Children We Care For and Previously Cared For Policy

Approved by:	**Sustainability Committee**
Date:	**December 2025**
Next review due by:	**December 2026**

Introduction

St Leonard's CE Primary School is committed to providing a high-quality education for all our pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. We recognise that children we care for (looked-after children) and previously cared for children are among the most vulnerable groups in society.

Under Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (November 2025), our provision for children we care for and previously cared for children is evaluated as part of the 'Inclusion' evaluation area. Inspectors will assess how effectively we identify and support pupils who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and how we work with multi-agency partners to improve their outcomes and experiences.

We also know that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential care, foster care, kinship care and those who have previously been in care compared with their peers. For example, they may experience a high level of disruption and changeable school placements, reduced opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities, and inconsistent or no attention paid to homework. This may result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population, and underachievement in further and higher education. These issues may also affect adopted young people.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. To date the outcomes achieved by children we care for have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting through:

- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Promoting early years experiences
- Celebrating success

Children we care for may (or may not) have some or all of the following needs and difficulties:

- Low self-esteem
- Poor education standards due to time out of school
- Delayed social, emotional and/or cognitive development
- Be bullied or bully others
- Be prone to mental health issues
- Be isolated with few friends
- Have behaviour challenges
- Poor attachments to others
- Have a need to be private/introverted

1.0 Definitions

A child is 'a child we care for' (looked-after child) in Oxfordshire if they are:

- Provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (Children Act 1989, Sections 20 and 21)
- Subject to a care order (Children Act 1989, Part IV)
- Subject to a placement order

A child stops being a child we care for when they are adopted, return home or turn 18 years of age; they are considered to be a previously cared for child. However, Local Authorities in the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21 years of age. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

A 'child with a social worker' includes children who are subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child

Protection Plan. While these children are not looked-after, they require additional support and monitoring, and the Virtual School has an extended non-statutory duty to promote their education.

2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 Advocacy and High Expectations

All our staff are aware that being or becoming 'cared for' has a major impact on children's lives. We maintain high expectations for all children we care for and previously cared for children, recognising that they are entitled to the same ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum as their peers.

The Designated Teacher and staff working with and supporting children we care for understand and are enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher. All staff and the Governing Body are aware of:

- The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance: *Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children*
- The requirements set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2025)
- Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (November 2025) and the standards for inclusion

There is a nominated Governor to monitor the work of the school in supporting its children we care for and previously cared for children as part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

We understand that children we care for and previously cared for children may face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. Our child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in this group of children.

2.2 Documentation and Monitoring of Progress

We systematically monitor the progress of children we care for and previously cared for children, and review support and interventions to ensure they are having the intended impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing. We make timely changes to provision where necessary to improve outcomes.

- We contribute to the process whereby all children we care for have a high-quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting at our school or becoming cared for. This is completed via an electronic system and it includes SMART educational targets linked to the child's Care Plan and any other documentation resulting from assessments (e.g. an Education, Health and Care Plan).
- PEP targets are aspirational, have academic rigour, and reflect the outcomes desired to reach individual goals. They determine the need for pupil premium plus funding for the child or young person.
- The child's views are captured and documented on the PEP.
- The child may attend PEP meetings (where appropriate). If attending, they will have a 'pre-meeting' to talk through who will be there and what to expect. They will be supported to share any concerns and anxieties.
- Any educational recommendations detailed in a PEP are shared with relevant stakeholders, upholding confidentiality.
- We assess each child's attainment either on entry to our school or on becoming a child we care for to ensure continuity of learning. These baselines are recorded in the PEP.
- We monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Where a child is underachieving and/or there are significant concerns, we discuss this with the allocated Virtual School and an early PEP review may be called.
- We use data analysis to identify trends and gaps for children we care for as a group and individually, comparing their progress with their peers and against their individual starting points.
- The Designated Teacher knows all the cared for children and previously cared for children in school and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and Social Worker. The school flags children we care for status appropriately (e.g. via our electronic systems), so that information is readily available as required.

Our monitoring and evaluation processes include:

- **Termly pupil progress meetings** where the progress of every child we care for and previously cared for child is reviewed against their individual targets and PEP outcomes
- **Regular review of interventions**, using baseline and exit data to measure impact
- **Learning walks and work scrutiny** focusing on the experiences of children we care for
- **Pupil voice activities** to understand pupils' experiences and views on the support they receive
- **Annual review** of provision and outcomes for children we care for as part of the School Improvement Plan
- **Reporting to governors** on the progress, attendance, and outcomes of children we care for and previously cared for children

Where monitoring identifies that provision is not having the intended impact, we take swift action to adjust our approach, seek additional specialist advice, or provide further training for staff.

2.3 Joined-up (Multi-agency) Working

We work closely and effectively with pupils, parents, carers, social workers, the Virtual School, and other professionals to ensure that children we care for and previously cared for children receive coordinated, high-quality support. We ensure that pupils' and parents'/carers' views and aspirations are included in decision-making about support.

The Designated Teacher or a school-based representative will attend all review meetings held for the child where appropriate/possible. We also provide information reports as needed.

We forward documents to link professionals/agencies for the child when requested and in a timely manner. The allocated Virtual School will assist and ensure any additional information is also forwarded.

We take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our children we care for. We liaise closely and professionally with other agencies as needed so that each child we care for has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

We share information effectively with the local authority and support the authority to complete statutory assessments in relation to pupils' social care needs. We work well with social workers, virtual school headteachers and other professionals to plan and provide multi-agency support for pupils who are known (or previously known) to children's social care.

At St Leonard's CE Primary School, we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and caseworkers to enable children we care for to achieve their full potential. We ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

The designated safeguarding lead and other leaders use their knowledge of a pupil's social care status to inform decisions about promoting their welfare, such as providing additional academic support, supporting their wellbeing or reducing barriers to attendance.

2.4 Training (including Continuing Professional Development)

Staff receive suitable training and support to enable them to meet the needs of children we care for and previously cared for children effectively. Training includes:

- The roles and responsibilities involved in the education of children we care for, provided by the Local Authority and Virtual School
- Understanding the additional safeguarding challenges faced by children we care for and previously cared for children
- How to maintain high expectations and provide high-quality inclusive teaching for children we care for
- Understanding the impact of trauma, attachment difficulties, and disrupted education on learning and behaviour
- Strategies to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children we care for

The Headteacher and Designated Teacher are responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

The Designated Teacher attends relevant training about children we care for and disseminates learning

to staff. Training needs are reviewed regularly based on the needs of pupils and outcomes data.

2.5 Governance

We have nominated a governor with responsibility for children we care for. The Head Teacher ensures that the Designated Teacher reports at least once a year to governors on:

- The training they have received
- The progress, attendance, and wellbeing of children we care for and previously cared for children
- The impact of pupil premium plus funding on outcomes for children we care for
- How the school is meeting the standards set out in Ofsted's inclusion evaluation area

Our governors have good knowledge of the impact of the pupil premium for children we care for and question/challenge accordingly. The nominated governor attends training where appropriate to support understanding of children we care for and other vulnerable groups.

Governors ensure that the school's provision enables every pupil to thrive, including children we care for and previously cared for children. They hold leaders to account for the outcomes and experiences of these pupils.

2.6 Admissions

Our nominated Governor ensures that our admission criteria and processes do not discriminate against children we care for. They also ensure that the school's policies and procedures give children we care for equal access to the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Due to placement care changes, children we care for may enter school mid-term. We understand how vital it is to give them a positive welcome. It may be necessary to offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help with their transition and to develop a sense of belonging, stability and safety.

We support successful transitions for children we care for at all key points: into school, between year groups within school, and when moving to their next setting. This includes:

- **Early liaison** with parents, previous settings, social workers, and any professionals already involved with the child
- **Pre-admission visits** for the child and family, with additional visits arranged where needed
- **Sharing of information** about the child's needs, strengths and successful strategies
- **Planning for adaptations** to the environment or provision needed before the child starts
- **Phased or flexible start arrangements** where appropriate
- **Comprehensive handover meetings** between current and receiving teachers when moving year groups
- **Enhanced transition programmes** when moving to secondary school, including additional visits and meetings between primary and secondary staff

2.7 Inclusion

This policy recognises that all pupils at St Leonard's CE Primary School are entitled to a balanced and broad curriculum. The policy also reinforces the need for teaching and learning support that is fully inclusive.

The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all children we care for and previously cared for children. We understand that the most effective inclusion strategy begins with everyday high-quality inclusive teaching, which has the most benefit for pupils who find learning hardest.

All teachers are responsible for the progress of children we care for and previously cared for children in their class. We ensure that:

- Teachers have high expectations for all pupils, including children we care for
- Teaching is adapted to meet pupils' needs, with scaffolding and support provided where necessary
- Children we care for can access the same ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum as their peers

- Reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010
- Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to plan and assess the impact of support

We encourage each child we care for to access out of hours learning activities, realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.

Where a child we care for also has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), we ensure that their needs are addressed in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice and that support is coordinated effectively between the Designated Teacher and the SENCo.

If we need to review whether a child is still appropriately placed in our school, we will seek advice from the Local Authority (e.g. through our link SEN Officer) to discuss appropriate alternative arrangements. We will involve the child, the social worker, the carer and, where appropriate, the parent/s at all stages of decision-making. We will consider all alternatives to expulsion, recognising that for a child we care for, this has broad implications.

Where alternative provision is commissioned for a child we care for, we ensure that:

- The provision is suitable, safe, and meets the pupil's individual needs
- Clear outcomes are agreed for the pupil's time in alternative provision
- We maintain responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils placed in alternative provision
- Regular monitoring takes place to evaluate the quality and impact of the provision
- Communication between school and the alternative provider is effective

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The management of all aspects of the School's work, including provision for children we care for and previously cared for children
- Keeping the Governing Body informed about all issues relating to children we care for in the School
- Working closely with the Designated Teacher, for example with regard to liaising with support services and other professionals
- The deployment of all personnel within the School to support children we care for
- Ensuring that pupil premium plus funding is used effectively to enable children we care for to make progress in learning, as well as socially and emotionally
- Suspension or expulsion decisions in line with the School's exclusion policy, and relevant local authority and national guidance, being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement

The Head Teacher also has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Governing Body about the implementation of this policy and the effect of inclusion programmes within the school as a whole.

3.2 The Governing Body

In addition to duties outlined in sections 2.5-2.7 above, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for children we care for
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for children we care for
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for children we care for who links with the Designated Teacher
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and any other staff as required to ensure the needs of children we care for are met
- Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for children we care for
- Ensure that the school's safeguarding policy reflects the additional barriers that can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in children we care for and previously cared for children

- Hold leaders to account for the progress, attendance, and wellbeing of children we care for and previously cared for children

3.3 The Designated Teacher (continued)

At St Leonard's CE Primary School, the Designated Teacher is a member of the senior leadership team. The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for Children We Care For within school
- In conjunction with the Pupil Premium Co-ordinator, ensure pupil premium plus funding is used effectively to enable children we care for to make progress in learning, as well as socially and emotionally
- Be familiar with the statutory guidance on the role of the Designated Teacher: *Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children* (DfE, 2018)
- Be familiar with Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (November 2025) and the standards for inclusion relating to children we care for
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for children we care for on both the children and the rest of the school community
- Know all the children we care for and previously cared for children in school, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- Attend relevant training about children we care for and disseminate learning to staff
- Link effectively with other agencies and carers in relation to children we care for, seeking advice from the Virtual School when appropriate
- Ensure that children we care for receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- Support successful transitions for children we care for at all stages, including into school, between year groups, and to secondary school
- Ensure that all children we care for have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care, the child contributes to this, and it is reviewed at 6 monthly intervals
- Ensure PEP targets are aspirational, have academic rigour, and are linked to measurable outcomes
- Ensure that all data on children we care for is made available for meetings as required
- Use both qualitative and quantitative data to monitor the progress and wellbeing of children we care for, identifying trends and taking swift action where provision is not having the intended impact
- Ensure confidentiality, sharing information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to children we care for
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for children we care for
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information and records, when a child we care for transfers to another educational placement
- Report to the Governing Body on children we care for in the school, to inform school policy and practice development. Attend governor meetings as appropriate
- Report to governors on the progress, attendance, wellbeing and outcomes of children we care for and previously cared for children, including the impact of pupil premium plus funding
- In conjunction with the Home School Community Link Worker, review and instigate opportunities for additional support if needed, e.g. through nurture provision, (in or out of class), counselling and therapy-based support
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEND, and there is effective provision where English is an additional language and/or there are medical needs
- Work closely with the SENCo to ensure coordinated support for children we care for who also have SEND
- Maintain high expectations for all children we care for and previously cared for children,

ensuring they have access to the same ambitious curriculum as their peers
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions and support for children we care for, making timely adjustments where necessary

3.4 All Staff

All staff will:

Follow school procedures and:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about the progress of a child we care for
- Have high aspirations regarding the educational and wider personal achievements of children we care for
- Maintain high expectations for children we care for and previously cared for children, recognising they are entitled to the same ambitious curriculum as their peers
- Positively promote the raising of self-esteem of a child we care for
- Ensure any child we care for is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- Be aware that children we care for may face additional safeguarding challenges and be alert to signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Be familiar with this policy and guidance on children we care for, and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- Liaise in a timely manner with the Designated Teacher where a child we care for is experiencing difficulties
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other link professionals, and keep carers fully informed at all times
- Keep accurate records as necessary, and make these available to other professionals, parents, carers, and/or the pupil as appropriate
- Adapt teaching to meet the needs of children we care for, providing scaffolding and support where necessary
- Work closely with teaching assistants to plan and assess the impact of support for children we care for
- **[NEW - Framework alignment]** Understand the impact of trauma, attachment difficulties, and disrupted education on learning and behaviour, and respond with empathy and appropriate strategies

3.5 The Virtual School

The Virtual School is not a building but a group of professionals who work closely with the child's school, social worker and carer to support their education. Initially their role is to secure a suitable school placement for a child that meets their educational and pastoral needs. The Virtual School also helps to ensure every child we care for has access to wider enrichment activities that develop their interests, strengths and skills. They monitor attendance, attainment and achievement at school, and ensure that educational success is prioritised in care planning.

Since 2021-22, the Virtual School has had an additional extended non-statutory duty to promote the education of children subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan, aged from 0 up to 18 in educational settings and those who have previously had a Social Worker. This includes children who are disabled and have, or have had, an allocated Social Worker, but who are not in care. In September 2024, the role of Virtual School Heads was further extended to include a non-statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievement of all children in kinship care.

Virtual School Heads identify and engage with key professionals, including designated safeguarding leads, social workers, headteachers, governors, SENDCOs, and mental health leads, to help them understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children with a social worker.

Children we care for receive additional funding to support the targets or outcomes set out in their PEPs. This is called Pupil Premium Plus and is administered by the Headteacher of the Virtual School.

We work closely with the Virtual School to:

- Ensure effective use of pupil premium plus funding
- Access training and support for staff
- Share data and information about the progress and wellbeing of children we care for
- Seek advice and specialist support when needed
- Participate in quality assurance processes for PEPs

4.0 RELATED SCHOOL INFORMATION AND POLICIES:

- Accessibility Policy and Plan
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy
- Equality Policy
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) information and Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Report and Policy
- Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition Policy
- Pupil Premium Strategy

5.0 USEFUL WEB LINKS:

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (November 2025) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework

Statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education

Oxfordshire Virtual School https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/virtual-school-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-0-25

Care Leavers Local Offer https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/childrens-services/local-offer-care-leavers