



Villa Real School
together we achieve

Children Looked After (CLA) 2024

Responsibility: Samantha Dawson

Date: February 2024

Signed and Adopted by the Governing Body

Chair of Governors

Date: 04.03.24

Review date: February 2025

Children Looked After Policy & Guidelines
RRSA Article Links.



Article 9. Separation from parents.

Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in the best interests of the child. For example, if a parent is hurting the child). Children's parents who have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

Article 20. Children deprived of a family.

If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language.

Article 21. Adoption

If a child is adopted the first concern must be what is best for the child. All children must be adopted and kept safe, whether they were adopted in the country they were born in or in another country.

INTRODUCTION

Villa Real School is committed to ensuring all children have equitable access to a high-quality education delivered within a safe and positive learning environment, which enables them to fulfil their potential.

The school recognises that nationally and locally there is considerable underachievement of Children Looked After in comparison to their peers; largely as a result of the impact of life experiences, rather than differences in their overall ability. We will support our CLA and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential and enjoy learning. Children looked after have also been adversely impacted by the pandemic and need additional support for their emotional wellbeing.

RATIONALE

Children Looked After are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of CLA have experienced abuse or neglect to some degree. This can result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population with fewer CLA progressing to Higher Education and following progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is considered looked after by a Local Authority if he/ she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the Local Authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term '**in care**' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children's Home, in a residential school, or with parents under supervision.

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are '**accommodated**' by the Local Authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be '**Children Looked After**' (CLA). They may be Looked After by our Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours. Private fostering is not Looked After. Please see Appendix 1.

This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of Children Looked After under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of CLA, updated by Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities published July 2014 (the guidance was reviewed in 2016 but was not revised as it was considered fit for purpose) and Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021 contains information on what schools and colleges **should** do and sets out the legal duties with which schools and colleges **must** comply. It should be read alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 which applies to all the schools, including maintained nursery schools. The Children Act 1989 sets out the legal framework.

We aim to contribute towards:

- staying safe;
- being healthy;
- enjoying and achieve;
- making a positive contribution;
- achieving economic well being

COMMITMENT

The Governing Body and school staff are committed to ensuring improved life chances for Children Looked After by ensuring that:

- the Governing Body and the School staff are fully aware of the issues affecting Children Looked After and the legislation and statutory guidance underpinning the work to improve academic achievement
- the school adopts a policy for the Education of Children Looked After which is disseminated to all staff and regularly reviewed
- the Governing Body ensures that all staff within the school have received training on the needs of Children Looked After
- the confidentiality policy of the school protects Children Looked After and ensures that there is controlled and appropriate sharing of information.
- the school ensures inclusion of Children Looked After by ensuring its policies are non-discriminatory and take into account the additional issues affecting Children Looked After and other vulnerable groups
- a Designated Teacher is identified within the school to ensure the child achieves stability and success within the School in accordance with the duties specified in statutory guidance
- a Designated Governor is nominated to monitor the work of the school in supporting its Children Looked After as part of a larger group of vulnerable children
- the school actively participates in the Personal Education Planning process by ensuring appropriate representation at meetings and contribution towards SMART targets
- The Designated Teacher is confident to use the Welfare Call system to write and track PEPs

- following the completion of the PEP, the School will ensure it deploys resources appropriately to support targets being achieved
- ensure that someone attends Children's Services Reviews on each child/young person and/or always prepares a written report which promotes the continuity and stability of their education
- ensure that if/when the child transfers school all relevant information is forwarded to the receiving school as a matter of priority. This could include CPOMs transfers
- ensure that systems are in place to identify and prioritise when Children Looked After are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this in line with existing school policy
- Children Looked After will pursue accredited curriculum pathways that are appropriate to their ability and interests
- Children Looked After are encouraged to access out of school hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on friendships, self-esteem and achievement
- the school will liaise closely with parents/carers and colleagues from Children and Adult's Services to celebrate achievement and discuss concerns
- the school will liaise closely with SEND Looked After and Vulnerable Group Casework Team, to ensure the child receives further educational support as appropriate
- the school will send reports/representatives to any reviews held for the child including Personal Education Plan and Care Plan reviews
- the school will release Children Looked After from lessons to attend the PEP meetings wherever possible or gather pupil voice through a variety of methods
- the school will ensure the views of Children Looked After are heard and used to inform further development of school practice
- the school will develop strong methods of communication with parents and carers and ensure all appropriate people with parental responsibility receive invitations to school activities and events
- To monitor those students, post 18 who were previously designated as CLA.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Designated Teacher will:

- be an advocate for CLA within the School
- be proactive in identifying ways in which the school can raise attainment of CLA
- work in partnership with Durham Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those pupils who are from other Local Authorities, providing termly progress data on the progress of CLA
- give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for CLA on both the looked after child and the rest of the school community
- know all the CLA in the School, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from the school record-keeping systems as required

- attend relevant training about CLA and disseminate information and good practice to other staff
- Influence the School policy and practice for CLA
- act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to CLA, seeking advice from SEND Looked After and Vulnerable Group Casework Team and other Virtual Schools for those pupils from other Local Authorities, when appropriate
- ensure that CLA receive a positive welcome on entering the school, especially mid-year, and offer additional support wherever possible such as a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- ensure that all CLA have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 10 days of joining the school or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- arrange and contribute to PEP Review meetings
- keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at termly intervals
- monitor the targets set out in the PEP
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a CLA is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion; Section 27 of statutory guidance, 'Headteachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any CLA'
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- act as the key adviser for staff and the School Governing Body on issues relevant to CLA
- ensure that care and the school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other School events
- actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extracurricular activities for CLA
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a Looked After Child transfers to another educational placement
- report to the School Governing Body on CLA in the School and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- agree with the Social Worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings and other events
- prepare reports for the Governing Body to inform and share information at meetings to include:
 - the number of CLA on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP
 - their attendance compared to other pupils
 - their attainment (using internal data and external data) compared to other pupils
 - the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
 - the destinations of pupils who leave the school
- attend Governing Body meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of CLA

- prepare reports of the CLA and share with Link Governor termly all relevant data including their progress against PEP targets, attendance, academic attainment and current attainment
- encourage all CLA to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities to encourage self-confidence and self-worth

All school staff will:

- positively promote the raising of a CLA's self esteem
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of CLA
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a CLA's progress
- ensure any CLA is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- follow school procedures
- be familiar with the school policy and guidance on CLA and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a CLA is experiencing difficulties
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times

The School Governing Body will:

- ensure all Governing Body members are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for CLA
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for CLA (Section 9 of Statutory guidance)
- liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of CLA are met
- Identify a Governing Body member with special responsibility for CLA;
- nominate a Governing Body member with responsibility for CLA who links with the Designated Teacher
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give CLA equal access in respect of:
 - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
 - out of School learning and extra-curricular activities
 - additional educational support
 - work experience and careers guidance
- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for CLA
- In the event of exclusion, ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meeting of the CLA
- challenge the Designated Teacher in a robust and rigorous manner to ensure that CLA's attainment and achievement is in line with non CLA

Durham Local Authority will:

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of CLA and those children with a social worker.
- Provide a specialist team to provide a wrap-around service for CLA as part of Durham Virtual School
- lead the drive to improve educational and Social Care standards for CLA
- ensure that the education for this group of pupils/students is as good as that provided for every other pupil/student
- ensure that CLA receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ensure that every CLA has a school to go to within 10 days of coming into care or of coming to Durham from another authority
- make sure that each CLA has a PEP according to national guidance
- ensure that every School has a Designated Teacher for CLA and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer including options advice and guidance for Key Stage 3-5 transition
- be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special educational needs of CLA and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs

APPENDIX 1

Private Fostering

What is it

- When a child under 16 (18 if disabled) is cared for and provided accommodation by someone other than a parent or a close relative, i.e., someone who is not a grandparent, brother or sister, uncle or aunt (full or half-blood) or a step-parent
- Arrangement is intended to last more than 28 days
- Arrangement has been made privately by parents

Examples of Private Fostering include Children/Young People

- Staying with a family friend as result of problems at home
- Sent to this country for Education or Health Care
- Teenagers living with family of boyfriend/girlfriend
- Asylum Seeking or Refugee children
- Language students living with host families

Responsibilities of Professionals

- Professionals becoming aware of Private Fostering arrangements must notify the Local Authority
- Teachers having day to day contact with children/young people may become aware of such arrangements and must refer to Children's Services
First Contact: 03000 267979