

# *The Ridings High School*

## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY**

### **Rationale**

- The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child's welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

Furthermore, the term 'looked after', which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term 'in public care', which has been adopted by the DfES in their publication, 'The Education of Young People in Public Care'.

- Unfortunately, the education of looked after children has been characterised by fragmentation and failure for too long. Leaving Care studies have revealed that 75% of care leavers leave formal education with no qualifications, and only between 12% and 19% go on to further education, compared with 68% of the general population.
- Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and 'normality' for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

### **Guidelines**

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education to all looked after children.
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievements of all looked after children.
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked after children.
- Ensure this is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children.
- Develop systems of communications and protocols.
- Promote the attendance of looked after children.

## Implementation

The school will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the identification of a designated teacher who is provided with regular training, and that they cascade the training to school staff as appropriate.
- Ensure the identification of a particular Governor with special responsibility for looked after children.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the South Gloucestershire Children and Young People Department's Social Inclusion guidance, **Special Educational Needs Legislation**, and joint Department for Education and Skills/Department of Health guidance on **The Education of Children in Public Care**.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavour to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.
- For details of particular 'Roles and Responsibilities' see separate document.

## Conclusion

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children. This policy aims to ensure that the school plays an effective pivot role in this outcome.

R C Evans  
Assistant Head Student Support  
January 2006