



# Finlay Community School Policy

## **Children Looked After (CLA) Policy**

Written by: Heather Willis

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Signed by (SLT and Governors):

Date:

Date for review: January 2021



The school works closely with the Gloucestershire Virtual School and follows their guidelines to ensure Children in care at Finlay Community School are provided with the very best opportunities to achieve their potential.

The following information has been taken from the Virtual School CLA Handbook for Schools and provides information that informs our practice.

### Section 1:

#### **Raising the educational achievement of Children in Care**

##### **Why do Children Looked After often underachieve?**

Every Child Looked After (CLA) is capable of learning and success in life, yet too many underachieve in education for a wide range of reasons:

- They have experienced significant family disruption and often neglect and abuse before coming into care which can all create significant barriers to learning.
- Movement between care placements and between schools can disrupt learning.
- CLA often need to catch up with learning they have missed.

The reasons for underachievement can be investigated through the Virtual School website.

[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool)

##### **What is being done at a government level?**

In the 2007 white paper Care Matters: Time for Change the government set out a wide range of measures to improve outcomes for CLA, including educational outcomes. In the Children and Families Bill 2013 the following recommendations were made:



*The Government is committed to improving life chances for all Looked After Children. Their educational attainment, while improving, is not doing so fast enough. We know that a virtual school head (VSH) can have a positive impact on the educational progress of Looked After Children and so the Bill will require every Local Authority to have a virtual school head to champion the education of children in the authority's care, as if they all attended the same school.*

### **What does the term 'looked after' mean?**

'Looked after' is a legal term which applies to children who are in the care of the Local Authority. There are two main types of being looked after:

- The child's parents may agree that the child goes into care. This is often referred to as a 'Section 20'.
- The child may be legally removed from their parents without parental consent. This is when the court concludes that a child could be harmed if they stay at home. This is referred to as a 'Care Order'.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to look after the child - this includes ensuring they receive the best education possible. The Local Authority assumes the role of 'corporate parent'. This responsibility is held by every adult employed by the Local Authority including those who work in schools.

### **What other care arrangements are there?**

Children may be in other arrangements where they live with adults other than their birth parents. This includes:

- Kinship care - children who live with other members of the family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or older siblings.
- Private fostering arrangements - children who live with other adults such as friends of the family.
- Special guardianship orders - children who live with adults other than their parents who have been granted guardianship of the children by the Local Authority.

Children who live under these arrangements are not 'looked after' in the legal senses and therefore do not have access to the same benefits that legally CLA do.



**The Designated teacher has a list of all children in the school who do not live with their birth parents with brief details of what the arrangements are and who has responsibility for them.**

**What about children in the care of other local authorities?**

Schools carry responsibility for all CLA, whether they are in the care of Gloucestershire or any other Local Authority. Up to date information on any of our CLA will be provided by their social worker directly.

**What are the responsibilities of the school for CLA?**

These are set out in two key government documents, which can be downloaded or ordered online at

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications).

*The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked After Children: statutory guidance for school governing bodies.*

Ref: DCSF-01046-2009

*Improving the attainment of Looked After Children in primary schools: Guidance for schools*

Ref: DCSF-01047-2009

**Section 2:**

**Children Looked After at Finlay Community School: January 2020**

There are 2 pupils who are in the care of a Local Authority. These pupils have an ePEP (electronic Personal Education Plan). Summary information of relevance will be provided for all staff by Heather Willis (Designated CLA teacher).

There is Pupil Premium money available to support this pupil. The sum for 2018/19 is £1900. It is very important that the school monitors the use of this money. [Please see appendix 2 for illustrations on how this money may be used]

**The role of the designated teacher**

The designated teacher is Heather Willis.



**The designated teacher will:**

- Promote a culture of high expectation
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting targets
- Be a source of advice for staff
- Support and communicate with carers
- Lead on the development and implementation of the ePEP
- Monitor progress of children if they leave care

**Working with other professionals and agencies to support CLA**

Heather Willis is responsible for working with all agencies involved with the individual pupils (e.g. Virtual School), ensuring that communication is effective and any meetings etc. involving the pupil minimise disruption to the pupil's education.

**The school will make sure that:**

- There is an agreed process in place for how the school works with others in focusing on how everyone contributes to promoting the child's educational achievement.
- School policies are communicated to social workers and carers.
- The school does everything possible to maximise educational stability for the child, especially by finding ways of sharing information through the ePEP and in providing advice to the Local Authority about the impact of disrupting education.

**Training**

The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in the guidance from the Virtual School.

This policy will be reviewed in line with recommendations from the Virtual School. This will be at least annually.

Appendices - Extracts from Virtual School CIC Handbook for schools

1. Personal Education Plans
2. Pupil Premium for CLA



## Appendix 1

### **Personal Education Plans**

All CLA must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the Local Authority which looks after them. The care plan will identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework within which to work with the child and carers in relation to his or her emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which are developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. In school or any other education establishment the designated teacher for CLA has a statutory role with regard to the development, implementation and monitoring of PEPs.

The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a CLA's official school record. If the child moves schools it should be forwarded, along with other school records, to their new school and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the Local Authority which looks after the child.

The PEP is the central platform for the education of CLA, which should be incorporated within each child's Care Plan.

In Gloucestershire all students in:

- Early years settings use a paper Early Years PEP
- Key stage 1 - key stage 4 use an on-line electronic PEP (ePEP)
- Post 16 students in education, employment and training use a paper Post 16 PEP

### **The importance of PEPs**

The PEP for CLA is the main way in which designated teachers (or FE equivalent), social workers and Virtual Schools keep track of educational attainment and progress for a CLA. The PEP also allows the Virtual School team to promote and then monitor how the Pupil Premium is used to improve educational outcomes for CLA.

The development and review of the PEP brings together the whole team linked to the CLA at regular intervals to focus on the child's educational progress and personal educational requirements.



The PEP is important to the child too, especially when they are fully involved in agreeing and reviewing actions and targets. The PEP should be seen as a living document which has the child's voice at the centre.

### **A good PEP**

- Sets positively phrased specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited (SMART) educational targets, which are agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate.

- Links the Pupil Premium funding directly to outcomes and the agreed targets.

- Is written with a wide audience in mind - many people who will read it are not familiar with social work or educational language.

- Identifies developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experience.

Pays reference to providing targeted interventions in core subjects in particular English and Mathematics.

- Records the young persons' achievements and participation in the wider school activities and out of school activities.

- Has clear accountability in terms of who is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

### **PEP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

#### **Who initiates the ePEP meeting?**

The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP meeting. The meeting is booked at a date and time that is convenient for all parties, including the carers and any other multi-agency colleagues who need to attend the meeting. Prior to the PEP meeting the social worker completes section 1 of the Professional Section within ePEP. The designated teacher completes section 2 and also ensures that the young person has completed the 'My Views' section.

#### **When should the PEP meeting take place?**

New to care - when a young person comes into care, a PEP meeting should be held within 20 working days.

The PEP cycle - subsequent PEP meetings, where possible, should be held early in the autumn term, in order that Pupil Premium funding can be used throughout the school year. The PEP review should be held in the Spring Term, in order to review the effective use of Pupil Premium.



**Does the young person have to take part in the meeting?**

Young people should attend as this is their educational review meeting. However, if for any reason they do not wish to attend, the appropriate person must seek their views and take these to the meeting. The designated teacher should then share the outcomes with the young person following the meeting.

**Can the PEP and the Annual Review of the Statement of SEN be run together?**

**YES** - These two meetings can be held together for CLA, as both meetings focus on education and, in most cases, are held with the same group of people.

**Can the PEP and the CLA review be run together?**

**No** - The LAC Review is the young person's meeting in which their whole care plan is reviewed. As part of the overall care plan review, the IRO should have access to the most up-to-date PEP. It is therefore important that the PEP is completed before a LAC Review takes place.

**Can the meeting go ahead without the social worker or the designated teacher?**

The PEP is a legal document and is a shared multi-agency education plan. Therefore, without the social worker or designated teacher (or designated teacher's representative), the plan could not be informed, shared or owned and therefore cannot go ahead.

**Do we need to meet or can we do the PEP over the phone or via email?**

It is Gloucestershire's policy that a PEP meeting takes place. It is important that all relevant adults and the young person have an opportunity to meet and share educational success and issues together. However, at times, often because of exceptional circumstances in the life of the young person, it becomes difficult to get all parties together for a PEP meeting. In these circumstances the Virtual School will provide advice and practical support.

**Do PEP meetings still need to take place if the young person is placed out of county?**

These young people are still in the care of Gloucestershire and therefore require a PEP meeting to take place. It is also very important that all agencies are aware of how these young people are achieving at school, the PEP is central to this process.

**What happens if the young person is out of school?**



Obviously a young person should not be without a school place and if this is the case please contact the Virtual School immediately.

It is equally as important that a PEP is completed for young people in difficult educational circumstances:

□ The young person is refusing to attend school. As the young person is still on a school roll, it is important that the PEP goes ahead within statutory timescales. This should take place as normal at the school and the young person should be invited to attend, even if they have not attended school for a period of time. If the young person does not want to attend the meeting, the foster carer or social worker should gain their views and share them at the meeting.

□ The young person is attending an Alternative Provision School or some other alternative education setting. As these are all different types of formal education the PEP should be completed with the tutor as the 'education representative' and with all the same relevant people (young person, social worker, etc.)

### **Pupil Premium**

Pupil Premium money is used to help the young person achieve the SMART targets that are set at the PEP meeting. This funding is released into the school budget throughout the academic year. The manner in which it is spent is monitored by the Virtual School and the Local Authority. It is the responsibility of the designated teacher to ensure that the money is spent as specified in the PEP.

In almost all cases the money will be transferred directly to the young persons named education placement, usually school. In more complex cases the Virtual School will work proactively with all parties to resolve any issues.

### **How are Paper PEPs different to ePEP?**

There are no differences in terms of statutory regulations with regard to Paper PEPs and ePEPs. Currently in Gloucestershire all students in early years settings use a paper Early Years PEP and all Post 16 students in education, employment and training use a paper Post 16 PEP. However all students in key stage 1 - key stage 4 use an on line electronic PEP (ePEP). It is hoped that over the next few years all PEPs will be completed on line.

□ ePEP is a secure web based system which enables professionals to have instant access to information about the educational progress of CLA. It can be



customised to the needs of each key stage or for children and young people who have additional learning needs.

□ ePEP tracks the progress of completion of individual or group PEPs and provides information regarding incomplete PEPs by reporting back to administrators and managers to ensure progress is made when necessary.

### **Who can help with problems or training?**

#### **Specific cases**

For support with specific cases and young people please contact the Virtual School learning mentor linked to the young person or your school. If you are unsure, please call 01452 328360.

#### **ePEP support**

If you have problems accessing the ePEP system or have any questions about the ePEP system in the first instance please contact our PEP and Pupil Premium Support Officer on 01452 328360 or email [rachel.evans@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.evans@gloucestershire.gov.uk).

To request a copy of the Social Care User Guide for ePEP or the Designated Teacher's User Guide for ePEP, please use the contact details above.

### **Appendix 2**

#### **Pupil Premium**

Pupil Premium is:

- Ring fenced money available to all young people of statutory school age who have been in continuous care for six months or more.
- Released into school and academy budgets by the Local Authority at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- For spending on named young people as part of their Personal Education Plan as agreed at PEP meetings.
- Monitored by Virtual School and the Local Authority.

CLA Pupil Premium is additional to any other funding that may be received by school. It should be used in a manner which will help to improve the educational outcomes for young people in terms of their attainment, aspiration or participation.

It is vital that young people have the chance to have a say in the manner in which the Pupil Premium is spent. Therefore the "My Views" section of ePEP



needs to be completed by the young person prior to the ePEP meeting and referred to during discussions.

The Pupil Premium should be viewed as an investment in the young person's education which, by the time of the PEP review, will be leading towards positive outcomes measured via Action Plan SMART targets Pupil Premium in the financial year 2017/18 per CLA in reception through to year 11 is £1,900.

The Department for Education has indicated that Pupil Premium funding can be carried over into the next financial year if this is in the best interests of the student.

### **Guidelines on the use of Pupil Premium**

Pupil Premium should be used:

- To minimise barriers to learning and achievement.
- In a creative manner which takes into account the unique context of each young person's life circumstances.
- As a means to enable students to be able to access learning activities, with a clear purpose, which take place outside of the school context.

Examples of use:

#### **✓ 1-2-1 Tuition in core and specialist subjects**

Raising the Educational Attainment of CIC (DCSF 2009)

'This group of children particularly benefit from personalised support. Early evidence suggests that one-to one tuition is a particularly effective way of providing this support for CLA, and so the VSH should ensure that CLA are able to access one-to one tuition wherever appropriate.'

#### **✓ Personalised learning resources for core and specialist subjects**

These complement tuition or mentoring support e.g. Laptop, i PAD, Kindle, Tablet, Software etc. Revision materials, study guides and other subject specific items are often used to good effect in conjunction with 1-2-1 tuition.

#### **✓ Alternative education provision**

Students who find it difficult to achieve in mainstream settings often benefit from a more alternative approaches to learning.



✓ **Support for vocational learning**

Vocational training as part of an alternative curriculum plan and assistance with the purchase of necessary equipment for a course e.g. safety equipment or specialist items.

✓ **TA or Mentor support/Group work/Therapy**

This type of intervention can provide additional support during lessons and unstructured time. It can also target specific areas of need e.g. anger management, self-esteem etc.

✓ **Educational opportunities outside of school**

These can vary from educational visits, participation in the arts or sports, or participation in local clubs and societies.

✓ **Strategic target groups**

It may be appropriate to pool the budget for a group of children where this would result in increased levels of support - for example, greater efficiency may be achieved by joint commissioning where a number of students have similar learning or developmental needs. This approach needs to be able to demonstrate how the joint provision links to the individual needs of each student and their PEPs.

✓ **Staff Training**

Pupil Premium can assist in some bespoke training, eg for staff who are working with young people who have significant needs, which if left unmet, will impede the young person in achieving their PEP targets.

Policy Agreed by Governors:

Reviewed: January 2020

