

# **Children Looked After (CLA) Policy**



## **St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit**

**(Reviewed August 2025)**

## Introduction

At St Mary's Primary School & Nursery Unit the staff and Governors are committed to providing quality education for all children by focusing on ensuring they have access to a broad, balanced and purposeful curriculum; by ensuring there is equality of opportunity and access for all; and by ensuring there is an ongoing focus on securing the best possible learning outcomes for every child.

The staff & Governors recognise that, when compared with their peers, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care. As a result, we are committed to implementing the principles and best practice guidelines outlined in current Health and Social Care (HSC) NI Public Health Agency (PHA) Guidelines and are committed to ensuring staff can effectively carry out their responsibilities as outlined below.

## Definition

CLA (Child Looked After), under the Children (NI) Order (1995), defines a 'looked after child' as a child who is accommodated by a Health & Social Care Trust (Trust) for a period of 24 hours or more. A looked after child may:

- be placed in a 'care' setting with foster carers or in a children's home, or placed with extended family or relatives i.e. kinship foster carers
- become looked after as the result of a voluntary agreement between the Trust and the child's parents (or others who have parental responsibility) or because of a Care Order granted to the Trust by a Court
- be one who is temporarily looked after for planned respite for 24 hours or more

## Policy Aims

At St Mary's we aim to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Support CLAs and give them access to the opportunities required to achieve their potential, enjoy learning, feel an active member of the school community and, as far as possible, take an active role in all school activities.
- Ensure school policies & procedures are followed for CLAs.
- Ensure that carers, parents and social workers of CLA children are kept fully informed of their child's progress, attainment, behaviour, social integration and development as well as their general attitude to learning and wider school life.
- Fulfil our school's role as 'in loco parentis' to promote and support the education of children who are 'Looked After,' by asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

In school our approach to supporting the educational achievement and ongoing social development of CLAs is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education
- Promoting attendance
- Targeting support

- Having high expectations
- Promote inclusion
- Achieve stability and continuity
- Provide early intervention and priority action
- Listening to children
- Promoting each child's health and well-being
- Reduce exclusions and promote stability
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved

## **Supporting Potential Vulnerabilities**

In school we recognise that children who are 'Looked After' may, or may not, have some or all the following difficulties, which require appropriate support and intervention in school:

- Low self-esteem
- Poor education standards due to time out of school
- Poor attachments to others
- Delayed social/emotional /cognitive development
- Prone to mental health issues
- Feeling a sense of isolation with few friends
- Experiencing behavioural difficulties
- Being bullied or show bullying towards others
- Having a need to be very private, which makes them extremely vulnerable in terms of education and future life-chances

To support the achievement of a 'Child Looked After,' St. Mary's has introduced key measures outlined as good practice:

- Engagement with the EA CLA Team
- 'Named Contact' for all 'Children Looked After' is the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mr Murray. In addition, each CLA has a 'Key Adult' and a 'Back-up Key Adult' to help meet their needs.
- To ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are in place and reviewed on a regular basis, as requested by social worker. Whilst additional funding support is available for CLAs, the completion of a PEP will only continue until a child is no longer in the care of the Trust or until an adoption order has been granted/finalised.
- Host a PEP meeting for P7 CLA's transferring to post primary education. (Designated Teacher of new school, DTCP, Social worker, family members if agreed by SW)
- To ensure that the Named Contact, Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult receive TAP (The Attach Project) Training and that this is disseminated to all staff through making TAP visible through 'Model the Model'
- Whole School TAP training for entire school community (Completed Sep 2024/25)

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Named Contact, Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult**

The above named will:

- Function as advocates for the 'Child Looked After'
- Undertake TAP Training and disseminate accordingly.
- When new CLA children join the school, the Named Contact will welcome them and ensure a smooth induction for them as well as their carer and note any specific requirements. This includes their individual care status.
- A CLA profile will be set up for each individual child.
- Assess any new CLA on entry to the school to help identify their strengths and weaknesses as this will help inform subsequent teaching and learning (this will also involve the class teacher and the SENCo).
- Ensure that a PEP is completed, (at present this is initiated by the SW) by the Named Contact who will have taken cognisance of other input from relevant staff. This should be prepared with the child and their carer in liaison with the social worker as well as with other relevant support workers/agencies. The PEP should be linked to outcomes of each child's Care Plan meetings as well as any Review of Arrangements Plan and previous IEPs/PLPs. Whilst the child continues to be classified as a 'Child Looked After,' they should be reviewed every 6 months with targets achieved either extended or changed.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and ensure a summary report is prepared in advance of review meetings and attend CLA reviews. All records will be uploaded to CPOMS.
- Ensure that the Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult are known to each CLA and that they should be available to talk to the child on the child's request.
- Co-ordinate support for the child and consult with other professionals and carers, as necessary.
- Ensure effective strategies, which support the education of this vulnerable group, are implemented, individualised, as necessary and regularly reviewed.
- Make sure that, where required, children who are 'Looked After' are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements e.g. SENCo support.
- Ensure that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Ensure staff receive relevant information and training and function as an advisor to staff and Governors.
- Ensure confidentiality of all children and only share personal information on a need-to-know basis.
- Provide written information to assist planning/review meetings.
- Support the child and family, as required, with their school attendance.
- Ensure that communication with carers remains regular and positive.
- Where feasible, encourage CLAs to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning.
- Ensure the speedy transfer of information and records between individuals and other relevant agencies, including a child's new school when they transfer.

- If the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded, seek urgent meetings with relevant parties.
- Ensure that any data returns relating to children who are 'Looked After' are completed and returned to the Trust in a timely manner.
- Produce at least one annual report to the Governing body regarding children who are 'Looked After.' Information should include current rates of progress, attendance and exclusions (if any), any concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the actions put in place have been effective in addressing any identified needs, how the Named Contact, Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult has worked in partnership with the child, carers and other relevant agencies and information relating to any training undertaken by them. For confidentiality reasons, this report will not mention the child's/children's name/names.
- Convene regular meetings with Safeguarding team to discuss CLAs and their individual needs.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of all Staff**

All staff will:

- Ensure that any 'Child Looked After' is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is always maintained.
- Be familiar with this policy and respond appropriately to requests for information/documentation required to support the completion of PEPs and review meetings.
- Respond positively to any request to function as the Key Adult or Back-up Key Adult the child can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- Contribute to the Named Contact's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate.
- As with all children, ensure that no child is stigmatised in any way due to the personal circumstances, religious beliefs or cultural practices.
- Provide a supportive climate to enable the child to achieve stability within the school setting and receive the appropriate support and intervention required to reach their full potential.
- Collaborate with the Named Contact to identify, plan, implement, deliver and review the impact of any required intervention and additional support arrangements required.
- As with all children, have high aspirations and expectations for both their educational and personal achievement and work as part of a wider school team to help remove any potential barriers to learning as well as positively promote the general well-being and self-esteem of the child.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors (BOG)**

St Mary's BOG will:

- Nominate a school Governor (Mrs Marie Curran) to support the Named Contact and ensure the needs of any CLA are understood by staff and considered at a school management level.
- Ensure all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance relating to CLA children.
- Be aware of whether the school has any children who are 'Looked After,' however the children will not be named.
- Ensure that there is a Named Contact, Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult for CLAs and that they have been enabled to conduct their roles and responsibilities in relation to supporting children who are classified as 'Looked After.'
- Support the Named Contact etc. and other staff to ensure the needs of each CLA are met.
- Ensure the nominated Governor links with the Named Contact, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the Governing body. (NB for child protection and confidentiality reasons these reports should not include any names of individual children).
- Review the effective implementation of this policy on an annual basis.
- Support the Trust in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of children who are 'Looked After.'
- In partnership with Mr Murray (Principal), ensure that, through relevant training and development, the Named Contact and Key Adult and Back-up Key Adult can acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills and knowledge required to fulfil this role effectively.

## **Personal Education Plan (PEP) Completion Process**

In partnership with the child (where appropriate), their carers, social worker, any other supporting professionals involved as well as their biological parents (where appropriate), each child's PEP is completed and reviewed on a regular basis. This process is undertaken as follows:

- The social worker will inform the school of a child becoming 'Looked After' or of a child, who is already 'Looked After' joining the school. SW to provide school with a copy of the CLA1 form.
- The social worker will share any relevant information with the Principal and/or Named Contact as well as copies of any relevant reports. This includes the previous PEP, where one exists.
- A copy of the new PEP form will be sent to the school by the social worker so the school can complete the educational data and targets sections as well as add any relevant details about the school and the child's support/teaching arrangements.
- A PEP meeting will take place if deemed appropriate. This meeting will involve the social worker, Named Contact (as well as other staff if appropriate), the child's carer, any other supporting professionals and the young person themselves, if appropriate.

- The completed PEP will be sent to the social worker, who will take it to the child's statutory review meeting and discuss it within the wider context of the child's life.
- The social worker will send the completed PEP to the school, CLA team, carers and parents.
- The school will continue to implement, monitor and review the identified actions, targets and interventions as well as track the child's overall progress within school.

***Effective and high-quality PEPs should:***

- Be an accurate and comprehensive record of the child's experiences, progress and achievement – social, emotional and academic.
- Be linked to information recorded in other education plans. These include a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or IEP/PLP; targets set for children recorded at an SEN Support level; IEP/PLP in relation to behavioural issues.
- Identify developmental and educational needs, (short and long term) in relation to a child's required need to develop specific skills, knowledge, concepts and experiences
- Set short term targets with clear progress measures identified against each target/area of need.
- Set long term plans and identify future aspirations.
- Document identified actions for specific individuals being used to support the achievement of agreed targets.
- Identify how the CLA Funding Allowance will be used to support the targets set in the PEP.

## **Confidentiality**

To ensure the safety and well-being of a 'Child Looked After,' information will be shared with staff on a 'need to know' basis. The Named Contact will discuss what information can be shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting and will only share this once agreed with the social worker, carer, young person (where appropriate) and other parties. All staff in school are aware that complete confidentiality of any information relating to children should be always maintained.

## **Training**

The Principal, Mr Murray and the Named Contact will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy, including a TAP Training briefing via 'Model the Model.' (Review training was completed in 2024/25 for whole staff)