

St. Brendan's Sixth Form College

Policy on supporting young people who are in care, or are care leavers (looked after young people)

1. *Aim of policy*

This Policy is designed to support the educational achievement and welfare of young people who attend St. Brendan's College and who are also currently in, or have left, the care of the Local Authority (sometimes known as looked after young people).

2. *Definitions*

Young people are deemed to be 'looked after' either if they have been taken into care by the Local Authority, or have been 'accommodated' by the Local Authority (a voluntary care arrangement). This includes young people who have arrived in the UK as unaccompanied asylum seekers. The majority of looked after young people will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home or other residential educational setting, living with a relative or even placed back at home with their natural parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the local authority. Young people aged 16-18 years may be in transition to independence e.g. in 'supported lodgings' or being supported by the 'Care and After' Team.

3. *Policy objectives*

3.1 To improve the transition process for young people in care moving from school to the College.

3.2 To ensure that the College develops appropriate academic and pastoral support for young people in care and care leavers, based on their expressed needs.

3.3 To ensure that the College has effective processes for identifying students who are in, or have left, care, and for tracking their progress, maintaining confidentiality where requested.

3.4 To identify any gaps relating to the attendance, success, retention or achievement of young people in care and care leavers compared to their peers, and to put in place measures to address them.

3.5 To raise the aspirations of young people in care and care leavers and support them with good information, advice and guidance to achieve their potential.

3.6 To ensure that young people in care and care leavers have adequate financial support (e.g. Bursary Funding) and help with budgeting and financial management.

3.7 To ensure that young people in care and care leavers have a say in the decisions that affect them and are involved in the various learner voice processes.

3.8 To ensure that staff are adequately trained, and are aware of the needs of young people in care and care leavers, and are sensitive to their circumstances.

3.9 To challenge any stereotyping or discrimination that the young people may face.

3.10 To develop effective partnership working both with the parent(s)/carer(s) of the young people and any agencies involved with them.

4. Why is a specific policy necessary?

The Common Inspection Framework recognises the need for schools and colleges to track particular cohorts of 'vulnerable learners' and to ensure there are no significant gaps in their educational outcomes, and that they receive the support they require to be successful.

Although a small cohort in the College, young people in care and care leavers have been identified nationally and locally as a group needing particular attention (see Appendix 2).

'Though some do well, the educational achievement of looked after children as a group remains unacceptably low'. (DfES 2010). They are also less likely than their peers to enter post-16 education and are more likely to become NEET (not in education or training) e.g. in 2010 17.5 per cent were unemployed the year after completing Year 11 (DfE 2012).

Many young people in care have had numerous foster placements, sometimes even involving changing geographical locations, and so their school or college is seen as one of the few places of stability and support.

The 16 to 19 age is a time when young people in care and care leavers are particularly vulnerable, as many will be moving out of care into independent living arrangements, re-establishing contact with birth families, transferring to different social workers or teams, and it is a time when they need particular support.

Young people in care and care leavers are also more likely than their peers to exhibit behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and it is important that staff understand the causes of this, and are able to bring in the appropriate support. Nationally, in 2010, 17.3% of young people in care and care leavers between 10 and 17 years had been convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand and 4.3 per cent were identified as having a substance misuse problem (DfE 2012).

The Social Exclusion Unit's Report 'A Better Education for Children in Care' identified five key reasons why young people in care and care leavers underachieve in education:

- their lives are characterised by instability
- they spend too much time out of school
- they do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development and
- they have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education

5. Identification

The College recognises that it is important to identify young people in care and care leavers as early as possible in the application process, in order to assess and meet their academic and support needs, and to aid their retention. Most of this work will be carried out through the Learning Support Team and the ALS (Additional Learning Support) processes.

5.1 Looked after children in schools should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and local authorities should ensure they have a Pathway Plan which supports their progression to further education or training. It is now recommended that this is extended to post-16 providers. The College will endeavour to identify young people in care and care leavers prior to their enrolment at College. This will be achieved through liaison with schools, Children and Young People's Services, HOPE (the virtual school for children in care in Bristol) and other social care agencies, and we will use all available paperwork to assist in assessing their support needs.

5.2 The College will ask all students about their 'care' status as part of the application and enrolment process (this is now essential to identify those who require Bursary Funding.)

5.3 Any declaration of 'care' status will be dealt with sensitively, and students will be asked who it can be shared with. If they agree, they will be flagged up as potentially 'vulnerable' with their Pastoral Support Assistant who will prioritise meeting them to assess their support needs.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that:

- Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that young people who are in care or are care leavers are supported;
- Their outcomes are monitored in comparison to their peers, and action is taken to address any issues;
- They receive regular reports on young people who are in care or are care leavers (as part of the safeguarding reports) ;
- That all staff are trained in safeguarding.

6.2 Designated Person

Schools are required to have a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, and the College will also have a named Designated Person who will be the Learning Support Manager. His/her role will be to:

- Keep abreast of national and local developments in relation to young people in care and care leavers

- To liaise with other local agencies to improve the post-16 transition of young people in care and care leavers
- To ensure that a post-16 Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place for all young people in care and care leavers
- To oversee the monitoring and tracking of young people in care and care leavers
- To act as an advocate for young people in care and care leavers as required
- To oversee the implementation of this Policy, plan and procedures
- To ensure that young people in care and care leavers are placed on courses suitable to their academic ability
- To develop any particular support structures that the young people require
- To ensure that all staff have adequate training on issues relating to young people in care and care leavers
- To liaise with schools, social care and other agencies involved with the young person to ensure support is joined up, and to attend meetings (e.g. relating to PEPs in schools) where possible
- To liaise with the parent(s)/ carer(s) and social workers about the young person where appropriate.

6.3 Pastoral Support Assistant (PSA)

The PSA will work with learning the Designated Person to:

- Ensure that the young person in care or care leaver is receiving adequate pastoral support;
- Raise their aspiration and promote positive self-esteem;
- Liaise with the Careers' Officer to ensure that they receive on-going information, advice and guidance and that they are made aware of any opportunities to widen participation in HE etc.;
- Track their attendance, achievement and effort and address any concerns with the student, flagging up to Learning Support if necessary;
- Signpost them to other support within the College or external agencies where necessary;
- Support them to address issues with teachers, and ensure teaching staff are aware of their circumstances (if they have agreed for this to be shared);

- Encourage and support them to access a wide range of enrichment and social activities inside and outside the College.

6.4 Bursary Fund Co-ordinator

The Bursary Fund Co-ordinator will work with the PSA and the Designated Person to ensure that:

- Young people in care and care leavers are identified at enrolment and their financial situation is assessed;
- That they receive the Bursary Fund promptly and are aware of the range of financial support that is available to them, and get help with budgeting if required;
- That liaison takes place with the PSA and Designated Person if any issues arise relating to their attendance, achievement or personal circumstances etc.;
- That their parent(s)/carer(s) and social workers are involved as appropriate and receive adequate information.

7. *The involvement of the young people*

The views of the young people in care and care leavers will be treated as paramount in any decisions that are made about them. The College will also find a range of innovative ways to consult the cohort about any support required, individually or collectively, or new initiatives that they would like the College to develop to support their needs. Any meetings around the young person will be inclusive and person centred in their approach and they will be consulted about who will attend and how they will be run. The College will also actively encourage their involvement in enrichment and other social activities that will provide them with social support and enhance the range of material they have for CVs, personal statements etc.

8. *Communication with other agencies*

The College will co-ordinate communication with other agencies through the Designated Person who will:

- Ensure that arrangements are in place to promote effective communication between all those involved with the young people in care and care leavers;
- Co-ordinate the collection of copies of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), Reviews, Reports, and attendance etc. from schools;
- To coordinate PEP meetings to ensure that, where relevant, information about progress, attendance, achievement etc. is shared with the young person's social worker in addition to the foster carer or residential social worker;

- Attend relevant review meetings relating to the young person whilst at College;
- Raise any concerns about their academic or pastoral support or general well-being with the appropriate agency.

9. Review

9.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years by Governors.

9.2 Reports on the progress and outcomes for young people in care and care leavers will be included in the regular Safeguarding Reports to Governors.

9.3 An annual action plan will be developed, monitored and reviewed by the Designated Person.

10. Supporting College Policies

Safeguarding Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Appendix 1: National Guidance

Primary Legislation

Children Act (1989)

Children and Young People Act (2008)

Adoption and Children Act (2002)

The Children (Leaving Care) Act (2002)

Guidance

Raising the Aspirations and Educational Outcomes of Looked After Children; a data tool for local authorities (DFE 2012)

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a00192332/raising-the-aspirations-and-educational-outcomes-of-looked-after-children-a-data-tool-for-local-authorities>

The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory guidance for school governing bodies (DCFS 2009):

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare/educationalachievement/educationalachievement>

Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfES 2010):

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00042/>

Improving the Educational Attainment of Children In Care (LAC) (DCFS 2009)

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00523-2009.pdf>

Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health of Looked After Children (DH/DCSF 2009)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare/healthycare/healthycare/>

Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Looked After and Learning – Evaluation of the Virtual School Head Pilot

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectid=15448&resultspage=1>

Appendix 2: Outcomes for young people in care and care leavers

At St. Brendan's Sixth Form College:

Number of Young People in or leaving care 2011/12:

17 (3 learning at level 2, 14 at level 3)

Outcomes:

- 83% retention (14)

Of the initial 17:

- 47% progression within college for next year (8)
- 12% progression to university (2)
- 24% different FE (4)
- 12% employment or further training (2)
- 6% NEET (1 student)

Educational outcomes for Bristol City Council in 2010/11:

| | % Children in Care (for over a year) | Peers |
|---|---|------------|
| Key Stage 2: (29, 7 disapplied): Expected level in Reading Expected Level in Maths | 59% 48% | 79% 79% |
| Key Stage 4: (59, 3 disapplied): 5A*C (incl. M and E) 5A* to C | 9.8% (7) 37.7% (21) | 50% 77% |