

Shine as Lights in the World



St. Michael's Woolmer Green C of E Primary School

Children Looked After Policy

Date of review:
Date of next review:
Responsibility:
Classification:

July 2026
July 2029
Full Governing Body
Public

Policy Objective

This policy aims to:

- Summarise how we will meet statutory guidance to promote the educational achievement and welfare of all Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (CPLA) on the roll of our school.
- Outline how our school will promote the education of Children with a Social Worker (CSW) and Children in Kinship Care

Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA

Leah Peters

Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and PLA

Debbie May

Shine as Lights in the World is our school vision and we believe it is central to the care and protection of our children, our first and most important duty. Our vision, which has been developed and widely shared with our whole community, makes safeguarding & whistle blowing everybody's responsibility. Our School adheres to the highest standards and adults model day-to-day fair and equal treatment so that all our children see in action that respect is about how we treat one another.

Our Golden Rule is: We will treat one another in a fair and equal way and treat others in the way we wish to be treated.

At St. Michael's Woolmer Green C of E Primary School we will create an environment where children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (CPLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with the DFE guidance.

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA and CPLA 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 and CPLA experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise. Our school community aims to champion the needs of CLA and CPLA to ensure they make rapid progress.

Intention

As a school, we acknowledge and understand the intention of the Virtual School Head Role Extension to Children with a Social Worker (updated July 2025), that extends the role of the Virtual School Head to use strategic influence with schools and social care to improve the educational outcomes for all children known to a social worker and those in kinship care arrangements. We understand that this guidance includes all children who are most vulnerable and educationally disadvantaged, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a supportive and stable base for all children and in promoting their academic, social, and emotional development. We understand the need for annual whole school staff training on trauma and attachment-aware

practice in the school, so that all adults, both non-teaching and teaching, fully understand and are sensitive to the barriers to learning that children can experience.

We will create an environment in which all children have a strong sense of belonging and feel valued and nurtured. Our aim is to establish a safe and inclusive culture within the school to support the well-being of both staff and children with a shared understanding of the inter-relationship between learning, well-being and safeguarding.

We will use our school policies and practice to create a 'calm, safe and supportive environment where children want to attend and where they can Shine as Lights'.

As a school, we see each academic year as an opportunity to develop our school staff to develop positive relationships with children to enable them all to achieve the best possible outcomes, and to prioritise wellbeing for all within the school community.

The Virtual School Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Toolkit training will support a greater understanding of diversity and equality and will enable all staff to develop empathetic insight around the behaviours of all children.

We have delivered the Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Toolkit training to all school staff and will develop a school response based on the principles that it promotes. We have delivered further training on relational practice supported by Therapeutic Thinking. Our staff feel confident in de-escalation and restorative practices. This whole staff approach to professional learning will help to create an ethos where all of those working within the school feel confident in reporting and evidencing issues relating to equality and diversity. Promoting an inclusive environment is key to the well-being of all children, as is a commitment to deepening their understanding of "democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance" (Ofsted 2019).

Our school's culture and values are manifested through the behaviour of all members of the school community - parents and carers, teachers, ancillary staff, visiting specialists and pupils. Our expectation is everyone within the school will interact with respect, kindness, appropriate boundaries and integrity.

Equality and Diversity

The implementation of this policy requires a reflection on those learners who have many overlapping experiences: discrimination because of a protected characteristic, SEND, poverty, adverse childhood experiences. Supporting these learners to achieve will raise achievement for all. The expectation is that all pupils will receive a high-quality, ambitious education that is inclusive of all learners. All schools and other education providers must meet their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010. All protected characteristics are supported to enable Hertfordshire education settings to provide opportunity for all.

We recognise the need to train all staff to reflect on their values, beliefs and professional responses to children. We will promote self-awareness and will facilitate regular reflective space for staff to prevent unconscious bias and to ensure that expectations and aspirations are high for every child

This section sets out the expected impact to be achieved through the implementation of the policy. Leaders will ensure that:

- a safe and secure environment is provided, where educational progress and stability is always central to the planning
- all adults are equipped with the understanding of the impact that the experience of trauma and neglect can have on the way children form relationships and learn.
- staff feel confident about relational approaches to behaviour management or regulation strategies that take into consideration what has been learnt from recent research on the effect of trauma on the brain and the potential long-term impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- to narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA, PLA and children who have experienced ACEs and their peers, ensuring **accelerated** and **rapid** progress
- CLA are prioritised for school-based interventions
- 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
- 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 nurturing support
- CLA and PLA will be positively identified within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for
- the Pupil Behaviour Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour. It is understood that all behaviour is communication and staff respond with compassion and care. Sanctions that shame and ostracise children from their peers, school, community or family are avoided. An inclusive culture and positive school ethos is created for all.
- All children and their families will feel part of our school community

Educational Planning for Children Looked After

Statutory Personal Education Plans (ePEP)

The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer and other relevant professionals. In any one school year there will be at least 3 PEP meetings for each CLA.

Roles and Responsibilities: The Headteacher and Governing Body

- will ensure that the Designated Teacher for CLA and CPLA has Qualified Teacher Status, and is a member of the senior leadership team. Designated Teachers will have a minimum of 2 days per year training to remain fully informed.
- will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and CPLA make accelerated progress and that the whole school staff receives appropriate training.
- will expect and enable significant communication, joint planning, and training with the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school so that there is a full and informed response to understanding the needs of children with a Social Worker within the school and a collaborative approach with Social Care.
- will report to governors each term on the progress and outcomes of CLA students and share their plan for improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, informing the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's developing policy and practice and accounting for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding for CLA and CPLA.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is a Statutory Post and is Leah Peters. She is a qualified teacher, member of SLT and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and CPLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or PLA has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and PLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book looks
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- developing expertise in the field of CLA and CPLA including attachment theory and trauma informed practice
- providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for CLA and PLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and PLA and school resource and staff training needs for working with this group
- prioritising CLA and CPLA for school-based additional support
- working alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead to support and promote the education of children with a Social Worker and children in Kinship Care.
- ensuring that CLA and CPLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform their annual CLA health review.

Roles and Responsibilities: Education planning for all children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care

The Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for all children through high quality learning and teaching and a drive to best possible outcomes for each child.

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for all Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care by:

- Attending relevant training, including the Virtual School toolkit training on 'Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' (to be found on the Virtual School [website](#))
- Providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Referring to the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead for advice
- Developing skills to be able to work in a relational way.
- Promoting positive relationships to help fully engage children and make rapid progress through access to any additional school-based support available and from quality first teaching.
- Be aware of the existence of potential unconscious bias about children with a social worker and mitigate against such a situation through careful reflection and ensuring that all decisions about these children are justifiable, equitable and fair.

Attendance

School attendance procedures will reflect the specific needs of all children with a Social Worker to ensure that they have good school attendance and punctuality. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools, the local authority and other local partners.

Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality, the school will contact the social worker and other professionals, including Virtual School and Attendance team support, promptly.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support CLA and CPLA during admission and transition are enshrined in the statutory codes of practice for admission:

- Prioritising CLA and CPLA at the point of admission

We follow these recommendations for all children known to a social worker who are in the process of admission to the school or transition from school elsewhere:

- There is a 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 at times of transition
- Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for all Children Looked After (CLA), Children Previously Looked After (CPLA), Children with a Social Worker (CSW) and Children in Kinship Care who have special educational needs and disabilities by ensuring:

- That all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic.
- That they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision.
- That progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEND Code of Practice.
- That any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight.
- That with the school SENCO, the EHCP review is held in a timely way with all relevant professionals invited and their views obtained.

Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on any child with a Social Worker by: familiarising themselves with the school's child protection policy and the current DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2025) [guidance](#) if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Suspensions and Exclusion:

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy (2026) alongside the [Behaviour in Schools \(2024\)](#) and the new [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from Maintained Schools](#).

[Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, Including Pupil Movement, guidance \(2024\).](#)

- We understand that the purpose of our Behaviour Policy is to provide all adults and children in our school with a safe, inclusive, learning environment in which everybody is respected.
- We will make every effort to avoid suspending a Child Looked After or Child Previously Looked After, 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.
- Where a Child Looked After is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the Designated Teacher will contact the linked Virtual School Education Adviser 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.
- Where a Child Previously Looked After is at risk of exclusion, the Designated Teacher will talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking the advice of the Virtual School on avoiding exclusion.
- We will explore alternative positive options which prioritise the young person's learning.
- We will keep the number of days out of the in-school routine to a strict minimum.
- We will always contact The Virtual School for support to find an effective solution which best meets the needs of the Child Looked After.
- We understand that 'where a Child Looked After (CLA) is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher (DT) should contact the local authority's VSH as soon as possible to discuss support for the individual child to reduce harm to the child's future education and to plan the best way to resolve the situation'. (Section 60: [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
- We will use the following methods to avoid suspending or excluding a child known to a Social Worker or a child in Kinship Care;
 - Half termly meetings about students in each year group so therefore able to plan any early intervention that may be required.
 - Inform the social worker, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead and the student's parents of any concerns as early as possible.
 - Consider what additional assessment and support may be needed to help the school address the student's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or exclusion.
 - Communicate regularly with all stakeholders in the way that works best for them. Hold regular reviews for the student with input from both academic and pastoral teams.

We understand that the Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. This duty can, in principle, apply both to the suspensions and permanent exclusions process and to the disciplinary sanctions imposed. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, governing boards of relevant settings must use their '*best endeavours*' to ensure the appropriate special educational provision is made for pupils with SEN, which will include any support in relation to behaviour management that they need because of their SEN. Our school procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of children with special educational needs.

The Headteacher, Designated Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Governing Body will ensure that all staff are briefed on the Statutory Guidance and practice outlined in this policy.

Date: July 2026

Review date: July 2029

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

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