



“Let your light shine brightly.”

Matthew 5:16

Children Looked After Policy

Policy accepted by SLT on:	15/6/2020
Next review:	Summer 2023
Signed (Headteacher):	<i>R. Kaye</i>
Statutory policy: Yes/No	On school website: Yes/No

Designated Teacher	Rupert Kaye
CLA Link Governor	John Price

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy should be taken and used as part of Christ Church's overall strategy, and implemented within the context of our vision, instrument of government aims, and values as a Church of England School.

Christ Church's Governing Body is committed to providing quality education for all pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes.

School staff and governors acknowledge 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 *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children: statutory guidance for local authorities* (DfE, Feb 2018) and Section 52 of the Children Act 2004. Children who are "looked after" may be "accommodated", "in care" or "remanded/detained" as follows:

Accommodated – 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.

2. Issues faced by children looked after (CLA)

CLA pupils 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;
- behaviour issues;
- poor attachments to others;
- a need to be very private.

This makes CLA pupils an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. Governors are committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible, and will ensure that the following are in place and are working effectively:

- a Designated Teacher for CLA;
- a CLA Link Governor;
- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for all CLA;
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect CLA;
- effective strategies that support the education of this vulnerable group.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for CLA;
- ensure a smooth transition and welcome induction for the child and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status;
- ensure that a PEP is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the child and the carer, in liaison with the child's social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings;
- 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);
- coordinate 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 CLA to participate in extracurricular 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 CLA are completed – as requested by the Somerset Virtual School CLA Team.

3.2 School staff

School staff should:

- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with 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 for that member of staff 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 CLA;
- positively promote the self-esteem of CLA.

3.3 The Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for CLA;
- be aware of whether the school has CLA and how many (no names);
- nominate a CLA Link 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);
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for CLA;
- liaise with the Headteacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to CLA;
- support the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of CLA are met;
- ensure Pupil Premium funding is targeted, and interventions are evidence-based and in the best interests of the child, to narrow attainment gaps and ensure positive educational outcomes for CLA;
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually, and at least every three years.

4. Confidentiality

Information on CLA 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.

5. Training

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

6. Personal Education Plan (PEP) completion

See Appendix A: Somerset Virtual School PEP review process.

6.1 For CLA pupils new to the school

- The social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after (or a child looked after entering the school).
- A date is set for a PEP meeting – which must take place within 20 days of the CLA pupil starting at school and should involve the social worker, the Designated Teacher (or other appropriate staff), carer and young person if appropriate.

6.2 Ongoing PEP timings for CLA pupils

- Five working days prior to the PEP meeting, the PEP form is sent from the social worker to the Designated Teacher to enable completion of educational data.
- At the PEP meeting, a date is set for the next PEP meeting (which should take place within six months).
- Within ten working days after the PEP meeting, the completed PEP form is sent from the Designated Teacher to Somerset Virtual School CLA Team for logging and monitoring purposes.
- Copies of the PEP form are taken to the child's statutory review and discussed within the wider context of the child's life.

APPENDIX A: SOMERSET VIRTUAL SCHOOL PEP REVIEW PROCESS

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) Process – guidance from Somerset Virtual School for Children Looked After (May 2017)
<https://www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-PEP-process-2017.pdf>

Somerset Virtual School places a great deal of importance on the completion of high quality Personal Education Plans (PEPs). We believe the PEP should provide a detailed snapshot of a young person's education, provide an opportunity for their voice to be heard and their views shared, and set out the roles and responsibilities of all those working to help CLA achieve the very best they can at school.

What is a PEP?

All looked after children must have a care plan which is regularly reviewed by the local authority. Sitting alongside this is the Personal Education Plan (PEP), which should identify intended educational objectives and outcomes for Children Looked After and be shared with all of the professionals who are involved in their care.

The Somerset PEP pro forma was thoroughly revised and re-launched in September 2016. It is annually reviewed and revised to take account of changes in legislation, County Council policy or practice and the views of stakeholders.

Guidance and support materials, a checklist to ensure effective completion and copies of the PEP pro forma can be accessed via the Virtual School website:

<http://www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk/staff/peps-and-accessing-funding/>

Support for the completion of high quality PEP documents is available to Designated Teachers through the termly network meetings as well as the online support documents. Social Workers are encouraged to attend the training events provided twice each year where PEP completion is a standing item. The Virtual school encourages DTs and Social Workers to seek advice and guidance and will meet with schools or CSC teams to develop understanding and effectiveness in relation to education and CLA.

Why do I need to complete a PEP?

The PEP Process allows everyone involved with the child/young person, including the Virtual School, to have a clear understanding of what is needed to ensure the best possible academic outcomes and how these needs are going to be met. The PEP process also accounts for the funding available to schools for supporting their CLA. This funding is released to schools on the understanding that a quality PEP document is submitted and accepted by the Virtual School.

The PEP must be fully completed and must have clear information regarding the use of the Pupil Premium funding and how it is linked to the child's learning targets. It must also explain the use of any SEND funding where appropriate. Where PEPs are not fully

completed or the use of the funding is not clear, a member of staff from the Virtual School will be in touch to clarify this and request further information. Funding will not be released to schools where satisfactory information is not submitted.

For further information on Pupil Premium funding for Somerset's CLA, please see our Pupil Premium Policy on the Virtual School website:

<http://www.somersetvirtuelschool.co.uk/staff/peps-and-accessing-funding/>

How often should we have a PEP Review?

In Somerset, PEPs are held every term. If you have CLA from other counties the frequency of their PEPs could differ. The Social Worker for the CLA or the Virtual Head for that authority will be able to advise you on this. PEP meetings can be called more frequently if there are changes in a CLA's circumstances.

A PEP meeting should be convened by the Social Worker, within 20 days of a child coming into care and, if a CLA moves school, a PEP meeting should be convened before they move, to plan for transition or as soon as possible after the move if it is an emergency response.

Who should attend a PEP meeting?

The PEP meeting should be attended by the Designated Teacher, Social Worker, Foster Carer/s and the young person (if appropriate). There may also be other people in attendance such as the CLA's class teacher and/or teaching assistant, parents, CLA Advisory Teacher and anyone else who works closely with the child and who may be able to contribute to the PEP.

Who initiates the PEP?

The PEP should be initiated by the Social Worker who is responsible for the child/young person and must include notifying thevirtuelschool@somerset.gov.uk in plenty of time, to ensure all paperwork is circulated and Virtual School Advisory teachers contacted. The Social Worker should invite all relevant parties, including the school, foster carer/s, parents and anyone else involved in the care and/or education of the child.

Virtual School Advisory Teachers attend many PEPs but not all. If you feel it is important that an Advisory Teacher (AT) is present, the relevant AT should be contacted directly with as much notice as possible. Where an AT cannot attend, they may be able to phone in during the meeting, speak with the Social Worker or DT in advance of the meeting or follow up any queries after the meeting.

If there are concerns regarding the scheduling of a PEP meeting, the Virtual School Advisory Teacher should be contacted to support the process. Ideally, the PEP takes place in the first half of a term but this is not a requirement.

Who should complete the PEP Paperwork?

The Designated Teacher or Virtual School Advisory Teacher will usually take the lead in writing the PEP and should begin the PEP meeting by checking through Part A of the PEP to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date. The PEP form should be completed as much as possible at the meeting, and completed by the agreed chair as soon as possible after the meeting. Once the PEP is completed, it is the Designated Teacher's responsibility to email the form to the social worker and thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk within 5 working days. The Social Worker's responsibility is to circulate the document to carers/parents as appropriate.

What happens once a PEP is submitted?

When a completed PEP is submitted to thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk, the PEP Co-ordinators use the information to update the Virtual School register. They record any changes since the last PEP, attendance details, exclusions, a summary of Pupil Premium spending, progress statements and SEND status. A copy of the completed PEP is filed and another sent to the AT.

The AT ensures that the PEP is completed satisfactorily. A PEP check document is used to summarise the outcomes and this is filed. Any queries relating to the completed PEP are followed up by the AT with the school or Social Worker. If funding above the termly allocation has been requested, the AT ensures that a detailed summary of the planned use of this funding is provided and shares the request with the Virtual Head. Outcomes regarding additional funding are communicated to the school by the AT.

Quality Assurance

Each month, a sample of completed PEPs is quality assured by the Virtual Head, Lead Education Advisor and Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist (CLA). Monthly monitoring of the total number of PEPs booked and submitted is completed by the PEP Co-ordinators and the area teams.

If following support for the Designated Teacher and input from the Virtual School, a school is found to be regularly submitting PEPs that do not meet the required standard, the Virtual Head will address this with the school's Headteacher in order to secure high-quality documents.