Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Policy for Children in Care

Supporting the Educational Outcomes for Children in Care



Telford & Wrekin Virtual School

Dream | Believe | Achieve

2026-2027

Date of Policy Creation	**May 2025**	**Named Responsibility**	T&W Virtual School
Date of review completion	**Sept 2026**	**Named Responsibility**	Caroline Boddy
Inception of new Policy	**October 2026**	**Named Responsibility**	Teaching & Learning Committee
Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body	**October 2026**	**Review due**	Autumn 2027

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Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after and previously looked after children are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after and previously looked after require special treatment and additional attention in order to improve their situation.

Donnington Wood Infant School and Nursery endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention, for all our pupils. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils experience high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for looked after and previously looked after children realistically and using the school's resources efficiently in order to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.
- Working with the wider corporate parenting team we will take an active role in applying the principles of good parenting by:
    - Giving priority to education
    - Maintaining education stability
    - Listening to children
    - Providing stability and continuity and adhering to the individual's care plan
    - Taking corporate responsibility
    - Promoting inclusion
    - Raising standards
    - Intervening quickly
    - Promoting early years experiences and post 16 progression
    - Celebrating successes.

We recognise that in meeting the needs of Children in Care, we will also be providing the additional care and support many other children also need; the needs of children in care often mirror those of other children too.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children

- DfE (2026) Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement
- DfE (2026) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DFE (2018) The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- DFE (2025) Promoting the education of children with a social worker (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- SEND Review - Special educational needs publication August 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- School Attendance Guidance - Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools Mental health and behaviour in schools (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Early Years inspection framework - Early years inspection Toolkit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- School Inspection Handbook Ofsted - Schools inspection toolkit- GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

2. Definitions

2.1. Children in Care (CiC) are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, as the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents (Section 20)

2.2. Previously looked after children (PLAC) are defined as:

- Children no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

2.3. Local terminology

- Taking into account the views of a large sample of children in care within Telford & Wrekin, the terms 'children in care' (CiC) and 'previously looked after children' (PLAC) are the preferred reference rather than Looked after Children.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The Governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for CiC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for CiC and PLAC has received the appropriate training.
- Ensuring CIC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if and when necessary.
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of CiC in the school.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the **Headteacher** regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an **annual** basis.
- Providing a nominated governor who should:
    - Ensure that a school's self-audit of provision for CiC and PLAC is undertaken.
    - Ensure that the school's policies and procedures ensure that CiC and PLAC have at least equal access to all aspects of the school life.
    - Attend meetings organised by the Virtual School to provide updates and training to nominated governors.

3.2 The Virtual School Head Teacher (VSHT) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's CiC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to CiC and PLAC.

- Working with the school to ensure all CiC within the school are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for CiC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of PLAC as effectively as possible.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
    - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the CiC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
    - Inform the Head teacher and Designated Teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
    - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP.
    - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all CiC.
    - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
    - Ensure the education achievement of CiC and PLAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibility for promoting their health and welfare.
    - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of CIC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

3.3 The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the Designated Teacher for CiC and PLAC.
- Allowing the Designated Teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the **governing board annually** on the following:
    - The number of CIC and PLAC in the school
    - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
    - The attendance of CiC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups
    - The level of suspensions and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
    - Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting CiC and PLAC is a key priority.
    - Actively challenging negative stereotypes of CiC.

3.4 The Designated Teacher for CIC and PLAC is responsible for:

- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to CiC and PLAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of CiC and PLAC at the school.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the Virtual School.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.

- Ensuring CiC are involved in reviewing and setting their own targets.
- Gaining the knowledge and skills to advise and support staff on teaching and behaviour strategies for CiC and PLAC
- Ensuring that CiC and PLAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- Supporting new CiC admissions to the school:
    - Provide pre-admission support and where appropriate, an enhanced 'welcome' phase in the first days and weeks at the school.
    - On admission of a CiC to the school, liaising with the VS to agree a date for a PEP meeting.
- Leading on how the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is supported and monitored.
- Liaising with the SENDCO to ensure all pupil needs are met.
- Working with the child's social worker, VSHT and VST to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the Headteacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all CiC and PLAC.

3.5 The SENDCo is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for CiC if the child has Special Educational Needs.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of CIC/PLAC.
- Liaising regularly with the Corporate Parents for children in care - Virtual School & Social Worker.
- Ensuring timely assessment and intervention is in place through provision mapping and allocation of resources to meet specific needs.

3.6 All school staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of CiC and PLAC in their classes and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Apply a relational approach to CIC and PLAC through developing a deep awareness of attachment theory and evidence-based trauma approaches to understand the young person's journey.
- Preserving confidentiality where appropriate and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Promoting the self-esteem of CiC and PLAC.
- Actively seeking advice, guidance or training to:
    - Understand some of the typical issues CiC and PLAC may present, such as early years trauma and attachment disorder.

    - Learn how to respond appropriately to the behavioural challenges these may manifest as, adapting any general policies appropriately.
- Being vigilant for any signs of:
    - bullying or peer on peer abuse towards CiC or PLAC.
    - safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CiC and PLAC.

4. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All CiC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan. The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a pupil to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. It will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

The school will work with other professionals and the child's carers, using the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances. All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the Designated Teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:

- If relevant, access to quality nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
- On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
- Suitable education agreed with the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion (this should be in place on the 2nd day of any fixed term suspension).
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate. (Attendance data will be drawn down into the PEP from the completion of the online attendance records through CRM).
- Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
    - Support to achieve at least expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
    - Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focuses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
    - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

5. Working with Agencies and the VSHT

The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the social workers, in addition to parents/carers or residential social workers. The school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual EHCP review at the same time as a PEP review. The school will work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, suspensions, exclusions or attendance issues.

The school will complete daily online attendance records which will enable the VS to monitor the attendance of CiC and react promptly if attendance falls or unexplained absences occur. For some CiC,

it is essential that the VS has this information on a daily basis. Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher for CIC and PLAC will communicate with the VSHT/VST and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP. **NB PEP dates are set through the Virtual School and any changes should only be made through the Virtual School.**

Through the Designated Teacher, the school will work with the VSHT/VST, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.

The Designated Teacher will ensure that the PEP targets clearly show how the PPG will be used. If necessary, this may involve consulting the VS prior to a PEP meeting to gain advice on using the PPG most effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs. This may draw down funds from the school's nominal high needs budget.

Additional funding for further intervention can be requested which can be commissioned through intervention packages. The Designated Teacher will ensure prompt, consistent and strong communication with the VSHT/VST regarding CiC who are absent without authorisation.

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of CIC and PLAC. This may be across a MAT or through network meetings provided by the VS.

6. Training

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of CiC and PLAC have either received or identified and prioritised the appropriate training, this includes information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Supporting SEMH
- Attachment and the impact of trauma
- Attachment Research Community- Relational approaches
- Attendance/Suspensions/Exclusions
- Homework - raising educational outcomes, supporting carers
- GCSE options
- Managing, understanding and responding to behaviours which challenge
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment.

7. Pupil Mental Health

CiC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated Teachers will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work with the VSHT/VST to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on CiC and PLAC, and when appropriate, know how to access further assessment and support.

To measure, if necessary, the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by CiC, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) will be used to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about CiC's emotional wellbeing. Teachers will regularly complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment. Every spring term, an Education SDQ is requested and needs to be completed by schools prior to the Spring term PEP date. This is for annual Education reporting and triangulation with Health & Social Care.

8. Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

Past experiences of CiC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's **Behaviour Policy**, ensuring that it is suitably flexible and inclusive.
(See DfE guidance for DTs **Working together to safeguard children – March 2026** Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK

Designated Teacher for LAC & PLAC February 2018 The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children – 2014 Updated 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a9015d4e5274a5e67567fbe/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance and, as far as possible, avoid suspension or permanent excluding any CiC or PLAC.
'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'

The school will have regard to Telford and Wrekin's 'Belonging Strategy'. Guidance for Schools - Telford & Wrekin Council

Schools will have regard for Telford & Wrekin Council Rarely Exclusion documentation May 2023

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSHT/VST will be informed at the **earliest** opportunity. Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be considered as a last resort. Schools should consult the 'Exclusion Reduction Team' by completing the pre-suspension hotline form via Synergy Live

when an exclusion is being considered as alternatives such as short breaks provision should be considered first.

Where a suspension is considered, the school will also consult with the VS prior to the suspension to consider what additional support can be provided to prevent suspension.

In the event of a suspension, the school will ensure that suitable alternative provision will be in place from the first day of the suspension. The school will inform parents and carers that they can seek the advice of the VSHT on strategies to support their child to avoid suspension for PLAC.

Schools will engage with ARC (Attachment Research Community) in prompting educational outcomes for Children in Care. Attachment & Trauma Aware approaches in education | ARC (the-arc.org.uk)

9. Pupils with SEND

Support for CiC with SEND who do not need an EHC plan will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews. In addition to following the SEND - Local offer (telfordsend.org.uk). The expectation is that a child in care is placed on the schools SEND register for support then information is shared with the corporate parent - Virtual School, Social Worker and parents (if appropriate).

The SENDCo, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve the Virtual School/ Social Worker, carers/ parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.

If appropriate, the VSHT will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for PLAC.

10. Information Sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of CIC and PLAC are understood and met.

The arrangements set out:

- Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured in order to comply with the latest GDPR.
- How pupils and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an **annual** basis by the designated teacher and the **Headteacher**.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **August 2027.**