

Enfield Virtual School

Preventing the exclusion of children in care Policy, Practice and Procedure 2018-2019

Enfield Council is committed to ensuring that every looked after child has the very best opportunity to succeed in their learning. The responsibility in achieving this does not lie with one individual but is shared by all adults who are involved with the pupil – this is known as the Corporate Parenting responsibility. To achieve this, the Council expects schools to use fixed term exclusion only as a last resort and expects them to avoid permanently excluding Children Looked After.

Context

Children in care are some of the most vulnerable children in society. They have often experienced significant trauma in their lives which can impact on their ability to succeed in their learning.

Schools play a vital role in ensuring academic success and enabling our looked after children to achieve their very best. Schools provide a safe and stable environment for vulnerable children who may have experienced huge changes and uncertainty in their lives.

The Exclusions Guidance 2017 acknowledges that there is a disproportionately high rate of exclusion of Children Looked After and that they are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion. It states that headteachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding permanently any looked after child.

The Council expects Head Teachers to work proactively with the Virtual School and the local authority where they feel a pupil is at risk of exclusion and, wherever possible, avoid permanently excluding a looked after child.

Legal framework

The Exclusions Guidance 2017, requires schools to ensure that they pay particular attention to looked after children and as far as possible avoid exclusions.

Where school has concerns about the emotional well-being of a looked after child or risk of exclusion, it should, in partnership with the Virtual School consider what support or alternatives can be put in place.

Schools are required to minimise disruption to a looked after child's learning. Whilst the statutory duty on governing bodies is to provide full-time education from the sixth day of any exclusion, the Council would expect schools to provide this from day one.

In line with guidance 2017, the headteacher must notify the parents of the days on which their exclusion applies, and at least by the end of the afternoon session. This would mean a phone call or email to both the foster carer, social worker and the head of the virtual school.

Enfield Council expects that schools will work in partnership with the Virtual School to avoid excluding looked after children by: -

- Identifying when pupils are at risk of exclusion and developing strategies to prevent behaviour escalating, including the implementation of individual behaviour plans and Pastoral Support Plans in line with your behaviour policies and processes and identifying and supporting pupils with additional needs.
- Assessing and screening pupils for special Educational Needs to ensure an appropriate match of curriculum and provision and sanctions are monitored to identify any inconsistency.
- Ensure that if a child is looked after, the foster carer, social worker and virtual head are aware of persistent poor behaviour or not responding to low level sanctions, and the use and effectiveness of any support and sanctions proposed recorded and regularly reviewed.
- Has school considered the contributed factors. Is the exclusion most appropriate and in the school behavioural policy?
- Are exclusion reasons clearly recorded, including impact on others?
- Is relevant evidence recorded/retained documents including support given?
- When there have been several fixed period exclusions in line with 2017 guidance the head of the virtual school will seek representation to the governing body. (If more than 5 days in a term.)
- Ensuring that the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children has access to appropriate training and resources to support them in their role and is empowered to champion looked after children and share their expertise with school staff and governors.
- Contacting the Virtual School for advice and guidance to discuss support and alternatives, **before** considering a fixed-term exclusion for a looked after child
- Inviting the named Virtual School worker to reintegration meetings on the rare occasions when it is deemed appropriate to issue a fixed term exclusion for a looked after child

- Arranging an emergency Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting and if applicable, an emergency Education Health and Care Plan review where a looked after child has received more than 1 fixed-term exclusion
- Contacting the Virtual School Head Teacher to discuss alternatives to permanent exclusion for a pupil whose continued presence, would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.
- Recognising that exclusion will have a negative impact on educational outcomes, reinforce feelings of rejection and low self-esteem and in some case's lead to placement breakdown. Such serious long-term consequences are not proportionated to breaches of a school behaviour code.

The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools to avoid exclusions by;

- Responding quickly to requests from schools for advice and support.
- Providing training to Designated Members of staff in schools on issues affecting the lives of children looked after; this will include attachment, trauma, ADHD, CAMHS.
- Offering support through termly DT meetings and CAMHS "circle of support" (meeting based at one location where DT's can share problems and CAMHS Clinical Psychologist and Family Systemic Therapist can suggest strategies to support).
- Ensuring that Personal Education Plans identify support strategies to reduce the risk of exclusion
- Promoting understanding of why pupils present as oppositional or inappropriate. This can often strengthen the schools understanding of how best to interpret the behaviour and inform them as to what strategies to put in place to best support their pupil. The Virtual School provides training on attachment, trauma, CAMHS and ADHD to social workers, foster carers and designated teachers.
- Using the Pupil Premium grant creatively to support those at risk of exclusion
- Supporting schools to consider what alternatives there are to permanent exclusion

Alternatives to exclusion

- *Academic and pastoral support*

Schools ensure that they have fully considered what the pupil is communicating and identify strategies to re-engage them with their learning or manage their emotions impacting on progress. Support may include access to a 'trusted adult', after school tuition, academic mentoring or TA support.

- *Internal exclusion*

Where possible, schools are encouraged to avoid exclusions. If it is felt that a pupil would benefit from exclusion, schools are encouraged to consider internal short-term interventions.

However, where schools are considering an internal exclusion, they should consider the impact on the individual pupil, particularly where they are put in 'isolation'. A high proportion of children in care have experienced significant abuse and neglect which may have included forced isolation with limited human interaction.

- *Restorative justice*

A process schools can use to enable pupils to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to take actions to amend. This can be undertaken with both teachers and peers.

- *Preventative programmes*

Short-term intervention programmes allowing pupils to access support to enable them to re-engage in their learning, using alternative provisions. (See Virtual School Intervention Map).

- *Managed moves*

There are occasions where a pupil would benefit from a different setting and where possible, this should be another mainstream school. Managed moves between schools can be used as an intervention to reduce the risk of a child being permanently excluded.

The Virtual School Head will need to be approached before any discussions are made with other

schools.

If agreed, a formal agreement will be made between the two schools, a child and their parents or carers. The Headteacher will negotiate the move with the Headteacher from the other school. The managed move is usually arranged for a trial period and, if successful, will result in a formal transfer to the new school. If the move is unsuccessful, the child will return to their home school.

A managed move should not be considered for a child who has a history of persistent absence or for a child who is not on a school roll. It should not be used in place of a school following the SEN code of practice in relation to supporting and assessment of a child's learning, social, emotional or mental health needs.