Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust

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CLA Policy Template

Policy Status: Statutory

Review Cycle: Annually

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Rationale

This policy describes our approach to meeting the requirements set out in the following legislation and statutory guidance, as applicable from September 2026:

- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 - section 20, and section 20A inserted by section 5 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Academies Act 2010 - section 2E inserted by section 5 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance statutory guidance, updated June 2026
- School Admissions Code 2021 and Fair Access Protocol guidance
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, including relevant provisions relating to safeguarding, attendance, admissions and support for children in care, where commenced
- The Designated Teacher (DT) for looked-after (CLA) and previously looked-after pupils (PCLA) (England) Regulations 2018

Definitions

CLA are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority i.e. a child 'looked-after' by a local authority within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; 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

    - 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, where the LA has parental responsibility.
    - Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the LA (under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) in agreement with their parents.

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

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA 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 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).

As a school, we are committed to do all that we can to promote the educational achievement and wellbeing of CLA and PCLA pupils.

Our Designated Teacher for Children who are Looked After is ……..

Our Designated Trustee for Children who are Looked After is ……

The school recognises that the provisions outlined in this policy must be in place regardless of whether there are any CLA or PCLA pupils currently on the school roll.

Roles and Leadership responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for CLA and PCLA who is fully qualified.
- Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties and has received appropriate training.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information and training they need in relation to each looked after child.
- Monitoring the number of CLA and previously-CLA in the school and their legal status (i.e. whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.
- Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA.
- Ensuring that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep CLA and previously-CLA safe.
- Ensuring CLA and previously-CLA have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of CLA in the school.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the governing board annually on the following:
- An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups.
- The attendance of CLA and PCLA, 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 CLA is a key priority.
- Ensuring that safeguarding practice for CLA and PCLA pupils reflects Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including a child-centred, whole-school approach, effective information sharing, early identification of concerns, online safety, and appropriate multi-agency working.
- Ensuring that all staff have a good understanding of barriers that pupils may face and how to support them to overcome these.
- Ensure that a trauma-informed approach is consistently used to support children, whilst still upholding high expectations and ensuring safeguarding for all pupils and staff in the school.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of CLA.

The Designated Teacher:

The responsibilities of a Designated Teacher are outlined in the DfE's statutory guidance. The designated teacher (DT) has lead responsibility, but individual tasks may be appropriately delegated. Our DT takes lead responsibility for:

- Acting as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving CLA and PCLA children.
- Promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school and monitoring progress.
- Working with social workers, other professionals and the Virtual School to promote the educational achievement and wellbeing of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on the roll.
- Acting as a source of advice, ensuring that teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these impact on all areas of life e.g. behaviour, attendance, homework and future career planning.
- Ensuring 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.

- Implementing mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioral needs of looked after and previously looked-after children e.g. formal assessment Thrive, Boxall, SDQ alongside more informal information gathering.
- Development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs (Personal Education Plan), ensuring that they meet pupils' needs by working closely with other teachers and professionals to assess each child's specific strengths, needs and provisions.
- Ensuring the identified actions of PEPs are implemented: monitor and track the progress of CLA children and review as part of the PEP. If a child is not on track to meet their targets, plan intervention as part of the PEP.
- Ensuring the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked-after children and previously-looked-after children, is followed, working closely with the SENCO to ensure that special educational needs are identified and appropriate support is put in place.
- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Promoting a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities.
- Working directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations.
- Leading on the planning of pupil premium plus spending, monitoring the impact
- Working closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are responded to quickly and effectively.
- Liaise closely with the virtual schools' team.
- Ensure effective transition both within the school and beyond.
- Ensure all CLA and PCLA pupils have an identified key adult, and regular opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings in a safe and accessible way.
- Work with the DSL to ensure that concerns about absence, missing education, exploitation, online harm, mental health, domestic abuse, neglect, or changes in care arrangements are responded to promptly and recorded in line with safeguarding procedures.

Trust Board and School commitment to Enhanced Support for CLA and PCLA Pupils

The Trust Board and School will ensure:

- High-quality learning opportunities and education are provided for all our pupils.
- Equality of access to opportunities and learning outcomes for all. We recognise that CLA and PCLA pupils can be especially vulnerable and are sometimes 'at risk' of failure in the learning context so take action to mitigate this.
- A suitable member of staff appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Staff, parents, carers and carers are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

Therefore, with specific reference to this cohort of pupils we will strive to achieve the following aims:

- To ensure that all CLA and PCLA pupils have access to a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum.
- To provide personalised learning and curriculum appropriate to needs and ability
- To support and monitor social progress, ensuring key adults prioritise respectful and responsive relationship building with individual children and provide appropriate support for social development within the peer group.
- To ensure that CLA and PCLA pupils receive a full-time education appropriate to their

age, ability, aptitude and any SEND, unless a temporary, time-limited and regularly reviewed part-time timetable is agreed as a safeguarding and/or reintegration measure in line with statutory attendance guidance.

- To ensure that CLA and PCLA pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities and strive to reduce and eliminate any barriers that may stop them from taking part Where emergency disruption affects school opening or access to education, CLA and PCLA pupils will be prioritised for safe, appropriate on-site provision or high-quality alternative arrangements, in line with safeguarding, attendance and local authority guidance.
- To ensure that carers, social workers and parents (as appropriate) of CLA and PCLA pupils are involved and kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- To ensure that wherever appropriate, CLA and PCLA pupils are involved in decisions affecting their learning, the plans for progress and future provision.
- To ensure that success is appropriately recognised and reinforced.
- To ensure that any emerging concerns are followed up in a timely way with skill and sensitivity (e.g. changes in patterns of behaviour and attendance).
- To liaise and cooperate with appropriate partners, in particular the appropriate Virtual School team, to ensure that all plans complement and support the promotion of the educational achievement and wellbeing of CLA pupils. We recognise that the Virtual School do not monitor PCLA pupils, but that they can provide advice and guidance
- To ensure all school policies and procedures are followed sensitively for CLA and PCLA pupils.

Virtual school head (VSH)

The Bedford Virtual School is our 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 guardians in respect of previously looked-after children. Virtual School Heads also have a strategic leadership role in promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements. This role is non-statutory for those wider cohorts but should inform partnership working and early support where relevant. We also work with other Borough VSLs if pupils are linked to them.

Our local Virtual School Worker is Gemma Hubbard-Jones - Education Support Officer, CLA.
Contact details are: gemma.hubbard-jones@bedford.gov.uk
Virtual School Head is Alison Pullen: Alison.pullen@bedford.gov.uk
Virtual School | Bedford Borough Council

Virtual School role:

- Promote high aspiration and raise achievement through challenge, support and targeted intervention.
- Ensure that children in care access high-quality teaching and learning.
- work closely with all those involved in the care and education of CLA providing training and support to help understand the issues and challenges they face.
- Co-ordinate and quality assure all Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- monitor and challenge schools to make the most effective use of Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PPPG).
- Ensure effective transition is provided between schools or specialist providers.
- Ensure Special Education Needs or Disability needs are identified and supported appropriately with an integrated plan.
- Celebrate CLA achievements.
- Lead training for Foster Carers, Designated Teachers, school governors and bespoke training for educational settings and staff in schools.

Safeguarding Commitment

At BILTT we fully recognise the contribution we can make to protect children and support pupils in school and beyond. We are fully committed to safeguarding our pupils through prevention, protection and support. We are also committed to actively promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; the pupils are encouraged to develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain. It is our duty to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism and to prevent terrorism. Any concerns are referred using My Concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Admissions to our School

- The Trust Board supports the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 in that 'Children in public care have the highest priority in their admission arrangements'.
- The Trust Board supports the statutory requirement that looked-after and previously looked-after children must be given the highest priority in oversubscription criteria and must take precedence over children on a waiting list where required by the School Admissions Code if they also meet the SEND entrance criteria of the academy.
- Fair Access Protocols will not be used to delay or replace the usual in-year admissions process. Where a CLA or PCLA pupil requires a place, the school will work with the local authority, Virtual School and admission authority to secure placement quickly and minimise any gap in education.
- Sometimes care placement changes lead to CLA and PCLA pupils entering school mid-term or mid-year if this is thought to be in the best interests of the child. The school will ensure that in these circumstances CLA and PCLA pupils will be admitted to the school in a timely manner, even if this would mean that this would increase class sizes above the recommended maximum. As necessary, schools will give a positive welcome, plan entry, offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help pupils settled into school.l
- The appropriate Virtual School will work with the school when a pupil is leaving to ensure that it is made as positive an event as possible e.g. leaving events, farewells, information transfer etc.

Inclusion and Allocation of Resources

- Our policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum and learning programme.
- For CLA and PCLA pupils, there can often be a need to develop learning opportunities emphasising personalised planning and planned inclusive approaches. This is especially pertinent as our pupils all have severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities.
- The Trust Board will ensure our school makes all appropriate learning provision for CLA and PCLA pupils. Resources are allocated in line with this policy and with our wider school teaching and learning policies and good practice.
- The Pupil Premium Plus funding allocated by the Head of the Virtual School will be used to support the individual learning programmes of the CLA pupils in the school, especially considering our pupils' severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities. Use of the Pupil Premium Plus will be discussed and monitored as part of the PEP process to ensure it is the most appropriate use for the individual pupil and to show impact on learning.
- The Pupil Premium Plus funding for PCLA pupils allocated through census processes will be used to support the individual learning programmes of the pupil, especially considering our pupils' severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A 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 to support the needs of the child, set targets and identify and put in place support to ensure the child reaches their full potential. The PEP is updated termly by the designated teacher with support from social care, the Virtual School and the child's carer/family. Copies of pupils PEP and relevant meeting notes are logged on My Concern and shared with all professionals involved. The PEP will also consider attendance, safeguarding, SEND, mental health and emotional wellbeing, transition planning, voice of the child, use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus, and any risks linked to part-time timetables, alternative provision or changes in care placement.

The Designated Teacher will ensure that:

- A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed at least three times a year and kept up to date so that it informs review of their care plan.
- PEPs are effectively completed so that they give clear information about a child's strengths and difficulties and give a clear plan for how needs will be met.
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHCP) plans that a looked- after child may have.
- The PEP process is used to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment. Further top-up funding can also be applied for if required.
- The updated PEP is electronically passed to the child's social worker and VS representative within 2 weeks of the PEP meeting and submitted to the Virtual School's Head. A copy is saved on My Concern with any additional minutes.
- Where attendance, safeguarding or placement stability concerns arise, the PEP will record agreed actions, responsible professionals, review dates and escalation routes.
- PEPs are transferred to a child's next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most recent version.

Monitoring the Progress of CLA and PCLA Pupils

- Progress for CLA and PCLA pupils in school is identified, monitored and supported, and is guided by school policies for teaching and learning.
- We will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of CLA and PCLA pupils at least termly. For CLA pupils, this will be formally reported to the Virtual School and shared with partners through the PEP process.
- The PEP is important to the planning and monitoring of education for CLA pupils and governors are aware that they are statutory school documents. The PEP will complement and reflect the high levels of personalised support that is already in place, such as Pupil Passport document and EHCP.
- The DT, working with the Virtual School if necessary, will ensure there is a PEP in place for all CLA pupils in school.
- The DT will liaise with the Social Worker to ensure a PEP meeting takes place within statutory timelines and ensure the attendance of appropriate staff.
- PEP processes will meet the requirements of the appropriate Local Authority, e.g. PEPs for Bedford Borough pupils will use the e-PEP system.

Attendance and Exclusion

- The school will monitor the attendance of CLA and PCLA pupils and will notify all appropriate partners at an early stage if there is an indication that problems with attendance might occur.
- Attendance practice will reflect Working Together to Improve School Attendance

statutory guidance, including a support-first approach, early identification of barriers, regular analysis of attendance patterns, and joint working with parents, carers, social workers, the Virtual School and local authority attendance services.

- Bedford Borough Council have a contract with Welfare Call Limited. A member of the Welfare Call team will call the school daily to ascertain attendance of CLA pupils. The school will ensure this information is provided promptly and accurately.
- The school will take all reasonable steps to ensure suspension or permanent exclusion is used only as a last resort for CLA and PCLA pupils, after appropriate support, reasonable adjustments, safeguarding consideration and consultation with the Virtual School and relevant professionals wherever possible.
- Where a suspension occurs, the school will work with the local authority, carers, social worker and Virtual School to ensure suitable education is arranged from the first day wherever required and that reintegration planning is prompt, child-centred and clearly recorded.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

- The DT will coordinate record keeping for all CLA and PCLA pupils.
- Records will include, up to date progress and attainment records, PEP planning records and personalised information relating to care context as appropriate. These records will be maintained confidentially in a single place on My Concern.
- CLA and PCLA pupils' status is appropriately 'flagged' in school management information systems (including SIMS), ensuring information and planning records are readily available as required.
- The DT will ensure there is ready access to information and up to date contact details for carers, parents (where appropriate), social worker and the named contact in the Virtual School team.
- All appropriate records will be forwarded to the receiving school promptly if there is a transfer to another school.
- Sensitivity is a priority in sharing information with members of the school staff team. We are guided by best practice and a 'need to know' basis.
- Information sharing will follow safeguarding, data protection and statutory guidance principles: information will be shared lawfully, proportionately, accurately, securely and on a need-to-know basis, with clear records of decisions and rationale.
- Any incidents of bullying of the CLA and PCLA pupils or by the CLA and PCLA pupils will be formally recorded and noted in the PEP and review processes.

Appointments within Staff and Trust Board

The school will adhere to the statutory requirement to appoint a DT for CLA and PCLA pupils. This person will be a qualified teacher and ideally a senior person within the school.

- All staff and governors have a responsibility for the educational achievement and wellbeing of CLA and PCLA pupils. The work of the DT is to lead in this area, but they do not hold sole responsibility.

Staff and Trustees' Development and Training

- The DT makes particular efforts to develop good awareness and understanding of issues, guidance and developments associated with the CLA and PCLA context. The DT disseminates knowledge and skills to colleagues in school as appropriate and necessary. Partnership working and collaboration with the Local Authority and the Virtual School team is essential here.
- There is a specific statutory expectation that the DT will maintain and extend their personal expertise.
- A Designated Trustee will attend appropriate briefings and relevant development

opportunities provided by the Local Authority and the Virtual School.
- Training for staff, trustees and the Designated Teacher will include September 2026 safeguarding updates, attendance responsibilities, online safety, trauma-informed practice, SEND, mental health, information sharing and the educational impact of care experience.

Partnership Working

We commit to developing proactive positive partnerships with other agencies, recognising their impact. Our partnerships are extensive; including: Virtual Schools, Social Care, Family Support Workers, Education Psychologists, Paediatricians, school nurses, SEND teams, CAMHS, Education Welfare Officers, locality teams and advocacy services

To enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of CLA and PCLA children the DT will:

- 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 guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Be proactive in:
    - 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 guardians.
    - Working with Family Help, social care, health, police, attendance services and other relevant partners where concerns indicate that wider multi-agency support or escalation is required.

For each looked-after child, all staff will work together to make sure:

- 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 procedures 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 and which family members a pupil can have contact with or information shared with.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy (including suspensions and exclusions)
- Safeguarding and Child protection
- Special Education Needs