

Weald of Kent Grammar School

Children in Care Policy

Designated Teacher: Ken MacSporran

Virtual School: [Home | Virtual School Kent](#)

1. Policy Aims

- a) Weald of Kent Grammar School (Weald) understands the powerful role it can play in significantly improving the quality of life and the educational experiences of children in care, who may be overlooked without specific policies and practices to highlight their needs.
- b) Weald has a duty to promote the education of children in care. This includes school admissions, attendance, engagement in school, academic attainment and progress.
- c) Weald recognises that the educational achievement of children in care remains unacceptably low. Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for children in care and children who have previous care experience are of real concern. Many will have experienced disrupted schooling and gaps in learning. In addition, a significant proportion have some form of Special Educational Need and/or have been excluded from school. This has resulted in the attainment of this group not being in line with the attainment of their peers nationally. This policy aims to ensure that all children in care have every opportunity to enjoy, learn and achieve in line with their peers.
- d) Weald aims to provide inclusive and trauma-informed practice for the children in the defined cohorts within this policy, in order to provide a safe environment for all. High aspirations are encouraged and belief in the potential of all children is held. Weald will develop genuine, safe, warm, respectful, calm, and kind relationships with children and young people. The school will support children and young people to build, maintain and repair positive relationships.
- e) The policy aims to remove barriers to inclusion, encouraging all children in care to take part in all aspects of school life, and to have an enjoyable and valuable school experience.
- f) Some children and young people who are in the care of the local authority, require additional support to help them to reach their potential. Children and young people who are on the edge of care and their families will also need additional support, and for all professionals to work collaboratively so that the family can stay together, where is it safe to do so.

2. Definitions

Throughout this policy the term 'children in care' refers to all children whose care is being, or has been, provided by the local authority. As stated in the Children's Social Care National Framework, legislation uses the term 'looked-after children' to refer to children who are being cared for by the local authority, whether that is under section 20, or sections 22 and 31 of the Children Act 1989. Legally, the language of 'children in care' does not include children accommodated and looked after under section 20.

However, children and young people often tell local and central government that the term 'looked after children' is unhelpful, and this policy has made the deliberate choice to use 'children in care' to refer to all children, regardless of the legal provision under which they are being, or have been, cared for by the local authority.

a) "Children in care", also known as looked after children (LAC), are defined as: Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989 or who is accommodated by the local authority for more than 24 hours.

Children in public care who are placed with foster carer, in children's residential homes, with parents or other relatives, in semi-independent or supported accommodation.

Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the Local Authority share parental responsibility.

b) "Children with previous care experience" also known as Previously Looked After or PLAC are defined as:

Children who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order.

Children who were adopted outside of 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).

The experiences and outcomes of PLAC can be very similar to those of LAC. PLAC educational needs are unlikely to have changed just because their care status has. To address this, the needs of LAC and PLAC are prioritised and addressed in a similar way. The progress of PLAC pupils is reviewed termly and we work proactively with parents, carers and other professionals to address any areas of concern and put in place support as appropriate. Parents and Carers of PLAC are encouraged to identify their child's previously looked after status on entry to the school and are required to produce documentation to support this. Any information will be treated confidentially.

c) Children with a social worker are defined as:

Children subject to a child in need plan or children subject to a child protection plan

d) Designated teacher for LAC

All maintained schools, academies and free schools are required to appoint a designated teacher to "champion the educational attainment of LAC and previously LAC". They should act as a source of information and advice about the needs of LAC (page 34, DfE guidance).

e) Virtual school head (VSH)

An officer employed by the local authority who makes sure their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC is met (page 4, DfE guidance). In Kent, this is called VSK – Virtual School Kent.

f) A personal education plan (PEP)

An 'evolving record of what needs to happen for looked-after children (LAC) to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential'.

3. Legislation and guidance

A Children in Care Policy is not statutory however there is a legal framework that includes statutory duties for schools. Legislation and guidance include:

- a) [Children Act 2004](#) (s52: to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children)
- b) DfE's guidance on [promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children](#). (2018)
- c) [The Designated Teacher For Looked After And Previously Looked-After Children](#) (2018)

Other legislation:

- a) Children Act 1989
- b) Children and Families Act 2014
- c) Children and Social Work Act 2017
- d) DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023)
- e) DfE 'Keeping children safe in education' (2025)

4. Policy Responsibilities

4.1 Trustees

The Trustee group with special responsibility for children in care in the school is the Quality of Care Committee. Trustees will ensure:

- a) the Trust has a coherent policy for children in care and those with previous care experience.
- b) The needs of children in care are considered, reflected and supported within all relevant school policies.
- c) Our admissions policy gives children in care the highest priority admission to the
- d) school, as outlined within 'School Admissions' DfE guidance 2014.
- e) The annual children in care monitoring report is scrutinised to ensure that the academic
- f) progress of children in care pupils is effectively being tracked and challenged.
- g) Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) and Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) spending is scrutinised ensuring that is used appropriately and effectively.
- h) An appropriate member of staff is appointed as Designated Teacher, who has access to training and resources (including time) to undertake their responsibilities and has the seniority champion the needs of children in care throughout the school.
- i) All staff are supported in recognising and meeting the needs of children in care.
- j) Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy.

4.2 Headteacher

- a) Appointing the designated teacher for children in care
- b) Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties including updating training and development.
- c) Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.

- d) Ensuring good use of pupil premium plus (PP+) to raise academic attainment and providing any resources according to immediate need.
- e) Supporting strategies to raise academic attainment for children in care and diminish the difference compared to their peers.
- f) Avoiding suspensions or permanent exclusions for all children in care and exploring alternatives with the local authority to ensure this is a last resort. If children are excluded as a last resort, ensuring that the Virtual School Head is notified at the time of exclusion.
- g) Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting children in care is a key priority. This includes ensuring that training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching is provided for all staff.

4.3 Designated Teacher

The named Designated Teacher with responsibility for children in care in the school is the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Their responsibilities include:

- a) *Maintain a current list of children in care including contact information and change of care status and ensure the electronic data concerning children in care is correct. Our school aims to ensure that all personal data collected about staff, pupils, parents, governors, visitors and other individuals is collected, stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) as set out in the Data Protection Bill, and the School's Data Protection Policy.*
- b) Building a relationship with the child or young person and acting as their voice where necessary.
- c) Building relationships with health, education, social care, and other partners so that they and the virtual school headteacher understand the support available to children in care
- d) Promoting the educational achievement of children in care; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- e) Acting as the main contact for social services, carers, virtual schools and the DfE.
- f) Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- g) Ensuring children in care are involved in setting their own targets and attending their PEP meetings.
- h) *Ensure each child in care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that reflects the student's achievements and targets.*
- i) Advising staff on teaching strategies for children in care and sharing relevant, key information where appropriate.
- j) Ensuring all staff are provided with training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching.
- k) Ensuring that children in care are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- l) Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- m) Liaising with the special education needs coordinator (SENCO) to ensure all pupil needs are met.
- n) Working with the child's virtual school and social worker to develop and implement their PEP within timescales.
- o) Maintaining the confidentiality of children in care, sharing personal information on a need-to-know basis only.
- p) Using the PP+ appropriately and creatively to address the needs of children in care in school.

- q) Ensuring that children in care have access to appropriate ongoing careers advice at the earliest opportunity and that they are encouraged to engage with post 16 education.
- r) *Attend and contribute to children in care reviews as required.*
- s) *Ensure top priority for looked after children in the school's admission policy (Section 106 of the Education Act 2005).*

4.4 All staff

- a) Being aware of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker (where appropriate) and providing them with support and encouragement.
- b) Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- c) Reporting any concerns (however small) to the designated teacher and/ or headteacher.
- d) Promoting the self-esteem of children in care, and having high aspirations for all children in care. Being aware and implementing any strategies provided for individual pupils. Work proactively with the DT to ensure that children in care meet their targets and achieve, highlighting any barriers to learning, and inclusion at the earliest opportunity.
- e) Showing empathy and understanding to all children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- f) Are aware of the specific needs of children in care in relation to Attachment and Trauma and make appropriate adjustment to teaching and classroom management to meet these needs.

4.5 Local Authority – the Virtual School

This is known as VSK in Kent. VSK provides support to schools and ensures that: Designated teachers and schools understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and helping meet the needs identified in the PEP

- a) Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children in care that their authority is responsible for.
- b) 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 children in care, children who have previous care experience and children with a social worker.
- c) Working with the school to ensure all children in care in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- d) Working with agencies to further understand and address the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience.
- e) Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously care experienced children and children with a social worker as effectively as possible.
- f) Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is cared for by the local authority.
- g) Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers, and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding children and young people's personal education plan (PEP).

- h) Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all children in care.
- i) Avoid delays in supporting suitable educational provision.

5. The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All children in care must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan. Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) in England do not legally require a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in the same way that children currently in care (Looked After Children - LAC) do. However, it is considered **best practice** for schools to maintain a form of educational plan for PLAC. Weald will use a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) for this purpose.

PEPs provide a record of the child's academic journey and are maintained for 75 years. The individual can access these at any time in their child or adult life.

The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a child to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential

The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

The school with other professionals and the child's carers will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances.

PP+ is allocated through the PEP targets. If additional funding is required for a young person, this needs to be discussed with the virtual school and an amount agreed.

All relevant bodies, such as the local authority, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages

PEPs are initiated by the child's social worker. Once the PEP has been initiated, the school's designated teacher will work with the social worker and VSK on the development and use of the PEP, the use of [pupil premium plus](#) funding, and on monitoring the child's progress towards their education targets.

What needs to be in a PEP?

The PEP should summarise the child's educational and training history, and educational and development needs. It should also provide details of who will take the plan forward and specify timescales for action and review.

This includes:

- Any additional needs such as SEN or mental health needs
- Ongoing catch-up support for those who have fallen behind with schoolwork (including the use of effective intervention strategies)
- Transition support where needed, such as when a child begins to attend a new school or returns to school (e.g. following illness or exclusion) or when a child changes school as a part of their plan for permanence (e.g. placed for adoption)
- School attendance, and where appropriate, behaviour support

- Support needed to help the child realise their short- and long-term academic goals, including:
 - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications
 - Careers advice and guidance, and financial information about further and higher education, training and employment
 - Out-of-school-hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests
- Explain how mental health needs are being identified and supported, and any support that's ongoing or is needed from mental health specialists
- Include SMART short-term targets, and explain how progress towards them will be measured against development and educational needs
- Include SMART longer-term plans for educational goals, which will typically focus on, depending on the pupil's age and understanding:
 - Public exams
 - Further and higher education
 - Managing money and savings
 - Work experience
 - Career plans and aspirations
- Explain how targets will be met, including:
 - Who will take action
 - Time scales
 - What will be done
 - What additional resources aimed at supporting the attainment of LAC will be used (e.g the pupil premium)
- Explain what effective intervention strategies have been (or will be) used, and how this has improved (or will improve) achievement

PEPs should be reviewed termly.

Maintaining PEPs for pupils post-16

The duty to promote the educational achievement of children in care extends to those young people aged 16 and 17 who are preparing to leave care

When a child in care turns 16, the LA should prepare a pathway plan for them to smooth the transition to adulthood. The PEP should be maintained as part of the preparation and review of the pathway plan.

6. Health needs

Children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker 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 virtual school to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The designated teacher will ensure that staff have appropriate training on trauma-informed practice. This will:

- Build staff knowledge and understanding about the impact of trauma and attachment difficulties or disorders on children and young people, especially those who are in or have experienced care.
- Support children and young people to safely express and understand their emotions.
- Encourage children and young people to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social, and emotional development.
- Ensure that children and young people enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.

7. Monitoring

The Designated Teacher will keep Trustees informed in a yearly report on the achievement of children in care so they are able to fulfil their duties to these students. This report could include:

- The number of children in care on the school's roll (if any).
- Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- Their end of year attainment, levels, grades, GCSE results, and other qualifications achieved, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- The number of suspensions and permanent exclusions (if any) for children in care pupils.
- The destinations of children in care pupils who leave the school.
- The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

8. Links to other policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding*
- Attendance*
- Positive Behaviour*
- SEND,*
- Admissions,*
- Data Protection
- Pupil Premium

Author:	Ken MacSporran	Reviewed:	February 2026
Link Trustees:	Quality of Care Committee	Next Review Date:	February 2029
	Ratified February 2026 FTB		