



Cared for Children and Previously Cared for Children Policy

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Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Cared for Children and previously Cared for Children are of real concern. Children who are Cared for often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.

Extol Trust endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our children. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage children to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development
- Ensure that children enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation
- Plan support for Cared for Children realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure the school meets their needs
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life
- Help children develop their cultural, moral and social understanding

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant 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 (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2022) 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following trust policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

And school policies:

- Behaviour Policy inclusive of Anti-bullying Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

2. Definitions

'Cared for Children (CfC)' 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, where the Local Authority (LA) has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

'Previously Cared for Children (PCfC)' are defined as:

- Children who are no longer cared for 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).

'Designated Teacher' is defined as:

- A member of staff designated to have the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of Cared for Children (including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at a school)

The Designated Teacher must be a qualified teacher who has completed an appropriate induction period and is working as a teacher at the school, this may be the Headteacher.

The 'Virtual School' is:

A virtual school, adopted by the Local Authority, to support the Virtual School Headteacher's (VSH) role. The VSH and the virtual school will be a very important partner for the designated teacher and will provide an invaluable source of support and advice to designated teachers both about individual children and the education of Cared for Children more generally.

Virtual schools may be able to:

- provide information on specialist services
- help identify resources to support specific activities
- co-ordinate support that may be required beyond that which is already provided by educational services, and
- provide training for designated teachers on aspects of social care

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring all schools have a coherent policy for Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the schools regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis
- Have oversight of CfC and PCfC educational performance

The Local Governing Body (LGB) is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school applies and is compliant with Trust Policy
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher for Cared for and previously Cared for Children has received the appropriate training
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher informs appropriate staff of the information they need in relation to each Cared for Child's:
 - Legal status (i.e. whether they are cared for 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 Cared for and previously Cared for Children safe
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Ensuring Cared for and previously Cared for Children 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 Cared for and previously Cared for Children in the school (included in the Annual Safeguarding Report)
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the headteacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis

The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority cares for; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's Cared for Children, 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 Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Working with the school to ensure all Cared for Children in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential
- Acting as the educational advocate for Cared for Children
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously Cared for Children as effectively as possible
- Managing the school's allocation of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for Cared for Children
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the Cared for Children who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress
 - Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a child on roll who is cared for by the LA
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers and independent reviewing officers (IRO) understand their role and responsibilities regarding a child's personal education plan (PEP)
 - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all Cared for Children
 - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision
 - Ensure the education achievement of Cared for Children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of Cared for Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- 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 local governing body annually on the following:
 - The number of Cared for and previously Cared for Children in the school
 - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
 - The attendance of Cared for and previously Cared for Children, compared to other pupil groups
 - The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting Cared for Children is a key priority
- Ensuring PP+ for previously Cared for Children is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of Cared for Children

The Designated Teacher (DT) for Cared for and previously Cared for Children 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 Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Promoting the educational achievement of Cared for and previously Cared for Children; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations
- Ensuring Cared for Children are involved in setting their own targets
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for Cared for Children
- Ensuring that Cared for Children are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored
- Liaising with the SENDCO to ensure all needs are met
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding Cared for and previously Cared for Children due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting these to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as they arise
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be used to support the child's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP
- Working with the headteacher to submit an annual report to the local governing body, which details the progress of all Cared for and previously Cared for Children

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of Cared for Children's respective social worker and VSH
- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding Cared for and previously Cared for Children as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm

- Where a child ceases to be cared for and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver

The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously Cared for Children

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of Cared for and previously Cared for Children and providing them with support and encouragement
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards Cared for and previously Cared for Children
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding Cared for and previously Cared for Children due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible
- Promoting the self-esteem of Cared for and previously Cared for Children

4. Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All Cared for Children 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 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 PEP will be reviewed termly.

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. 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 child's full range of education and development needs, including:

- Access to 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 provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate
- Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
 - Support to achieve 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 focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve
- Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests

The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a Cared for and previously Cared for Child's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

5. Working with Agencies and the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH)

Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the child.

Schools will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the Cared for Child's social worker, in addition to carers or residential social workers.

Schools will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of Cared for and previously Cared for Children with their statutory care review.

Schools will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard Cared for and previously Cared for Children.

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 Cared for and previously Cared for Children will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.

Through the designated teacher, the school will work with the VSH, 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 communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.

PP+ for previously Cared for Children will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. Schools will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of Cared for and previously Cared for Children, according to their needs.

The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding Cared for Children who are absent without authorisation.

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of Cared for and previously Cared for Children.

6. Training

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of Cared for and previously Cared for Children will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting children to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

The local governing body will ensure that staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep Cared for and previously Cared for Children safe through training.

7. Safeguarding

Schools will recognise that many Cared for and previously Cared for Children have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave children vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst Cared for and previously Cared for Children as soon as possible.

Where a Cared for or previously Cared for Child has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.

The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of Cared for and previously Cared for Children can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over Cared for and previously Cared for Children in line with the processes outlined in the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a Cared for and previously Cared for Child is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on children who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

8. Children's Mental Health

Cared for and previously Cared for Children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher 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 VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on Cared for and previously Cared for Children, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst Cared for and previously Cared for Children may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with Cared for and previously Cared for Children are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these children.

A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be used on a termly basis to help social workers and other relevant professionals form a view about Cared for Children's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

Each school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of Cared for and previously Cared for Children.

Individual school's SEMH Policy will be adhered to when dealing with all potential or explicit mental health issues that Cared for and previously Cared for Children may face.

9. Suspension and Exclusion

We believe it is vital past experiences of Cared for and previously Cared for Children are considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy.

As part of the termly review of a child's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported both in and out of school to improve this.

Where schools have concerns about a Cared for Child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. The school will engage proactively with the social worker and/or carer of a Cared for Child to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour.

Where a Cared for Child is likely to be subject to a suspension (or permanent exclusion), the designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible. The VSH will work with the designated teacher and other relevant individuals to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the child's behaviour and eliminate the need for a suspension (or permanent exclusion).

Schools will inform carers that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child's behaviour.

Schools will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance '[Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement](#)' and recognise that suspending or excluding Cared for Children can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides.

10. Children with SEND

Support for Cared for Children with SEND will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENDCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously Cared for Children.

The designated teacher and the SENDCO will ensure that Cared for and previously Cared for Children with SEND are supported in line with the schools SEND Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting children with SEND may lack applicability for Cared for Children.

11. Information Sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of Cared for and previously Cared for Children are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on Cared for and previously Cared for Children and how data will remain secure
- How children 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 schools and relevant LA departments
- How relevant information about individual children is passed between authorities, departments and school when children move.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Trust or in response to a change in legislation. The next scheduled review date for this policy is July 2026. All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.