

Fostering Education Policy



SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This policy sets out how the education and achievement of children who are looked after in Walsall's foster homes will be actively promoted.

RELATED CHAPTERS

Staying Put (Foster Care) Policy

Education for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Procedure (which contains information on the Virtual School)

This procedure was added to the manual in February 2014.

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1. Introduction and Context

Although some do well, **Looked After** children as a group are at greater risk of poor experiences of education and low educational attainment than their peers. As a corporate parent, Walsall Council holds the strongest commitment to helping every child Looked After, wherever the child is placed, to achieve the highest educational standards he or she possibly can. This includes supporting their aspirations to achieve in further and higher education. The Fostering Service's education policy is in conjunction with the overall Council policy for supporting the education of all Looked After children.

Walsall Council's education policy within its Fostering Service is designed to ensure that children who are Looked After in Walsall's foster homes are effectively supported to achieve their full educational potential. It sets out how the education and achievement of children will be actively

promoted not only as part of a child's essential preparation for adulthood, but also recognising that education and achievement are valuable in themselves for a fulfilling life.

Article 12 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account. Any organisation working with children, young people and their family should make provisions for the child to be heard, record their views, the outcome and the feedback given to them.

This policy is written in line with the Corporate Equalities Strategy, which seeks to value diversity and promote equality through practice and procedures.

This policy is written in line with corporate criteria in accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which places a duty on the Local Authority to prevent young people in their area committing offences.

2. Aims

The education policy aims to ensure that a 'long view' is taken of every child's education and development and that the pre-school early years of learning and achievements will be recognised as being of particular significance. At the same time, the power of therapeutic, foster caring relationships to assist learning in traumatised pre school children will be given full consideration along side formal pre- school learning environments. It also aims to encourage and support the highest aspirations and broadest opportunities for children's learning both in and out of school throughout childhood. The centrality of the foster carer in the child's development and welfare will be recognised in all communication with schools and the Virtual School.

The importance of self esteem, acceptance and freedom from fear of bullying in enabling every child's learning will underpin the fostering education policy. Finally, plenty of time for outdoor exercise, fresh food, sufficient hydration as well as good sleeping habits are the health-based factors which will also contribute to the overall achievement and learning of all children.

3. Responsibilities

Foster carers will:

- Support children's educational needs as detailed within the child's **Placement Plan**. This will detail arrangements agreed within delegated authority such as attendance at parents consultations, target setting days, school plays, concerts, sports events and special meetings about progress or issues of concern;
- Provide warm, sensitive and understanding care and appropriate stimulation thereby creating a supportive learning environment for children;
- Provide opportunities for personal and social interaction;
- Act as advocates for children in relation to educational opportunities and decisions;

- Enrol babies and children in local libraries;
- Work with the Virtual School to support take up on the 2 Year Old;
- Encourage reading in children - reading to babies and young children;
- Encourage children to have limited time watching TV and playing computer games and ensure they are involved in other forms of interaction and learning such as extracurricular activities and additional support clubs such as sport, drama or music;
- Praise and celebrate the educational and developmental efforts and achievements of children in their foster homes and will join with any specific arrangements for public celebration such as through the Virtual School or Excellent Activities arranged via IYPSS;
- Ensure all children have 100% school attendance. It is expected that Looked After children will not be taken out of school during term time. There are no exceptions to this;
- Work closely with the child's school in relation to homework, attendance, discipline;
- Support children in relation to their homework - ensuring appropriate space and time and any other resources are available;
- Participate in the drawing up of a child's **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**;
- Keep a record of the educational efforts and achievements of each child, and also all communication with schools and share the record with the child's social worker and the fostering social worker regularly and ensure the consultation sheet is completed;
- Will work in partnership with the Virtual School to identify outstanding schools when applying for school admissions and /or midyear transfer. Children's Services will support the carer in overcoming any practical barriers in relation to achieving this, such as transport issues;
- Support young people making the transition to adulthood through further or higher education, training or employment as identified in the Placement Plan and PEP;
- Support young people to access work experience and be fully aware of the options for young people in terms of non-educational apprenticeships; sources of funding post-16; and the range of further education options.

The Fostering Service will:

- Ensure that the Placement Plan sets out clearly the foster carer's role in each child's education and that it addresses any special interests or additional needs specific to each child;
- Ensure that foster carers are supported in enabling all children to attend school or their alternative provision both regularly and punctually;

- Provide support to carers through the supervision process to enable carers' learning and development in relation to the educational needs of children who are Looked After and how to support the child in their care;
- Provide support to carers in relation to extracurricular activities;
- Work with the Virtual School Head Teacher to develop an understanding within schools of the educational needs children who are Looked After;
- Ensure that all foster carers are aware of the anti-bullying policy of Walsall Council and will regularly check during visits for any signs of bullying or for actions to follow up any incidents of bullying;
- Support foster carers to care for young people post 18 years of age who attend education or training through the **Staying Put (Foster Care) Policy**.

4. Five Top Tips for Foster Carers to Support Educational Activity

1. Ensure that you fully understand the child in terms of their experiences and current emotional and psychological well being;
2. Understand the importance of stability, resilience and motivation in educational achievement;
3. Understand the education system through training, reading and conversations with social care and education professionals;
4. Ensure that you establish regular communication with the key personnel at the educational establishment;
5. Develop an understanding of yourself and the role you play in supporting a child in terms of their education.

5. Legislation

- [National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011](#)
- [Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4; Fostering Services](#)
- [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children](#)