



Overarching Children in Care Policy

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“Learning together, to be the best we can be”

1. Scope

- 1.1. This overarching Children in Care (CiC) policy has been developed and published to outline the Nexus Multi Academy Trust commitment to a best practice approach in ensuring the best possible support for children in care and previously children in care
- 1.2. To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Nexus children in care and previously children in care.
- 1.3. Our pupils' welfare is our paramount concern. Trust Governance will ensure that an academy within Nexus will safeguard and promote the welfare of children in care and work together with other agencies to ensure that the academy has adequate arrangements to identify, assess and support them.

2. Ethos

- 2.1. We believe that all our academies should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of each individual child.
- 2.2. Every one of our academies is a community and all those directly connected - staff members, governors, parents, families and pupils - have an essential role in ensuring our children in care and previously children in care.
- 2.3. We recognise the importance of providing an environment within our academies that will help **all** children succeed.
- 2.4. We will work with carers to build an understanding of the Trust's responsibilities to ensure the welfare of children in care and previously children in care, including the need for regular communication to other agencies in some situations.

3. The legal framework

- 3.1. Children in care and previously children in care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who have accessed care have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists when compared to their peers.

3.2. 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).

3.3. The term '**In Care**' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the Court 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.

3.4. 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.

3.5. All these groups are said to be '**Looked After Children or Children in Care**'. They may be looked after by the Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living locally.

3.6. "Previously-children in care" are defined as:

3.6.1. Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.

3.6.2. Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. The roles and responsibilities set out in this section reflect the statutory requirements placed on schools and trusts by the Children Act 2004, the Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance, and Keeping Children Safe in Education. These updates extend duties beyond children currently in care to include those who are previously looked-after (through adoption, special guardianship, or child

arrangement orders), children in kinship care, and those with a social worker. The purpose is to ensure that schools champion the educational achievement and welfare of these pupils, embedding inclusive practice across leadership, governance, and classroom provision.

4.2. Designated Teacher

4.2.1. All schools must appoint a **Designated Teacher** for children in care and previously looked-after children. Their key roles include:

- 4.2.1.1. Promoting a culture of high expectation, aspiration, and inclusion for all looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- 4.2.1.2. Championing the needs of these pupils in all aspects of school life and acting as their advocate.
- 4.2.1.3. Being a source of advice and support for staff, governors, and carers on meeting the needs of children in care and previously looked-after children.
- 4.2.1.4. Helping staff to understand barriers to learning and wellbeing faced by children in care, previously looked-after children, and those in kinship care, and modelling strong inclusive practice.
- 4.2.1.5. Taking lead responsibility for ensuring that each child in care has an effective, high-quality **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**, working in partnership with the Virtual School Head, social workers, carers, and other professionals.
- 4.2.1.6. Supporting staff to work effectively with the child's wider network, including carers, Virtual School staff, and safeguarding partners.
- 4.2.1.7. Promoting educational stability, including ensuring that school admissions, attendance, and any decisions about elective home education or alternative provision take full account of the child's safeguarding and educational needs.

4.3. Trust Board of Directors

4.3.1. The Trust Board of Directors is committed to providing a quality education for all students, based on equality of access, opportunity, and outcomes.

4.4. Headteacher

4.4.1. The Headteacher will ensure that:

- 4.4.1.1. The policies and procedures adopted by the Trust Board are fully implemented in their academy(s).
- 4.4.1.2. Sufficient resources, time, and professional development are allocated to enable staff to discharge their responsibilities to children in care and previously looked-after children.

- 4.4.1.3. The Designated Teacher has appropriate seniority, training, and support to carry out their statutory role.
- 4.4.1.4. Attendance, safeguarding, and inclusion policies take account of the heightened vulnerabilities of children in care, previously looked-after children, and those with a social worker.

4.5. All Staff, Local Governors, Volunteers and External Providers

4.5.1. All staff members, governors, volunteers, and external providers must:

- 4.5.1.1. Know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- 4.5.1.2. Understand their safeguarding responsibilities and respond appropriately to any concerns, including disclosures from pupils.
- 4.5.1.3. Be aware of the particular safeguarding and educational vulnerabilities of children in care, previously looked-after children, and those with a social worker or in kinship care arrangements.
- 4.5.1.4. Work collaboratively with the Designated Teacher and safeguarding team to provide consistent, supportive relationships for these pupils.

5. Admissions

5.1. The Trust Board endorses the appropriate Local Authority policy for the admission of children in care. Due to changes in care placements, looked after children may enter an academy at any time in the term. At Nexus, we believe that it is vital that all new students receive a positive welcome and full support for their inclusion in our learning community.

6. Inclusion

6.1. This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. This Policy reinforces the need for teaching and learning that is fully inclusive. The Trust Board, via the Chief Executive Officer, will ensure the academy makes appropriate provision for all looked after students.

7. Allocation of Resources

7.1. The Trust Board, via the Chief Executive Officer, will ensure that the academy allocates resources to support appropriate provision for children in care and previously children in care, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. Schools will work in partnership with Local Authority Virtual Schools for looked after children and other Virtual Schools for students who are from

other Local Authorities, to ensure that children in care receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

8. Record keeping

- 8.1. The Designated Teacher must know all the looked after children and previously looked after in the academy, as well as those in kinship care and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Local Authority Virtual Schools specialist staff, teacher/support worker and social worker. The status of looked after children is identified within the school's information systems so that appropriate staff (classroom teachers, relevant associate staff) are aware of their needs, while ensuring information is managed confidentially and shared only on a "need to know" basis. Children in care or previously children in care and those in kinship care are identified as a vulnerable group when tracking, monitoring and reporting on attainment and progress.

9. Monitoring progress

- 9.1. Each academy assesses the attainment and learning needs of every looked-after pupil on entry to ensure continuity and appropriate progression. The local authority, through the allocated social worker and in partnership with the Virtual School Head, is responsible for initiating a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** within 20 working days of the pupil entering care or joining the school. The PEP must include the active involvement of the child or young person, and their views will be central to its development.
- 9.2. The Designated Teacher will:
 - 9.2.1. Contribute to the PEP process by providing up-to-date assessment, progress, and support information.
 - 9.2.2. Liaise with the social worker, Virtual School staff, carers, and other professionals to arrange and attend termly PEP review meetings.
 - 9.2.3. Ensure that copies of the PEP are made available to relevant professionals, including the social worker, Virtual School, and other agencies as required.
 - 9.2.4. Record how **Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)** is being used to improve attainment, attendance, and wellbeing outcomes, in line with Virtual School guidance
 - 9.2.5. Monitor the quality and impact of the PEP within school to ensure it is a robust and effective plan.
 - 9.2.6. All PEPs will be completed and stored electronically using the system determined by the Virtual School (currently through Welfare Call or other approved platforms).

- 9.2.7. While PEPs are not a statutory requirement for **previously looked-after children**, the academy will ensure that they receive appropriate monitoring and support, and that their progress is regularly reviewed, with the Designated Teacher acting as a key advocate

10. Staff Induction, Training and Development

- 10.1. We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support a children in care or previously been in care.
- 10.2. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to raise awareness of issues associated with children in care within the academy and disseminate information.

11. Partnership with Parents/Carers and Care Workers

- 11.1. We believe in developing strong partnerships with parents/carers and care workers to enable children in care and previously children in carew to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this collaboration and partnership working.

12. Confidentiality, Consent and Information Sharing

- 12.1. We recognise that all matters relating to children in care and previously children in care are confidential. The Headteacher, DSL or the Designated Teacher will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff only where it is necessary for them to carry out their professional duties and to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- 12.2. All staff members must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being. Safeguarding concerns will always be shared with the DSL or a deputy.
- 12.3. All staff members have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies, including the Virtual School Head and social worker, in order to safeguard children and promote their educational achievement.
- 12.4. All our staff members who come into contact with children will be given appropriate training to understand the purpose of information sharing in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

- 12.5. We will ensure that staff members are confident about what they can and should do under the law, including how to obtain consent to share information and when information can be shared without consent.
- 12.6. Staff are reminded that concerns about data protection must never prevent timely and appropriate information sharing when a child's safety, wellbeing, or educational achievement may be at risk

13. Multi-agency working

- 13.1 We will develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, including agencies providing early help services to children, the Police and Children's Social Care, in line with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- 13.2 We will ensure that the designated teacher will participate in multi-agency meetings and forums, including IRO and PEP meetings; during which, they will work with the virtual school head and the child's social worker to discuss how funding can be best used to support the progress of children in care in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan and to ensure their safety and security.
- 13.3 We will participate in serious case reviews, other reviews and file audits as and when required to do so by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

14. Whistle-blowing and complaints

- 14.1. We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff members fail to do so.
- 14.2. We will ensure that all staff members are aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues.
- 14.3. We have a clear reporting procedure for children, parents and other people to report concerns or complaints, including abusive or poor practice.
- 14.4. We will actively seek the views of children, parents and carers and staff members on our child protection arrangements through surveys, questionnaires and other means.

15. Quality assurance

- 15.1. We will ensure that systems are in place to monitor the implementation of and compliance with this policy and accompanying procedures. This will include periodic audits of child in care files and records by the Designated Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 15.2. School senior leadership teams, Trust officers and/or the local governors will ensure that action is taken to remedy without delay any deficiencies and weaknesses identified in child protection arrangement.