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# LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

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<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	
To determine and approve policy and ensure compliance	ESA School Board
To implement, deliver and comply	Headteacher and School Board
<b>APPROVAL DATE</b>	June 2023
<b>COMMITTEE</b>	ESA School Board
<b>DURATION</b>	3 Years
<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	June 2026
<b>SLT LEAD</b>	Designated Teacher for CLA/PLAC

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## 1. AIM

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) on roll at Elstree Screen Arts Academy. Any reference in this policy to Children Looked After (CLA) includes Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).

## 2. RATIONALE

There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995, a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework
- Underachievement in further and higher education

At ESA we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after children (PLAC) 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 Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.'* Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018.

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA/PLAC and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development. We promote whole school staff training in their specific needs, so that all adults at this school are sensitive to the barriers to learning that CLA experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise. We understand the need to work in a 'relationship-based' way so that children looked after and previously looked after children (PLAC) feel valued and a part of our school community.

## 3. DEFINITION

The Children's Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'looked after children' (LAC) or children in care or 'children looked after' (CLA) by the local authority, the term used by Hertfordshire.

Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days a year. Previously looked after children are those who immediately after being in care became subject to an adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home, or
- In a residential school

#### 4. THE ROLE OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD

The Children and Families Act 2014 amends section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that it's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. This officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH). In Hertfordshire, Felicity Evans is the Virtual School Head.

It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day to day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

#### 5. OUR AIMS FOR CLA AND PLAC

- to provide a safe and secure environment where educational progress and stability is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and PLAC
- to narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLAC and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- that they benefit from school-based interventions, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.' Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018) and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- for all CLA and PLAC 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, (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.' Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018)
- for all adults to provide sensitive, child-led support, adopting a relationship based approach and 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.
- that school systems facilitate discrete support, that includes a strong relationship between schools' staff, carers and children looked after on roll.

- CLA and PLAC 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 on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018)
- Our Behaviour Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour, but we understand that not all behaviour is a matter of choice. We will not enforce sanctions that shame and ostracise children looked after from their peers, school, community or family. In this school we seek to create an inclusive and positive school ethos for every pupil.
- Links to other relevant school policies that reference CLA and PLAC may be found here, but not limited to the following:
  - Admissions Policy
  - Code of Conduct
  - Behaviour Policy
  - Home School Agreement
  - Anti-bullying Policy
  - Equal Opportunities Policy and Equality Scheme
  - Child Protection and Training Policy
  - Safeguarding and Student Welfare Policy
  - Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- CLA and PLAC and their families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged into this school community (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.’ Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018).

## 6. EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR CLA/PLAC

Personal Educational Plans (ePEP) and CLA/PLAC Self Evaluation Forms (CLASEF):

The school will ensure that every CLA/PLAC 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 three PEP meetings for each CLA/PLAC and all teaching staff for the CLA/PLAC will have the opportunity to provide termly feedback. The school will complete all sections of the CLASEF to share our plan for improvement and development in school for disadvantaged children and also 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 Board in the annual report.

## 7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Headteacher and the School Board are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and PLAC. 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 and have at least two days per year training to remain fully informed. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and PLAC make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receive appropriate training.

Each school within the Trust will have a School Board Governor with special responsibility for CLA and PLAC.

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The name of the Governor with special responsibility for CLA and PLAC at Elstree Screen Arts is Kemi Omijeh.

The named governor will report to the School Board on an annual basis using the report from the Designated Teacher as the source information:

- The number of CLA and PLAC in the school
- A comparison of progress as a discrete group, compared with those of other students in school and nationally
- A comparison of attainment measures as a discrete group, compared with those of other students in school and nationally
- The attendance of a discrete group, compared to other students
- The number of fixed term/permanent exclusions
- Student destinations after leaving the school

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that CLA and PLAC students have equal access to:

- Full time educational provision – at least 25 hours
- Public examinations
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. one to one tuition
- Employment Excellence careers guidance
- Additional education support
- Extracurricular activities
- Work experience
- Student Premium Plus funding to raise attainment

The named governor is encouraged to support the development of the school by endorsing the CLASEF (self-evaluation process) that will confirm the schools' best practice. The named governor may want to ensure that the School Board has a full understanding of the efficient and effective use of Student Premium including Student Premium Plus. The HCC Governance Team offers a two-hour course for this purpose. Please contact [Hannah.stewart@hertsforlearning.co.uk](mailto:Hannah.stewart@hertsforlearning.co.uk).

The Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC at ESA is Nikki Ward. She is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLAC by:

- ensuring that the CLA or PLAC has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and PLAC 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/PLAC, 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;
- 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 PLAC

- regularly reporting to the Head and School Board on the attainment of CLA and PLAC 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 on their roles and responsibilities, 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.

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

- reading this 'school policy' for CLA/PLAC
- attending relevant training, including the Virtual School toolkit training on 'Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed practice' (to be found on the Virtual School website: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool))
- 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/PLAC by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available

## 8. ATTENDANCE

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

## 9. ADMISSIONS/TRANSITIONS

School procedures to support CLA/PLAC during admission and transition include:

- prioritising CLA and PLAC 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 PLAC at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

## 10. ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and PLAC with additional educational needs by:

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- 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 on their roles and responsibilities, 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 over-sight (*in line with the Lamb Report, Dec '09*)
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the targets set as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit, ePEP and CLASEF

## 11. SAFEGUARDING

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA/PLAC 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' (All staff) September 2021, if there are any safeguarding concerns.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

## 12. 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/PLAC 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 PLAC
- 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

## 13. EXCLUSION

- We have reviewed the school behaviour policy in **September 2020** in line with the statutory guidance published in February 2018 (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.* Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018).
- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a CLA/PLAC, 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.
- We will use the following methods to avoid excluding a child looked after or previously looked after, as referred to in the Exclusion Policy.
- School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of CLA and PLAC. CLA and PLAC 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).*

## 14. MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

School staff will make every effort to develop positive professional relationships 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 PLAC.

## 15. THE HERTFORDSHIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children:

- Virtual School Head (VSH): Felicity Evans
- *Website:* [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool)
- *Twitter:* @VS\_HCC
- *Email:* [virtualschool@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@hertfordshire.gov.uk)
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