VICTORIA LANE ACADEMY

Children in Care Policy

2026 - 2027

A Member of the Tudhoe Learning Trust

Definition
'Children in Care' (CIC) is a term that refers to children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility. This can happen either with parental agreement or when a Court makes a Care Order. The child may be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, with family members or sometimes with their parents. These children are therefore subject to corporate parenting.
This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" and associated guidance on the education of Children in Care (CIC).

Governor Responsible: Mrs Kayleigh Short (Chair)
Designated Lead: Miss Heather Whitfield

Victoria Lane Academy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad-based curriculum and aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care. The school and the governing body endorse the Durham County Council policy and welcomes CIC who may be looked after by our local authority or those who may be in the care of another authority but living in Durham.
Victoria Lane Academy's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of CIC is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all CIC – Heather Whitfield.
- All CIC will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the Virtual school, Victoria Lane Academy, the child, Foster carers and the child's Social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of CIC.

Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, CIC are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, CIC significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. 75% of CIC leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping CIC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Victoria Lane Academy recognises that CIC can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that CIC may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances. Victoria Lane Academy recognises that CIC may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

Victoria Lane Academy believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Child in Care can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that CLA can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Responsibility of the Head teacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for CIC, whose role is set out below. (Heather Whitfield)
- It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave. (Francesca Azzouzi)
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of CIC and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of CIC to all parties involved.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibility of the Governing Body

- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of CIC:
- The Education (Admission of CIC England) Regulations 2006. Relevant DfE guidance to Governing Bodies (Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors).
- Ensure that the school has an overview of the needs and progress of CIC.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of CIC.
- Ensure the school’s other policies and procedures support their needs.

- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Head teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of CIC are recognised and met.

Receive a termly report setting out:

1. The number of looked-after pupils on the school's roll (if any).
2. Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
3. Their Teacher Assessment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
4. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
5. The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
6. The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

The role of the Designated Teacher:

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met.
- This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.
- Ensure that the Electronic Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Maintaining an up-to-date record of the CIC in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required
- Ensure that each Child in Care has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes.
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately Co-ordinate any support for the CIC that is necessary within school liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage CICs may face.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage CIC to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of CIC.
- Set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school – to a new school.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- Be aware that 60% of CIC say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored.

- Attending training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding CIC.

The responsibility of all staff:

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of CIC, as for all pupils.
- Maintain CIC's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable CIC to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all CIC.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of CIC.
- Be aware that 60% of CIC say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy.

Confidentiality

Information on CIC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis.
The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Record keeping and information sharing

The Designated Teacher will keep an up-to-date record of CIC and Young People in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff.
Electronic Personal Education Plans will be initiated within 5 school days of the Child in Care or Young Person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the CIC/YP. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.
Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition. It is vital that the Child in Care or Young Person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Exclusions

Victoria Lane Academy recognises that CIC are particularly vulnerable to exclusions.
Where a CIC is at risk of exclusion the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.
The child or young person's Electronic PEP will reflect strategies to support the child and

where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening.
Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information.

Staff development and training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated Teacher is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of CIC.
Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with CIC, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include EAL, being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs.
Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs provision and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those CIC who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs and will work with them appropriately.

Support and resources

The Governing body will ensure that the school allocates resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for CIC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Home-school liaison

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable CIC to achieve their potential.
Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working

Admission arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements CIC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle.
The school recognises that CIC are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise CIC in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Children n Care (England) Regulations 2006).

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 the Child in Care or Young Person including Social Care teams; Educational Psychologist; Health Services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. Victoria Lane Academy is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

Policy Implementation: February 2018

Date of Last Policy Review: July 2026

Date of Next Policy Review: July 2027

Headteacher: *H. D. Whitfield*

Chair of Governors: *K Short*