

Policy for the Education of Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After Children (PLA)

Bolder Academy

1 MacFarlane Lane, Isleworth, TW7 5DB

Registered in England and Wales No: 08932893

Model Academy Policy for the Education of Children Looked
After (CLA) and Previously Looked After Children (PLA)

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| This policy is called: | Policy for the Education of Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After Children (PLA) |
| It applies to: | All staff, governors and visitors to Bolder Academy |
| Person responsible for its revision: | Headteacher |
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Policy Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (PLA) on roll at Bolder Academy

This policy is based on the Department for Education's [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#).

It also takes into account [section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010.

Definitions:

Looked-after children are registered pupils who are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Previously looked-after children are registered pupils who fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
 - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
 - A special guardianship order
 - An adoption order

They appear to the governing board to have:

- Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
- Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual school head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and carers in respect of previously looked-after children.

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Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA: Heidi Swidenbank

Name of the Designated Academy Governor for CLA / PLA: Andrew Dodge

At Bolder Academy we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (PLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through Academy-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the DfE.

We recognise that our Academy plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA/PLA and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development. We promote Academy-wide staff training in specific needs, so that all adults at this Academy are sensitive to the barriers to learning that CLA experience. The aim is to enable staff to feel that they are 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 feel valued and a part of our Academy community.

Our aim is to champion the needs of CLA to ensure they make rapid educational and social progress during their period in care on the roll of Bolder Academy.

Our Aims for CLA/PLA:

- 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 PLA.
- To narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLA and their peers, ensuring **accelerated** and **rapid** progress.
- That they benefit from Academy-based interventions, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact.
- For 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.
- 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 Academy activities.

- That Academy systems facilitate discrete support that includes a strong relationship between Academy's staff, carers and children looked after on roll.
- CLA will be advantaged within Academy policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for.
- 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 students who are CLA/PLA from their peers, Academy, community or family. In this Academy we seek to create an inclusive and positive Academy ethos for every student.
- Links to other relevant Academy policies that reference CLA and PLA may be found on the Academy website.
- CLA and PLA and their families will feel part of the Academy community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged into this Academy community.

Educational Planning for Children Looked After

The Academy 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.

It will also account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding and inform the Academy Governing Body in an annual report.

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

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 and have at least 2 days per year training to remain fully informed. The Governing Body monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and PLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole Academy staff receive appropriate training.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After in 2020 is Heidi Swidenbank. She is a qualified teacher, and will have the following leadership responsibilities:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- 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.
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently.
- Performing a coordinating role with Academy staff and outside agencies, including Virtual School Head(s).
- Ensuring effective communication with the Academy's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual Academy.
- Developing expertise in the field of CLA, including attachment theory, and trauma informed practice.
- Delivering the Virtual Academy training: 'An introduction to Attachment Aware and Trauma-informed Practice' to the whole Academy;
- Providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole Academy staff.
- Promoting a supportive, whole school culture based on strong relationships, where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and PLA and Academy resource and staff training needs for working with this group.
- Prioritising CLA for Academy-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria.
- Ensuring that CLA and PLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the Academy because of their care status.
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and carers to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations

- Involve parents and carers of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education.

Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's ePEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in ePEPs
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their ePEPs
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their ePEP
- Ensure the identified actions of ePEPs are put in place
- During the development and review of ePEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils
- Ensure that:
 - A looked-after child's ePEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the ePEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
 - ePEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
 - The updated ePEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
- Transfer a looked-after child's ePEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment
- Help raise the awareness of parents and carers of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents' and carers' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure ePEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children.

Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

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- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and carers of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
 - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
 - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or carers
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
 - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
 - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents

- Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips

Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:

- Contact the VSH 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
- Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour

Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, the designated teacher will talk to the child's parents or carers before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

Responsibilities of All Staff

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

- Reading this Academy policy.
- 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 Academy-based support available.

Attendance:

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

Admissions/ Transitions:

Academy procedures to support CLA during admission and transition include:

- Prioritising CLA and PLA at the point of admission.
- The swift transfer of information between Academy that may include Academy visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous Academy.

- 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 will work creatively 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 academy-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria.
- 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.
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the targets set as agreed in the termly virtual academy visit and epep.

Special Educational Needs:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA who have special educational needs by:

- Having high expectation of progress each academic year.
- Ensuring that they are accessing Academy-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 over-sight.
- That with the Academy SENCO the EHCP review is held in a timely way with all relevant professionals invited and their views obtained.

Safeguarding:

Academy staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by:

Familiarising themselves with Policy, as well as the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the DfE guidance contained in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (updated 2021), in the event of any safeguarding concerns.

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

Alternative Provision:

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

- A plan that will retain the CLA on the roll of the Academy or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+.
- An agreed part of the overall eep 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 Academy and the alternative provider.

Exclusion:

- 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 Academy, 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 children looked after or previously looked after: accessing the Gateway, working with the Virtual School to see if mentoring is available.
- Academy 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.

Multi-Agency Working:

Academy 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 PLA.

Mental Health

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.

Academy staff will:

- Work together to identify signs of potential mental health issues, and know how to access further assessment support where necessary, such as CAHMS
- Understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children, and their ability to engage with learning
- Be mindful that mental health issues such as the ones mentioned above will continue to affect previously looked-after children over time and that we will need to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.



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