

# Revised Policy Statement on the Education of Hertfordshire Children in Foster Care

A recent research project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, was jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol, the Rees Centre, Department of Education, and the University of Oxford.

The main analysis concentrated on the progress at secondary school (Key Stages 2-4) of young people who had been in care for over a year at the end of Key Stage 4.

Detailed statistical analysis was complemented by interviews with 25 young people in six local authorities and with adults significant in their educational careers, including foster carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School head teachers

## Key Findings

What are the key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England? The analysis reveals that controlling for all factors; the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:

- Time in care. Young people who have been in longer-term care do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and better than those who have only been in short term care – so it appears that care may protect them educationally
- Placement changes. Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE
- School changes. Young people in care who changed school in Years 10 or 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not
- School absence. For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over two grades less at GCSE
- School exclusions. For every additional day of school missed due to fixed-term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE
- Placement type. Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over six grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.
- School type. Young people who were in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared to those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream school. Those in pupil referral units with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.
- Educational support. Young people report that teachers provide the most significant educational support for them but teachers suggest that they need more training to do this effectively.

Hertfordshire is committed to ensuring all CLA achieve the best outcomes possible. We also recognise that these outcomes can be enhanced by promoting their educational achievement.

## **Underpinning Legislation:**

Children Act 1989: Section 22(3A) – duty on local authority to promote educational achievement  
Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

## **Standard 8 states**

The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children, including pre-school children and older children, are supported to achieve their educational potential.

1. **The foster home will provide a learning environment and will support the development of the children in their care.**

This means:

- Each child in placement has appropriate equipment to undertake homework and study – a quiet place to work, a desk or table, writing equipment, access to a computer, and books.
- Commitment to and enthusiasm for education and learning is shown and an interest is taken in the child's learning and achievement.
- Carers take the opportunity to discuss the school day after school and note any relevant special events e.g., trips, outings etc.
- Carers will foster the social development of the child with friends and other pupils in their school by encouraging tea visits, attending school events (e.g. the summer fete, school plays etc) as a family.

2. **The foster home will ensure access to a range of educational resources to support children's learning and opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning.**

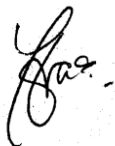
- It is essential that carers are good role models to children and young people and they are seen reading and writing.
- In this technological age children have little opportunity to write. It is important that this skill is encouraged by enabling them to write things down
- A commitment to support learning by provision of additional learning experiences that build on curriculum subjects, for example visits to museums, galleries and exhibitions.
- Children are encouraged to attend school clubs and activities and pursue their interests.
- Carers regularly provide activities which support literacy and numeracy for example, reading with the children, cooking and weighing ingredients
- Carers must take opportunities to support homework activities.
- Carers should use paid allowance to support access to school trips that complement the taught curriculum.
- Carers should ensure that all children and young people join the local library and attend regularly any events arranged there.

3. **The foster home will ensure children attend school, or alternative provision, so that they have at least 95% attendance.**

- Carers should transport children to school

- Issues, over attendance or punctuality, raised by the school are dealt with quickly and in co-operation with the school
  - Any absences are explained quickly and if possible prior to the event
  - Any issues of concern that may affect attendance should be raised with the school
  - At transition times the children will be taken to school and supported on entry to school
  - That holidays will not be taken during school time
4. **Foster carers will help their children to achieve their educational or training goals**
- Attendance at and contribution to PEPs and any other education planning meetings
  - Fully implementing any tasks or targets set out for carers in the PEP
  - Understanding and acting on school reports
  - Carers should praise, encourage and inspire children towards learning
  - That significant events in the school calendar (e.g. examinations or transition) are planned for in advance within the family to reduce stress and anxiety
  - Carers ensure that they have up to date information on attendance, education progress and any under-achievement
  - Attending regular training or information updates from the school or the Virtual School, so that they are able to understand achievement data, support their children in their learning at various ages and keep up to date with curriculum developments.
  - Carers should access the school website regularly
5. **Foster carers will maintain regular contact with their child's school and other education settings, and advocate for the child where appropriate.**
- Attending all relevant consultation meetings, academic review day and any special events relevant to their foster child, for example, assemblies
  - Building up a good relationship with the school so that information can be shared both ways and contact made with the school as appropriate, for example daily if attendance is an issue
  - Contacting the school if there are any concerns over achievement or welfare to ensure effective interventions are in place and their children are participating fully in school.

Signatures:



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