joined-up approach to minimise disruption to a CLA's education.

- Ensure confidentiality for individual students, sharing information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual.
- Contribute information to CIC reviews, when required, attending these as appropriate.
- Attend relevant training about CIC.
- Report to the Governors regularly on CIC in the school.

The Designated Teacher at EAN is Candice Van Aardt, Deputy Headteacher

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School staff will:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a CIC's progress.
- Have high expectations of the personal and educational achievement of a CIC, ensuring this is shared with the individual student.
- Positively promote the raising of a CIC's self-esteem and self-belief.
- Ensure any CIC is supported sensitively and in line with EAN safeguarding policy.
- Respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaise with the Designated Teacher where a CIC is experiencing difficulties.
- Engage with CIC provided or sources by the Designated Teacher.

The Governors will:

- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for CIC, following the guidance for appropriate appointment and support.
- Receive and challenge, where appropriate, regular reports from the Designated Teacher and act to address any issues that are raised.
- Ensure that all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for CIC.
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of CIC are met.
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for CIC who regularly links with the Designated Teacher.
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give CIC equal access.
- Review the effective implementation of the school's policy for CIC.

Partnership Working

At EAN, we recognise that our staff cannot work in isolation to ensure the best outcome for CIC. We also recognise that while students may be accommodated in our local area, they may be in the care of another local authority. Therefore, a key focus for us is to build strong working relationships with carers, virtual schools and other agencies who are involved in supporting CIC.

This may include:

- Educational psychologists or other SEND services
- Medical officers or school nurses
- CAMHS
- Education welfare officers
- Youth offending service

Personal Education Plans

Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings must occur within 20 days of a CIC starting at EAN and their PEP must be agreed with their social worker and virtual school. PEP reviews then happen on a termly basis.

These are a formal mechanism to ensure that CIC are receiving the most appropriate support from EAN and that everyone involved with CIC have high expectations. It is the Designated Teacher's role to liaise and arrange these meetings, review the current plan, gain the student voice and then shared the agreed PEP with all the relevant parties.

During these meetings, the Designated Teacher, will consider with the Virtual School is any PP+ funding needs to be requested. Further from this, the Designated Teacher will work flexibly and creatively with the Virtual School to ensure opportunities for training and support ensure that all CIC receive the full range of support which enables them to make progress and achieve.