



Townlands C of E Primary Academy
Children Looked-After (CLA) and
Previously Child Looked-After (PCLA) Policy

Approved by: Rachael Johnson (Chair of Governors)

Date: February 2025

Next review due by: February 2028

Rationale

Townlands C of E Primary Academy recognises that CLA and PCLA can experience specific and significant disadvantages within a school setting. We are committed to ensuring that these pupils reach their potential in all areas. We recognise that CLA and PCLA may have faced significant trauma in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) including abuse, neglect, loss and/or rejection. When children are exposed to these adverse and stressful experiences, it can have a long-lasting impact on their learning, as well as on their to interact with others.

Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, national progress and attainment data shows that CLA and PCLA are at greater risk of exclusion and are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Helping CLA succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Townlands C of E Primary Academy believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every CLA and PCLA can be successful.

School can be a source of stability for children who may have been subject to emotional distress and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and thrive.

Policy (Legal Framework)

Looked after children (CLA)

The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989: a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if they fall into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

Previously CLA children (PCLA)

PCLA children are those who:

- are no longer CLA by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Every local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure that their duty to promote the educational achievement of CLA and PCLA is properly discharged; this officer is called the Virtual School Head (VSH). The duties of the VSH are defined in the DfE statutory guidance "*Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children*" – February 2018.

The governing body of a maintained school and the proprietor of an academy must ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff, undertakes the responsibilities within the school to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school's roll; this person is the 'designated teacher' (DT). The duties of the DT are defined in the DfE statutory guidance "*The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children*" – February 2018.

Principles

Townlands C of E Primary Academy is committed to enhancing the achievement and welfare of CLA and PCLA in the following ways:

- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of CLA and PCLA.
- Providing a climate of acceptance and challenging negative stereotypes.
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broad education that meets the needs of the individual child.
- Ensuring that (CLA and PCLA) pupils have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of the school, including the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Ensuring CLA have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that addresses all aspects of education including health and wellbeing and ensures that appropriate support is in place to promote progress.
- Ensuring that carers/parents, social workers and virtual school staff (where relevant) are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- Ensuring that (CLA) pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions about their education, including affecting their future provision.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher (DT) is appointed, who will be responsible for all CLA and PCLA.
- Prioritising a reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Ensuring discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensuring there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially regarding schoolwork on "family".

Procedures

Admissions

Townlands C of E Primary Academy welcomes all CLA.

All CLA and PCLA have the highest priority within school admission arrangements. The school recognises that CLA and PCLA are an 'excepted group' and will be prioritised in our oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked after Children (England) Regulations 2006).

The PEP (Personal Education Plan)

A PEP will be initiated within 20 school days of the CLA starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary (at least termly and within 6 months of the previous PEP). The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns, ensure appropriate support is in place and set SMART targets. The child should be involved in their PEP by attending the meeting and/or sharing their views or in another way (e.g. gathered by the DT before the meeting).

We will have robust arrangements in place to ensure that any undiagnosed special educational needs are reflected in the PEP and addressed through the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) framework as soon as possible.

Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

PPP for CLA will be delegated to schools by the relevant virtual school to help support appropriate provision for individual CLA, meeting the objectives set out in this policy and the child's PEP. Townlands will work in partnership with the child's Virtual School to ensure that CLA receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve in all aspects of school life.

For PCLA, the PPP funding will go directly to the school's budget if the child is listed as PCLA on the January census. The use of this funding will be identified in consultation with the young person and their parents.

Exclusions

Townlands C of E Primary Academy recognises that CLA and PCLA are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a CLA/PCLA is at risk of exclusion, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. Consultation with social workers, the Virtual School and other relevant parties will be important in identifying strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

If an exclusion is unavoidable, the reintegration meeting should consider all possible measures and resources that provide support and prevent further exclusions.

Confidentiality

Many CLA do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel different. We will maintain and respect the child's confidentiality in consultation with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties. Once this has been agreed, complete confidentiality is to be maintained and information on CLA will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis.

All staff will do their utmost to maintain the child's confidentiality e.g. avoiding reference to their care status/PEP meetings in front of their peers.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with CLA and PCLA, such as Social Care teams; virtual schools, Educational Psychology, health services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Responsibilities

Governing Body

The governing body will appoint a named governor for CLA and PCLA. The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and DT as the named staff responsible for implementing this policy.

The named Governor should:

- Ensure the school has a coherent policy for CLA and PCLA that is regularly reviewed in light of the relevant statutory guidance and that other school policies support their needs.
- Ensure that the school has a DT, and that the DT has the necessary time, resources and training to be able to carry out his or her responsibilities.
- Ensure CLA have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of CLA and PCLA.

The governing body should receive an annual report setting out:

- The number of CLA and PCLA students on the school's roll.
- Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- Their progress and attainment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions.
- The destinations of CLA 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.

Head Teacher

The responsibilities of the Head Teacher are:

- To identify a DT for CLA and PCLA.
- To support the DT in carrying out his/her role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training on CLA.
- To ensure that the DT has the necessary time and resources to carry out the role.
- To ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of CLA and ensure strategies are in place to address any concerns in these areas.
- To report on the progress, attendance and behaviour of CLA to all parties involved.
- To ensure that all staff receive relevant training about the needs of CLA and PCLA and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- To ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used effectively to support appropriate provision for individual CLA.

Designated Teacher

Government Guidance says that the DT should be *“someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, who should be an advocate for CLA and PCLA, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy shares and supports high expectations for them.”*

Our Designated Teacher will:

- Understand the role of carers, social workers and other relevant parties, be the named contact for them and maintain regular communication with them.
- Understand the role of virtual schools and respond promptly to requests for information.
- Act as an advocate for CLA and PCLA in order to maintain high aspirations, allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the PEP to plan for that transition in consultation with the child’s social worker.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition to a new school or phase of education and ensure the speedy transfer of information.
- Be responsible for the implementation of the child’s PEP and lead in promoting their educational achievement. This includes monitoring academic progress and attendance, and ensuring the necessary support is in place to meet the child’s learning, social and emotional needs.
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how CLA and PCLA children learn and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements.
- Ensure that each CLA and PCLA has an identified key adult that they can talk to at school.
- Ensure that children are able to discuss their progress and are involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Set up timely meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Maintain an up-to-date record of the CLA in school, ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required on a strictly ‘need to know’ basis and reporting annually to governors, maintaining confidentiality of all CLA and PCLA.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage CLA to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
- Be aware that many CLA and PCLA say they are bullied, so actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school’s anti-bullying policy.
- Attend training as required and keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding CLA.

All Staff

All staff should:

- Be aware of the impact of trauma (including abuse, neglect, loss and separation) on children's development and their ability to build relationships, and how this might affect their behaviour.
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of CLA and PCLA, as for all pupils and work to ensure they achieve stability and success at school.
- Understand how important it is to see CLA and previously CLA children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their CLA or previously CLA status.
- Use effective classroom strategies to meet the needs of CLA and PCLA and be aware that some curriculum content may trigger difficult emotions, such as schoolwork on "family".
- Engage with relevant training that is offered to enable them to work effectively with CLA and PCLA.
- Keep the DT informed about CLA and previously CLA children's progress, respond promptly to requests for information and discuss any concerns about barriers to learning (including bullying).
- Appreciate the central importance of the CLA child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported.

Links to other policies

The needs of CLA and PCLA should be kept in mind in all other policies including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy