



# Slough Virtual School

Model CLA policy for schools



## Policy Summary

This policy is to be used as a template for schools.

**Policy Owner:** Anne Bunce,  
Virtual School Head

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©Slough Children's Services Trust  
St Martins Place, 51 Bath Road Slough SL1 3UF

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A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be  
..... Safe, Secure and Successful

## Contents

Contents.....	1
Introduction .....	3
Barriers to learning .....	3
Attainment.....	4
Personal Education Plans (PEPs).....	4
Pupil Premium.....	5
Virtual School Head (VSH).....	6
Assessment .....	6
Attendance.....	6
Extra-curricular activities .....	7
Pastoral support.....	7
Confidentiality.....	7
Roles and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher .....	7
Roles and responsibilities of all staff .....	8
Roles and responsibilities of the governing body.....	9

## Introduction

XXXXXXX School is committed to providing quality education and to promoting the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA).

A child who is looked after by a Local Authority (referred to as a Child Looked After) as defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989 means a child who is subject to a care order (or an interim care order) or who is accommodated by the local authority.

Education is closely linked to quality of life in adulthood. Children looked after by a Local Authority suffer from a number of interlocking educational disadvantages. Some are 'external' such as the experience of frequently disrupted schooling and the lack of opportunities to acquire basic skills. Others are pathological, such as low self-esteem. However, a crucial factor is the level of expectation about what Children Looked After are capable of and the degree of priority given to educational issues in their daily lives.

Education is not solely confined to school achievement. It includes the acquisition of skills such as riding a bicycle, swimming, playing a musical instrument and the development of individual special interests and talents. The acquisition of skills improves children's self-confidence which enables them to make further achievements. Such skills also contribute to improved health, particularly mental health.

We aim to close the attainment and progress gap between Children Looked After and their peers and to create a culture of high aspirations for them. We believe that our Children Looked After should experience the same opportunities, access and outcomes as their peers.

## Barriers to learning

Children Looked After are a vulnerable group, who may also face additional barriers. The following have been identified as common factors which can contribute to underperformance of Children Looked After:

- Unmet emotional, social, mental and physical health needs
- Lives often characterised by instability
- Attachment issues
- Early life trauma
- Erratic attendance
- Insufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- Primary carers not equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development
- Gaps in their learning with a fragmented education history
- Insufficient tracking and monitoring of progress resulting in a delay in implementing support
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence
- Schools not having high enough expectations and aspirations for Children Looked After

- School Exclusions and No School Place

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children. XXX School has a Designated Teacher for Children Looked After to ensure that all the educational needs of Children Looked After are met. We also have a School Counsellor/Inclusion Leader who regularly works with each Child Looked After, to ensure that their emotional welfare needs are met.

## Attainment

We have high expectations of Children Looked After and are continuously striving to close the attainment gap between Children Looked After and their peers. We closely monitor and track the attainment and progress of each Child Looked After, every half term. To improve the attainment of our Children Looked After, we ensure the following:

- A framework of high expectations and aspirations for Children Looked After
- A curriculum that provides stretch and challenge
- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is of high quality
- An understanding of the common barriers to learning often experienced by Children Looked After and identifying strategies that will mitigate their impact
- Rigorous monitoring and tracking of the academic and social performance of Children Looked After
- Appropriate forms of support with early intervention
- A culture that takes account of the pupil's views and engages Children Looked After in the target setting process
- Recognition of the role of carers as partners in learning and engaging them fully in all aspects of their child's education
- Strong pastoral support with the Designated Teacher at the centre of communication
- A child-centred multi-agency approach
- Effective use of the Pupil Premium funding where the impact of interventions implemented are critically monitored and evaluated
- All staff to have high expectations and high aspirations for children looked after
- Children looked after are encouraged to join extra-curricular clubs to build relationships and work on their strengths and interests

## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All Children Looked After have an effective and high quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) which forms the education component of the child's overall care plan. The PEP is a record of the child's education and training. It describes what needs to happen for a Child Looked After to help him/her to fulfil his/her full potential. Given that there is a greater likelihood that a Child Looked After will move education placements more than other children, the PEP is the core document which enables children and their Social Workers, carers and teachers

to reach a shared and agreed understanding of what needs to be done, how, and by whom (including services and named people) to implement the plan.

There is a range of information which must be included in the PEP:

- The child's views and feelings about school
- A chronology of the child's educational history
- Details of the schools attended, and the reasons for leaving
- An indication of the extent to which a child's education has been disrupted before entering care or accommodation
- Information about the child's attendance and disciplinary record at each school attended
- Information about academic attainment and progress and any special educational needs and details of specialist support which is put in place to promote the child's educational achievement
- Details of the child's leisure interests
- Details of the arrangements in place to minimise disruption of the child's education and training where a change in the child's educational arrangements is unavoidable
- A description of the role of the people who care for a child in supporting his/her educational achievements, including how they support the child to pursue leisure interests
- Objectives and targets which relate to educational aspirations (academic and non-academic), and leisure interests which support the child to enjoy learning and to achieve and for which he/she and his/her carers feel a sense of ownership
- Details of the support the child needs and will receive in relation to, for example, one-to-one tuition, transition and integration support where a child moves schools or other education setting
- A clear line of accountability which demonstrates a shared understanding and responsibility for supporting a child's education, and which shows who is responsible for supporting the child in relation to implementing each aspect of the PEP

The PEP should be treated as a 'living document' which helps create a shared understanding about how everyone can contribute to helping the child to succeed. Termly PEP meetings are held, attended by the Designated Teacher, other relevant school staff such as SENDCO form or class teacher, Foster or other carer(s), Social Worker, in some cases the birth parent(s) and the Child Looked After (where they want to be). At these meetings, each Child Looked After's PEP is reviewed in order to make sure that it fully reflects the needs of the child, remains up to date and is implemented.

## Pupil Premium

Children Looked After are one of the groups of pupils that attract Pupil Premium Plus funding. Local Authorities receive a Pupil Premium Plus grant allocation based on the number of children looked after for at least one day and aged 4 to 15 at 31st August, as

recorded in the latest Children Looked After data return. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of children looked after and close the attainment gap between this group and their peers. Use of this Pupil Premium funding is closely linked to each child's targets. Funding is held by the Virtual School and must be applied for (usually via the PEP) in direct relation to meeting a child's SMART target. It should have a direct impact on specific support for the child looked after.

## Virtual School Head (VSH)

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its Children Looked After, wherever they live or are educated. That person, the Virtual School Head, must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England. The Virtual School Head is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's children looked after, including those placed out-of-authority. They have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after. Virtual School Heads ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes and that all children looked after, wherever they are placed, have a PEP. They ensure that there are arrangements in place to promote a culture that takes account of the child's views according to age and understanding in identifying and meeting their educational needs.

## Assessment

The attainment and progress of each Child Looked After is monitored closely by all involved in their PEP. This includes the Designated Teacher, class teacher, SENDCo, Social Worker, carers and the Virtual School.

- Each Child Looked After's attainment and progress is recorded termly on their PEP and is discussed at length at their PEP meeting.
- We ensure that all Children Looked After have SMART (specific, significant, stretching, measurable, meaningful, motivational, agreed, achievable, action-orientated, realistic, relevant, results-orientated, time bound, tangible, trackable) targets in place. Careful consideration is given to the interventions necessary to improve each target and the identification of who will support the child to meet these targets. Where necessary, funding can be applied for to help the child meet these targets.

## Attendance

- The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After monitors and records attendance and punctuality of each Child Looked After. This information is shared with the child's Social Worker and Carer(s) at PEP meetings.
- If a Child Looked After is identified as having poor attendance or punctuality, the Virtual School will be alerted and targets will be set.
- At XXX School, attendance is celebrated through several incentives XXXXX

## Extra-curricular activities

We recognise that Children Looked After are often prevented from joining in with after school activities because of transport arrangements, for example. As we believe it is essential that Children Looked After are able to play a full part in school life, the following strategies are in place to help them to do this:

- The Designated Teacher monitors the involvement of Children Looked After in extra-curricular activities.
- The Designated Teacher liaises with the young person, carer(s) and Social Worker to try to promote involvement in extra-curricular activities through PEP meetings.

## Pastoral support

As well as ensuring high-quality learning opportunities, we also place great emphasis on supporting the personal development and well-being of Children Looked After.

- Our Children Looked After meet regularly with our School Counsellor/Inclusion Leader to provide them with an opportunity to talk about and work through their experiences and feelings. These sessions also contain an element of art and play therapy as a means of expression for these children.
- We work closely with outside agencies to provide our Children Looked After with experiences they otherwise may not have access to, e.g. to provide them with music lessons as a means of increasing self-esteem and confidence.
- The Designated Teacher ensures that Children Looked After's class teachers know who their carer is and the rights of the parent(s), so that they know who should receive copies of newsletters, reports etc.

## Confidentiality

- Information on Children Looked After is shared with school staff on a 'need to know' basis.
- Information about Children Looked After is only shared with relevant parties, e.g. Social Workers and Carers and is not discussed with anyone else outside of school.
- Personal information divulged to the School Counsellor/Inclusion Leader by individual Children Looked After is shared at PEP meetings when necessary, but is not discussed outside of these meeting, unless such information raises a safeguarding issue. In such cases, the school Safeguarding Policy and procedures will be followed.
- Any reports to the Governing Body in relation to Children Looked After will not include names of children.

## Roles and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher

- To act as an advocate for Children Looked After
- To act as a source of information and advice about Children Looked After's needs

- To ensure that all staff are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Children Looked After and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- To monitor the educational progress of all Children Looked After
- To ensure that interventions are in place for those Children Looked After that are underachieving or not reaching their full potential
- To ensure that each Child Looked After has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP is an evolving record of each Child Looked After's attainment, progress and next steps to enable them to make expected progress and to fulfil their potential
- To update PEPs termly and to keep any other records up to date
- To ensure that the educational targets within the PEP are implemented fully and that all relevant staff are aware of them
- To lead PEP meetings with social workers and carers
- To take account of each Child Looked After's views in identifying and meeting their educational needs (according to age and understanding)
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new Child Looked After into the school
- To ensure that each Child Looked After has an identified member of staff that they can talk to (this may not necessarily be the Designated Teacher)
- To ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis
- To encourage Children Looked After to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals, and report on the progress of all Children Looked After on the school role to relevant parties
- To ensure Pupil Premium funding is used effectively to help close the gap between Children Looked After and their peers
- To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register
- To attend any relevant training and network events organised by the Local Authority

### Roles and responsibilities of all staff

- To ensure that any Child Looked After is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- To be familiar with the policy and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings
- To respond positively to a Child Looked After's request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary



- To ensure that no Child Looked After is stigmatised in any way
- To provide a supportive climate to enable a Child Looked After to achieve stability within the school setting
- To have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Children Looked After
- To positively promote the self-esteem of Children Looked After

### Roles and responsibilities of the governing body

- To ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Children Looked After
- To be aware of how many Children Looked After are on roll at the school (without identifying their identity)
- To ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Children Looked After
- To 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
- To support the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Children Looked After are met
- To nominate a Governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the Governing Body. (These reports will not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons)
- To review the effective implementation of this policy biannually.