

**Woodmancote School and Little Chestnuts
Children In Care Policy
(Previously Looked After Children Policy)**

Designated Members of Staff	S Johnson and K Baxter
Committee with responsibility	Safeguarding Committee
Date of Issue	February 2019
Frequency of Review	Yearly

Issue Number	Issue Date	Summary of Changes
1	February 2019	New Policy in line with model policy from Virtual School
2	April 2021	Reviewed
3	February 2022	No changes
4	September 23	Reference to KCSIE 23
5	September 2024	Reference to KCSIE 24
6	September 2025	Inclusion of Role of Virtual School Heads (VSHs) in KCSIE 2025

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Rationale

At Woodmancote we believe that all Children in Care, and those previously in care, should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Gloucestershire children. As a community we aim to be champions for Children in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development.

To do this we commit to:

- Supporting them to raise their aspirations;
- Giving them a sense of the control they have over their own lives;
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption.

Definition: Who are our Children in Care?

Most Children in Care will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the Care of the Local Authority if he or she is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- a) Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
- b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order;
- c) Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child.

Legal Framework

- From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children's and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care.
- The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Children in Care was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes.
- Previous legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Children in Care.

Schools requirements

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education for all Children in Care;
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of Children in Care;
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and truancies for all Children in Care;
- Ensure there is a (qualified) Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of all Children in Care who are on the school roll;
- Develop effective systems of communications and protocols;
- Promote the attendance of Children in Care.

Objectives

At Woodmancote to ensure support for Children in Care we will:

- Create a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent;
- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children;
- Bring the educational attainments of our Children in Care in line with those of their peers;
- Make sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- Balance high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress;
- Have a Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with carers, parents (as appropriate) and Social Workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues;
- Work alongside the Social Worker, Virtual School and other professionals to ensure that each Child in Care has a current, good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person and helps them make excellent progress;
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Closely monitor each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes;
- Ensure there is a well planned and coordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented;
- Plan for future transitions effectively

All staff and Governors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Children in Care by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to complete tasks and

responsibilities. Also, to establish and maintain appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures, both within the school and with other agencies.

In addition we will:

- Challenge negative stereotypes amongst students and staff;
- Closely monitor the social and personal progress of all Children in Care;
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's Care status and the background and family history of children who are in Care, especially surrounding teaching and learning relating to the family;
- Ensure a clear protocol is followed in the sharing of information, both within school and with outside agencies.

In pursuit of this Policy we will:

- Nominate a School Governor to ensure that the needs of Children in Care in the school are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Teacher;
- Support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training to support Children in Care.

Admissions and Transitions

We will:

- Prioritise the admission of Children in Care, and those who have been adopted who have a Special Guardianship Order, within our own Admissions procedures in order to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Children in Care;
- Ensure that all Children in Care meet the Designated Teacher who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral;
- Ensure a warm welcome to our school by providing appropriate induction for all Children in Care so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers and parents where appropriate;
- Make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are obtained at the outset;
- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition (where the receiving school is made known);
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.

Attendance (also see our Attendance Policy)

We will:

- Implement a first day of absence procedure for all Children in Care whose attendance falls below 95%;
- Inform the Carer / Virtual School / Education, Performance and Inclusion Team / Social Worker / Parents if there are any concerns about attendance;

- Acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.

Exclusion (also see our Relationship and Behaviour Policy)

We will:

- Actively follow the Gloucestershire County Council's Protocol for Reducing Exclusions of Children in Care and follow the Child in Care Transfer Protocol/Procedure if a child is at risk of permanent exclusion.

Multi-Agency Liaison

We will:

- Support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making;
- The Designated Teacher will liaise closely with carers, parents (if appropriate) and the child's Social Worker on a variety of issues, including homework, kit and equipment required. It is important that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared;
- There will be a clear understanding about the role and responsibility of staff in relation to the child and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved;
- Our staff will share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child;
- Be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of the parents.
- Our Designated Teacher will ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned on time, to comply with statutory obligations;
- Encourage each of our Children in Care to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self esteem and learning.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting in time for every Statutory Care Review that involves the Social Worker, Foster Carers, child and parent (if appropriate). Additional attendees may include; Educational Psychologist/Advisory Teachers, Therapists, Health, Virtual School etc. We will seek the views of the child as to appropriate attendees in line with the statutory guidance;
- Have a high quality PEP for each child which includes appropriate targets and has been quality assured by the Virtual School;
- Contribute to the process whereby all Children in Care have a high quality PEP in place within 20 days of starting at the school. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need/EHCP);

- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in the PEP will be adhered to by our staff in order that all our Children in Care have the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set;
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the Child in Care and used as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Seek to nominate our Children in Care to the Virtual School for the annual Children in Care Celebration of Achievement Events.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that Children in Care enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible. The responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities is that of the Social Worker, sometimes delegated to Foster Carers. The person who may give permission will be clarified at the first PEP meeting.

Complaints

If a young person, parent or Social Worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should, in the first instance, raise it with the Designated Teacher, who will try to resolve the situation alongside the carer and Social Worker.

Roles & Responsibilities

Governors:

What every Designated Governor for Children in Care needs to know:

- The number of Children in Care on the school roll;
- The number of Children in Care with up-to-date PEPs and have they been assessed as good quality;
- Overall attainment and progress of Children in Care in the school / performance compared to peers;
- Number of Children in Care with SEN and with an Education Health Care Plan (EHP);
- Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of Children in Care;
- Number of Children in Care who have had a Fixed Period Exclusion in the previous 12 months;
- Is the school making effective and efficient use of the Pupil Premium for its Children in Care?
- Is the school meeting its statutory duties with respect to the Designated Teacher? (Qualifications, experience etc.);
- Is the Designated Teacher provided with appropriate professional development and time to fulfil the role?
- How LA supports educational achievement of Children in Care.

The Governing Body will:

- Appoint a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009; (DCSF, The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies [2009]);
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that school staff and Governors are aware of the DfE Statutory Guidance;
- Have knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Children in Care, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance 2014 (Promoting the Education of Children in Care);
- Appoint a Governor with specific responsibility for Children in Care;
- Take a proactive approach in cooperating with, and supporting, the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of Children in Care attending the school;
- Ensure that Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher;
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, Children in Care.

The Role of the Headteacher:

- Ensure that, in partnership with the Governing body, the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of Children in Care;
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting Children in Care to achieve;
- In partnership with the Governing Body, monitor the effectiveness of the role of the Designated Teacher;
- Oversee the development of the policy on Children in Care;
- Evaluate the attainment and progress of Children in Care, discuss them at Senior Leadership meetings and report these termly to the Governing Body and Virtual School.

Designated Teacher for Children in Care (see Statutory Regulations from September 2009 & Promoting the Education of Children in Care 2014):

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- Promote the educational achievement of every Child in Care on the school's roll;
- Set up systems to regularly record the achievement of all Children in Care, monitor their attainment and progress and, where progress is not being made, take appropriate actions to support the pupil;
- Ensure effective expenditure of the Pupil Premium Plus funding;
- Ensure the Voice of the Child is heard;
- Build a good working relationship with the link person from the Virtual School bringing to their attention any concerns;
- Regularly report progress and attainment for every Child in Care to the Virtual School;

- Promote a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every Child in Care matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised;
- Facilitate the training of school staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Children in Care learn and develop;
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Children in Care at a disadvantage;
- Promote a culture in which Children in Care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- Promote a culture in which Children in Care are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in Care;
- Make sure that Children in Care are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/interventions promoted by the Department for Education;
- Ensure able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential
- Promote good home-school links through contact with Carers and effective communication;
- Work with school staff to monitor the educational progress of Children in Care and intervene, drawing upon external agency support if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy or other similar concern;
- Maintain records regarding all Children in Care, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- Establish a specific system for Children in Care with regard to contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Children in Care;
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of all Children in Care and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis;
- Play an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to statutory reviews of Children in Care as required;
- Serve as a named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and Social Care and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- Ensure data requested by the Virtual School for Children in Care is returned on time;
- Ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between Key Stages and Year groups and schools where appropriate;

The role of all those involved in supporting Children in Care is to:

- Ensure that all Children in Care are treated inclusively;
- Have high expectations of Children in Care's involvement in learning and educational progress and ensure that more able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential;
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- Be aware of the reasons which may affect the behaviour of a Looked After Child and understand that this is often a form of communication which may need a more personalised response or intervention;
- Understand how important it is to see Children in Care as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- Appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Child in Care's status;
- Understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, Carers, Social Workers, Area Learning Advocates and, depending on age and understanding, the child him/herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

The role of all those involved in supporting Children in Care with Special Educational Needs is to:

- Quickly identify any Special Educational Needs and ensure appropriate provision will be made;
- Have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Children in Care are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this;
- Ensure that if the child has a Statement of Special Educational Need or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly Care Planning Reviews; dates can be obtained from the Social Worker.

Role of Virtual School Heads (VSHs) in KCSIE 2025

1. Extended Responsibilities:

- As of **March 2024**, the role of the Virtual School Head was **expanded** to include:
 - **Children with a social worker**
 - **Children in kinship care arrangements**
- This extension is **non-statutory**, meaning schools are encouraged—but not legally required—to collaborate with VSHs in these areas.

2. Educational Achievement Focus:

- VSHs are expected to **promote the educational achievement** of these vulnerable groups, ensuring they receive appropriate support both academically and in terms of wellbeing

3. Collaboration with Schools:

- Schools should **work effectively with Virtual Schools** to support children in kinship care, and this should be reflected in their safeguarding practices and records. Woodmancote is committed to working with the Virtual School In Gloucestershire in order to improve outcomes for pupils.

4. **Monitoring and Oversight:**

- Although VSHs do not directly manage these children, they play a key role in **monitoring attendance, attainment, and progress**, and in **advising schools** on how best to support them.

The Headteacher and/or Designated Teacher will be responsible for briefing all staff on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Signed: Chair of Safeguarding Committee

Statutory Documents

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Gloucestershire Virtual School Guidance

[Statutory Guidance and Documents | Virtual School \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://gloucestershire.gov.uk)

[Virtual School Policies, Useful Guidance and Documents | Virtual School \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://gloucestershire.gov.uk)

[Resources | Virtual School \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://gloucestershire.gov.uk)

