Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School

Children Looked After Policy

Date: March 2025

Signed:

Nicola O'Connell – Headteacher

Jane Bisseker – Chair of Governors

Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School policy for: Children Looked After, Previously Looked After, Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care - Using the virtual school model policy

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This is a 'model' policy that schools may adapt or adopt according to schools' own circumstances.

A Model School Policy for the Education of all Children

- **Children Looked After (CLA)**
- **Children Previously Looked After (PLA)**
- **Children with a social worker (CSW)**
- **Children in kinship care**

Policy Objective

To implement

- the 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.
- to 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 CPLA
Sunny Chandra
……

Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and CPLA
Jane Bisseker
……..

Name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead with responsibility for children with a Social Worker
Nicola O'Connell – Headteacher
……

At Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School we will ensure that 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 to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the DfE guidance.

Intention

As a school, we acknowledge and understand the intention of the revised guidance implemented in September 2024, by the DfE to local authorities, 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 new 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 feel valued, nurtured and that they belong.

Our aim is to establish a safe and inclusive culture within the school to support the well-being of both staff and pupils through an informed 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 and young people want to attend and where they can learn and thrive'.*

We will do this in recognition of the wider context where; '*The behaviour policy is the starting point for laying out our vision and is one of the important ways this school culture is communicated to pupils, staff, and parents and carers'*. **DfE: Behaviour in schools Advice for headteachers and school staff** February 2024. See here for new guidance.

We know that it is likely that children have experienced loss and educational damage as a result of the pandemic and as a school, we see each academic year as an opportunity to develop our school staff to engage in positive relational practice to enable all to achieve the best possible outcomes and standards.

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 better understand 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 also prepared an action plan to ensure that the whole school takes a holistic approach to well-being for all pupils. Our staff feel confident in de-escalation and restorative practices. This professional learning for all staff 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 pupils, as is a commitment to deepening pupils' understanding of "democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance" (Ofsted 2019).

Our Behaviour Policy is for staff and pupils alike. We understand that positive behaviour management is completely influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children who are part of this school, and that learning is taught as well as 'caught'.

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 protective characteristic, SEND, poverty, other adverse childhood experiences. Supporting these learners to achieve will raise achievement for all. The expectation is that all learners 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 schools to provide opportunity for all. See here for the Hertfordshire strategy.

We acknowledge that we should train all staff to reflect on their professional responses to children and to prevent unconscious bias from affecting aspiration.

Impact

This section sets out the expected impact to be achieved through the implementation of the policy in school.

- 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).
- The gap between the attainment of children who have experienced ACEs and their peers is narrowed, **accelerated** and **rapid** progress is made.
- School-based interventions are accessed, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention see guidance here and to use the allocated Pupil Premium *Plus* (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- All CLA to have at least termly Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings each academic year and for the joint planning and quality first teaching to have measurable impact on each child's learning on a daily basis (see guidance here).
- All adults provide sensitive, child-led support, with at least one key adult with whom the child or young person has a trusted relationship and who will act as an advocate for them and take a special interest in their progress in all school activities.
- School systems facilitate nurturing support, which includes strong relationships between school staff, parents or carers and children.
- Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After are positively identified within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for (see guidance here).
- The Behaviour Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour, and 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 every pupil.
- All children and their families feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged in this school community.

  (See the Virtual School 'Kinder by Design' checklist for revision of school behaviour policy.)

Statutory Educational Planning for all Children Looked After

Statutory Personal Education Plans (ePEP)

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. In any one school year there will be at least 3 PEP meetings for each CLA.

The Headteacher and Governing Body:

- will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role and have at least 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 and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receive appropriate training.
- will also ensure that there is an expectation of 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 complete both sections of the Report to Governors (formerly CLASEF), to share their plan for improvement and development in school for disadvantaged children and also to inform the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's developing policy and practice, and to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding for CLA and CPLA to inform the school Governing Body in an annual report.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is a Statutory Post and in 2025 is Kathryn Lloyd.

He/she is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and CPLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or CPLA has access to quality first teaching.
- tracking the progress of CLA and CPLA 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
- delivering the Virtual School training: 'An introduction to Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' to the whole school and update training sessions annually
- providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive, relationship-based and has high expectations for CLA and CPLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and CPLA and staff training needs for working with this group

- working alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead to support and promote the education of children with a Social Worker and children in Kinship Care
- prioritising CLA and CPLA for school-based additional support (see guidance here)
- 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 and every child.

Children known to a social worker achieve significantly less well than others at all stages of education and poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends[1].

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 a relational culture 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 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

[1] Review of Children in Need (2019)

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), 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 2024) guidance if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Suspensions and Exclusion:

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy (*enter date)* 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 our policy on behaviour concerns the conduct of staff and children alike. We understand that behaviour management influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children who are part of this school, and that learning about behaviour regulation is taught as well as 'caught'.
- 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 looked-after child (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;

    - Use of Therapeutic thinking practices and Trauma and attachment strategies

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 March 2025

Review date March 2026

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

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