

Children Looked After (CLA) Policy

Swanbourne CE School

Mursley CE School

Drayton Parslow Village School

Kingfishers Pre-School (Mursley)

(In this policy known as the Three Schools)



This policy was adopted on - **September 2025**

The policy is to be reviewed by - **September 2027**

(Copies of this policy are available for staff, parents, visitors and volunteers on request from the school office).

Rationale

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of Children Looked After, 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. Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of Children Looked After and schools play a pivotal role in this.

At The Three Schools we are committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. We recognise that, nationally, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in "Guidance on the Education of Children Looked After" (May 2000) and Section 52 of the Children Act 2004. Children who are "looked after" may be "Accommodated" "In Care" or "remanded/ detained" as follows:

Accommodated (Section 20)

This is a voluntary arrangement, because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.

In Care

A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A care order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority, or shares this with the parents.

Remanded/Detained

A child can be remanded or detained as in the following:

- an emergency protection order
- removed by police using their powers of protection
- remanded by a court following criminal charges
- a court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.

Children Looked After (CLA) may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others.
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues.
- poor attachments to others.
- have a need to be very private.

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. At The Three Schools, we are committed to ensuring that these children are supported at The Three Schools as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- a Designated Teacher for Children Looked After
- Personal Education Plans for all Children Looked After.
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect Children Looked After.
- effective strategies that supports the education of this vulnerable group.

Legal Framework

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 Children Looked After.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly-based education to all Children Looked After
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all Children Looked After
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all Children Looked After
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of Children Looked After
- Promote the attendance of Children Looked After.

Roles and Responsibilities

Many Children Looked After do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However, we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible. The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and SENCO as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all Children Looked After have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and SENCO also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with Children Looked After.

Role and Responsibility of the Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for Children Looked After;
- when new to the school, ensure a smooth and welcome induction for the child and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status;
- ensure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the child and the carer, in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings, within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least, every 6 months; A flow chart showing PEP completion is found at the end of this policy.
- keep PEPs and other records up to date, particularly in time to inform review meetings;
- ensure that each child in public care (if they wish) has an identified member of staff that they can talk to (this should be based on the child's request, and may not necessarily be the Designated Teacher);
- co-ordinate support for the child in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary;
- ensure staff receive relevant information and training and act as an advisor to staff and governors;
- ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis;
- provide written information to assist planning/review meetings and ensure attendance as far as possible;
- ensure that the child and carer(s) receive early notification of meetings, parents' evenings and other events and that communication remains regular and positive.
- encourage Children Looked After to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible;
- ensure speedy transfer of information between individuals and other relevant agencies and to a new school if and when the child transfers;
- seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded.
- ensure that any returns on Children Looked After are completed - as requested by the Local Authority.

Role and Responsibility of Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding Children Looked After of the school by:

- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all Children Looked After and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by Children Looked After and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
- acting as an advocate for Children Looked After in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances

The SENCO will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all Children Looked After. she/he will:

- have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after
- maintain records regarding all Children Looked After, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
- monitor the educational progress of all Children Looked After and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern

The SENCO will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
- playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of Children Looked After
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties

- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Health Care Plans (HCP).

The SENCO will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- by meeting with the looked after child to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role
- by ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (this maybe the class teacher in a primary school)
- by ensuring each child has a Health Care Plan
- by requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies, including the Education of children Looked After Service, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support
- by working closely with the SENCO to ensure all Children Looked After with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning
- by having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions
- by encouraging all children to continue on to further or higher education
- by ensuring all Children Looked After are made to feel a part of the school environment

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with the and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- respond positively to a child in public care's request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary;
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
- as with all children, ensure that no child in public care is stigmatised in any way;
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Children Looked After
- positively promote the self-esteem of Children Looked After

Role and Responsibility of the Governing Body

The governing body of this school will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Children Looked After;
- be aware of whether the school has Children Looked After and how many (no names);
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Children Looked After;
- liaise with the Head Teacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to Children Looked After;
- support the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Children Looked After are met;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body (These reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons)
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

Confidentiality

- information on Children Looked After will be shared with school staff on a "need to know basis"
 - the Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting.
- Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Training

The Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) Completion

- Social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after (or a Children Looked After entering the school)
- Date is set for the completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- A copy of the form is sent to the school to enable completion of educational data PEP meeting takes place within 20 days, involving the social worker designated teacher (or other appropriate staff), carer and young person if appropriate.
- A date is set for the next pep meeting Personal Education Plan is taken to the child's statutory review and discussed within the wider context of the child's life.
- PEP sent by Social Worker to the Children Looked After Team.

Health Care Plans

Each child will have a Health Care Plan (HCP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The HCP will consider:

- the child's strengths and weaknesses
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child
- It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next HCP meeting.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children Looked After are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LEA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school.

Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Health Care Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first HCP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that Children Looked After experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that Children Looked After enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

Complaints

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head teacher's response.

Policy agreed by governing body - **September 2025**

Policy to be reviewed - **September 2027**