



# CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) POLICY

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## 1. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#). It also takes into account [section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010.

## 2. Definitions

Looked-after children are registered students that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Previously looked-after children are registered students that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
  - A special guardianship order
  - An adoption order
- They appear to the academy governance to have:
  - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

**Personal Education Plan (PEP)** is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

**Virtual School Head (VSH)** is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these students as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children. VSHs also have strategic responsibility for promoting the education of 'Children with a Social Worker' as outlined in section 10.

### **3. Aims**

The key aim of this policy is to promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (Post-CLA) and support them in achieving the best possible social, emotional and academic outcomes.

We aim to create an environment where CLA have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with [Promoting the Education of looked-after and previously looked-after Children \(DfE Feb 2018\)](#)

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development. We promote staff training in their specific needs, so that all adults are sensitive to the barriers to learning that CLA experience and feel able to support the children discreetly and confidentially, as needs arise.

Our school community aims to champion the needs of CLA to ensure they make rapid progress during their period in care.

#### **Our Aims for CLA:**

- To provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and Post CLA.
- To narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and Post-CLA and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- That they benefit from a wide range of school-based interventions and to use the allocated Student Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact.
- For all CLA to have a minimum of three Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings in an academic year and for the joint planning to actively impact on each child's learning on a daily basis, to ensure accelerated and rapid progress
- For all adults to provide discreet, sensitive, child-led support, with one key adult identified who will form a strong relationship and take a special interest in daily life at school.
- That school systems facilitate discrete support, as appropriate.
- CLA will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for.
- CLA and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community in recognition of the particular needs of this group.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 Designated Staff

Designated Teacher for CLA and Post CLA

Ms Gemma Absalom

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are our initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

Deputy Designated Teachers for CLA and Post CLA

Mr Ben Cummings

Miss Miranda Hall

Designated School Governor for CLA and Post CLA

Mr Laurence Pilgrim

### 4.2 The Headteacher and Academy Governance

The Headteacher and Academy Governance are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and Post-CLA students. They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and Post-CLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receives appropriate training.

### 4.3 The Designated Teacher

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child by:
  - Working with VSHs
  - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these students matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
  - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
  - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these students
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

#### 4.4 All staff

All staff will promote improved educational opportunities for CLA and Post-CLA students by:

- Reading and being aware of the implications of this policy on their practise.
- Attending training, as appropriate.
- Providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher.
- Referring to the Designated Teacher for advice.
- Playing their part in creating a 'CLA-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for CLA by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available.

### 5. Educational planning

#### 5.1 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for students
- Ensure that:
  - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
  - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
  - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

#### 5.2 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses student premium funding
- Work with VSHs to agree how student premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about student premium funding and other support for these children
- Play a key part in decisions on how student premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how student premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning

- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

### 5.3 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
  - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
  - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
  - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
  - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
  - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
  - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
  - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
  - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary

- Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion

## 6. Special Educational Needs

All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA who have special educational needs by:

- Having high expectations of minimum levels of progress each academic year (in line with the expectations set out in the ePEP and Virtual School Progress Report for Governors).
- Ensuring that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision (in line with the SEN Code of Practice).
- Ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic.
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEN Code of Practice.
- Ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight.

## 7. Additional support

### 7.1 Admissions and Transition

School procedures to support CLA during admission and transition include:

- Prioritising CLA and Post-CLA at the point of admission.
- The swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school.
- Early identification of staff mentor and peer buddy.
- Additional support and planning for CLA and Post-CLA at times of transition.
- Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss.

### 7.2 Attendance

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of CLA and Post-CLA to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school contacts the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in the attendance policy.

### 7.3 Safeguarding

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by:

- Familiarising themselves with the CLA Policy
- Following the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2024, if there are any safeguarding concerns.

### 7.4 Alternative provision

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision that differ from daily attendance at school will be:

- A plan that will retain the CLA on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+.
- An agreed part of the overall ePEP for the student.
- Full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality.
- In-line with the educational needs of the CLA or Post-CLA.
- Appropriate to provide opportunities to make appropriate progress in the course of study provided by the setting.
- Monitored regularly and that ePEPs will include the school and the alternative provider.

## **7.5 Exclusion**

We will make every effort to avoid excluding a CLA, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of CLA and Post-CLA.

## **7.6 Multi-agency working**

School staff will make every effort to engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of CLA and Post-CLA.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Teacher for CLA . At every review, it will be approved by the Academy Governance.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy

## **10. Promoting the education of children with a social worker**

In September 2021 VSHs became, with agreement and support from their local authority, strategic leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker. Details relating to the extended role of VSH are outlined in the following government guidance [Virtual school head role extension to children with a social worker](#).

The term ‘children with a social worker’ refers to all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a CIN plan or a Child Protection plan.

Parmiter’s School will work with the Hertfordshire Virtual School to support these childrens’ needs and liaise with the Hertfordshire Virtual School Education Hub for support and guidance as required.