



## **ROEBUCK ACADEMY**

### **CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY 2023**

Date Adopted: 04.09.20  
Reviewed: 14 November 2023

**Policy Objective:**

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (PLA) on the roll of this school.

**Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA**

Clare Elson.

**Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and PLA**

Nadia Hodges.

At **Roebuck Academy** we will create an environment where children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (PLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with the *(DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018 )*.

**Equality and Diversity statement**

This policy is intended to be helpful for improvement in the education available for all learners but has a focus on children looked after who, statistically, experience disadvantage in education. The criteria are clear that the expectation is that all learners receive a high-quality, ambitious education; that providers are inclusive of all learners; and that all providers must be meeting their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010 and all protected characteristics therein.

An inclusive learning environment in which everybody is respected is conducive to a happy and healthy learning environment.

The Virtual School Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Toolkit training will support a greater understanding of diversity and equality and is relevant to many children particularly those returning to school in September 2020.

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe, (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023).

In particular they should ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and the child's contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. They should have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her. The designated safeguarding lead should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child, (KCSIE, 2023).

A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all

agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group, (KCSIE 2023).

### **Children with social workers**

Whilst all children should be protected, it is important that governing bodies and proprietors recognise (and reflect in their policies and procedures) some groups of children are potentially at greater risk of harm, (KCSIE 2023)

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs, Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health, (KCSIE 2023) These children will have a Child in Need and Child protection plans. All CLA children will have social workers. This informs decisions about safeguarding and promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services), (KCSIE 2023).

Local authorities should share the fact a child has a social worker, and the designated safeguarding lead should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both local authorities and schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, (Paragraph 172 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023).

### **Children missing in education**

Children, missing from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safe guarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation. It is important the school or college's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and also helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to a local authority and children's social care and need a social worker (such as on a child in need or child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community, (KCSIE 2023).

Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or to a child missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services, , (Paragraph 173 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023).

### **The Designated teacher**

Governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies must appoint a designated teacher and should work with local authorities to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are looked after. With the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the Children and Social Worker Act 2017, designated teachers have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who have left care through adoption,

special guardianship or child arrangements orders or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales. The designated teacher **must** have appropriate training and the relevant qualifications and experience, (KCSIE 2023).

**Statutory guidance: Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children contains further information on the role and responsibilities of the designated teacher.**

**Why looked-after and previously looked-after children need the support of a designated teacher?**

1. Many looked-after and previously looked-after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning. Excellent practice in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children already exists in many schools. The designated teacher role is statutory to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.
1. Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children shows that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 when compared to non-looked-after children.
2. The support that schools and designated teachers give to children who are looked-after and previously looked-after should not be seen in isolation. All looked-after and previously looked-after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked-after children, parents or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority, the Virtual School Head will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school. (DfE Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)

## **Virtual School Heads**

Every local authority in England is required to appoint an officer (called a Virtual School Head) to discharge the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of the children it looks after, regardless of where they are placed. Maintained schools and academies are required to have a designated teacher for looked-after children. Given the interrelationship between health and education outcomes, social workers should ensure that the authority's VSH and the designated teacher for looked-after children are aware of information about the child's physical, emotional or mental health that may have an impact on his or her learning and educational progress, (Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England March 2015)

Virtual school heads manage pupil premium plus for looked after children; they receive this funding based on the latest published number of children looked after by the local authority. In maintained schools and academies, the designated teacher should work with the virtual school head to discuss how funding can be best used to support the progress of looked after

children in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan. The designated teacher should also work with the virtual school head to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children, (KCSIE 2023).

As with designated teachers, following the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, virtual school heads have responsibilities towards children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside of England or Wales. Their primary role for this group will be the provision of information and advice to relevant parties, (KCSIE 2023).

Statutory guidance on Promoting the Education of Looked After Children contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads, (KCSIE 2023).

In addition to their statutory duties, the role of virtual school heads was extended in June 2021, to include a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker, (KCSIE 2022).

In offering advice and information to workforces that have relationships with children with social workers, virtual school heads should identify and engage with key professionals, helping them to understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children. This should include Designated Safeguarding Leads, social workers, headteachers, governors, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, mental health leads, other local authority officers, including Designated Social Care Officers for SEND, where they exist, (KCSIE 2022).

Non-statutory guidance on [promoting the education of children with a social worker](#) contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads, (KCSIE 2022).

Our Hertfordshire Virtual school Head is Marietta Harrow, Head of Achievement, Virtual School, Children's Services.

### **Definition of CLA, (looked after child and previously looked after child)**

- A child 'looked-after by a local authority' is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014;
- A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales; and;
- A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if s/he is in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

(DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018 ).

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA 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 experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise.

Our school community aims to champion the needs of CLA to ensure they make rapid progress during their period in care.

**NB.** This policy is designed to be read in conjunction with the school 'Guidance for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After' which provides the detail of school provision for CLA. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/virtual-school/documents/model-school-policy-guidance-for-schools-on-the-education-of-children-looked-after-201809.pdf>

#### **Our Aims for CLA:**

- To provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and PLA;
- To narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLA and their peers, ensuring **accelerated** and **rapid** progress;
- That they benefit from school-based interventions, including 'Making Good Progress 121 Tuition', even if they do not meet the criteria for that *intervention (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)* and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact;
- 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, to ensure accelerated and rapid progress (*DfE Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*);
- 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 discrete support, as appropriate;
- CLA will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018.*);
- CLA and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community in recognition of the particular needs of this group (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children*

statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018).

## **Educational Planning for Children Looked After**

### **Personal Education Plans (ePEP) and CLA Self Evaluation Forms (CLASEF):**

The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer and other relevant professionals. The school will complete the CLASEF to inform the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's policy and practice, to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding and to inform the school Governing Body as the annual report.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

**The Headteacher and Governing Body** are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA. They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to monitor that all CLA and PLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receives appropriate training.

**The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After** is Clare Elson, she is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA 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;
- 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 for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*);

- Ensuring that CLA and PLA 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.

Working directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents or guardians to:

- Promote good home-school links;
- Support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians;
- Ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- Ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy; and (DfE Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)

**All staff** will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- Reading the 'school policy' and 'school policy guidance document' for CLA;
- Attending training, as appropriate;
- Providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher;
- Referring to the Designated Teacher for advice;
- Playing their part in creating an attachment and trauma-informed 'CLA-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for CLA by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available.

#### **Attendance:**

**School attendance procedures** reflect the specific needs of CLA and PLA to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school contacts the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in the attendance policy.

#### **Admissions/ Transitions:**

**School procedures to support CLA during admission and transition include:**

- Prioritising CLA and PLA at the point of admission;
- The 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 for CLA and PLA at times of transition;



- Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss.

### **Additional Educational Needs:**

All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and PLA with additional educational needs by:

- Having high expectations;
- Ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria (*in line with the DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*);
- Ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified and teaching to the plan is systematic; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight (*in line with the Lamb Report, Dec '09*);
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the expectation of progress each academic year, as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit, ePEP and CLASEF.

### **Special Educational Needs:**

**All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA who have special educational needs by:**

- Having high expectation of minimum levels of progress each academic year (in line with the expectation set out in the ePEP and CLASEF);
- Ensuring that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision (in line with the SEN Code of Practice);
- Ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic;
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEN Code of Practice;
- Ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight.

### **Safeguarding:**

**School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by:** familiarising themselves with the 'School Policy Guidance for Children in Care' and following the school's child protection policy and the 'DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2020.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/912592/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_Sep\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912592/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_Sep_2020.pdf)

If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them **immediately**. If staff have a concern, they should follow the school's child protection policy and speak to the Designated Senior Person/DSL (or deputy).

### **Alternative Provision:**

**We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision alternative to daily attendance at school will be:**

- A plan that will retain the CLA on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+;
- An agreed part of the overall ePEP for the student;
- Full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality;
- Meet the educational needs of the CLA or PLA;
- Will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting;
- Will be monitored regularly and that ePEPs will include the school and the alternative provider.

### **Exclusion:**

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy in line with the statutory guidance published in February 2018 (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*). We will make every effort to avoid excluding a CLA, 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. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of CLA and PLA. CLA and PLA with special educational needs should have exclusion as a behaviour management action as a last possible resort (*Regulation 4(1) (c) of the Equalities Act 2010* which means that a head teacher could only lawfully exclude a child for a reason relating to their disability, even a disability that results in the child having a tendency to physical abuse, if reasonable adjustments have been made).

### **Multi-Agency Working:**<sup>1</sup>

School staff will make every effort to engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of CLA and PLA.

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

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

- Website: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool)
- Twitter: @VS\_HCC
- Email: [virtualschool@hertfordhsire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@hertfordhsire.gov.uk)
- Phone: 01992 556915