



Monmouthshire County Council

Policy Guidance for Schools to Support Children who are Looked After (CLA) and formerly Looked After Children.

Context

The local authority (LA), including all Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) schools promote the educational achievement and promote the well-being of the children and young people they look after. This is part of the concept of being the Corporate Parent for Children and Young People who are looked after.

“The Welsh Government has a national mission to ensure that all our children and young people have an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards. Underpinning this is a belief that someone’s ability to benefit from education should not be determined by their personal circumstances and a drive to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to education.”

Making a difference - A guide for the designated person for looked after children in schools’ Welsh Gov 2017

In Monmouthshire the LA designated Looked after Children in Education officer (LACE) remit is held by the Vulnerable Learners Lead who sits within the Inclusion team who support the delivery of its aims/ principles. The LA will work with school Designated Child Looked After Leads (Designated CLA Leads) to ensure that:

- the learner’s out of school life is understood and responded to safely and sensitively.
- that support is in place to avoid home circumstances or adverse life experiences creating any form of barrier or obstacle to learning or inclusion in school life.

All learners who are CLA must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP forms part of the child’s overall care and support plan and should establish how to meet the learner’s need. It should be upheld as an important and meaningful plan which is reviewed regularly by social workers and education professionals using person

centred principles to ensure that the child's voice is held central and that there is appropriate multi-agency input to ensure the broad range of the learner's need and support are understood and met.

The LA has a role in supporting schools to ensure designated CLA leads are trained in their role and that each school also has a designated CLA Governor to oversee this aspect of the school. The LA and schools use a range of training forums and approaches to meet the needs of CLA and former CLA learners. These include but are not limited to:

- Bespoke advice, guidance and support to schools and other teams as needed.
- Training and support for designated CLA leads via the Educational Achievement Service (EAS) consortia.
- Termly CLA leads forum for information sharing, 'Q and A' and sharing of best practice.
- Attendance at PEP reviews and LAC reviews where appropriate. Monitoring and quality assurance of PEPs to ensure that they comply to expectations outlined in *Making a difference - A guide for the designated person for looked after children in schools* Welsh Gov 2017
- Support regarding Additional Learning Needs (ALN) with LA Individual Development Plans (IDPs) as appropriate.
- Monitoring of CLA learners to ensure their special status is understood in relation to admissions and exclusion matters
- Reporting to cabinet and the corporate parenting board as required to maintain their awareness of the support of CLA and former CLA learners by the Children and Young Peoples Directorate (CYP).

Key Documents for the Support of CLA learners:

- Making a Difference: A Guide for the Designated Person for Looked After Children in Schools (Welsh Government, 2017)
- School Admissions Code (Welsh Government, 2013)
- Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units (Welsh Government, 2019)
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2021)
- Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2021)
- Towards a stable life and a brighter future (Welsh Government, 2007)

The LA endorses the policy below for the use of MCC schools.

Example School's Child Looked After (CLA) and former CLA

Policy - April 2023

Context

We are an inclusive school, and we want all our learners to thrive both as people and as learners.

We want them to be able to achieve the goals of the Curriculum for Wales of being:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

We recognise that due to home circumstances, and a range of negative or adverse life experiences, some of our learners will have faced, and may continue to face, challenging situations.

Learners who are, or who have at any point been looked after, may need additional understanding and support to ensure our school operates in a truly inclusive and equitable way.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) defines a 'child looked after' as:

- In care, which is subject to a care or interim care order. Provided with accommodation by the local authority, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

A 'previously looked after child' is:

- a child or young person who has been looked after but is no longer looked after in England and Wales. This is because the child is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement order. Schools may not know if a child is adopted since the adoptive parent(s) are under no obligation to share this information with school.

Our School Context:

As at the Pupil Census in January 2023 (PLASC) there were X children on roll who were recorded as looked after. This number can change from day to day.

We as a school community are mindful of the fact that some of our learners may be adopted and adoptive parents may not wish for their child's adoptive status to be known or recorded and there is no obligation upon adoptive parents to do so. We are also mindful that a current or former looked after learner could join our school at any point in the school year. The aim of the LA and our school is to ensure that we, like all MCC schools are 'CLA friendly' and 'CLA ready' at any point in the school year.

We are sensitive to the fact that both current and former CLA learners may not want any additional support to be apparent to others in school, which could include both adults and their peers. We will always endeavour to work in a child focused and person centred way and to ensure their voice is listened to and acted upon, in terms of the way they are offered, and can access, any bespoke or targeted support.

We believe that although current and previously looked after learners may need and benefit most from the understanding that underpins both Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) training, these approaches are likely to greatly benefit the wider school population too. Such approaches are very much part of the ethos of the school and the LA which aim to ensure an embedded approach to support emotional and mental wellbeing which promote a sense of belonging and encourage both positive behaviours and attendance at school for all. We especially believe this to be the case knowing that the difficult home circumstances of some learners may not come to the attention of professionals for some time. Other learners may never reach the threshold of becoming looked after but their home life could still be challenging and difficult in many ways.

Although the support given to CLA learners relies upon a whole school and whole LA approach we also have designated strategic leads to ensure that CLA learners have their needs understood and met.

The Designated CLA lead is X

The Designated CLA governor is X.

The Designated CLA lead:

1. Promotes a whole school approach to being always 'CLA friendly' and 'CLA' ready.
2. Promotes a whole school approach to understanding that not all former CLA will be known as such, and which therefore recognises that adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and trauma informed schools (TIS) aware approaches are of potential benefit to the whole school community.
3. Promotes a whole school ethos of removing seen and unseen barriers to high aspiration and high achievement for all CLA and former CLA learners at all stages of their school life.
4. Sensitively identifies children who are looked after through several methods, including admissions and referral forms; contact with parents/carers, social workers, and the LA ALN, Inclusion team (LACE remit) and admissions teams.

5. Works in partnership with the LA Inclusion, Admissions and ALN teams as well as EAS consortia, parents/carers, and social workers to improve the educational outcomes for children in care.
6. Works in partnership with parent/carers and social workers to improve the educational outcomes for previously CLA.
7. Builds effective relationships with parent/carers and social workers.
8. Promotes strong pastoral support systems, including emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) TIS and ACE approaches and nurture provision.
9. Maintains (with the support of electronic systems) an up-to-date record of all CLA on the school roll.
10. Tracks and monitors the progress of individual CLA pupils.
11. Ensures educational information is transferred securely and in good time between agencies, new schools and relevant professionals.
12. Ensures that CLA have an effective PEP that includes an effective One Page Profile (OPP). The PEP is reviewed regularly with the child, their parent/carer and social worker, in a person-centred way.
13. Ensures that children who are previously CLA have an effective One Page Profile (OPP). The school regularly reviews the OPP with the child, their parent/carer and social worker, in a person-centred way.
14. Respects former CLA's right to privacy and will only share information with people who need to know.
15. Informs staff about former CLA status, where agreed with the parent/carer and social worker, so that the school can provide appropriate support and monitoring.
16. Respects CLA learner's right to privacy and will only share information with people who need to know.
17. Recognises that care can be temporary, short term or long term and that children can come in and out of care during their educational career.
18. Informs staff about learners who are CLA, where agreed with the parent/carer and social worker, so that they can be supported and monitored appropriately.
19. Recognises that these children, *may* need additional support and guidance to succeed. Therefore, ensuring that there are appropriate mechanisms for this to happen.

The nominated governor should support the work of the designated CLA lead in:

Having empathy with the complexity of the lives of looked after children. Promoting high aspirations for looked after children

- Monitoring learning outcomes.

- Empowering school staff to contribute to the teaching and wider learning experiences of children in care.
- Ensuring that the interests of CLA and former CLA are championed in line with Welsh Government guidance on exclusions and restrictive practices as well as in line with inclusion and equity of access to all school core and enrichment opportunities.
- Reporting to the governing body on the support in place for CLA and former CLA learners in the school.
- Being satisfied that the designated person appointed by the Headteacher prioritises education for the looked after child. The decision on who should fulfil the designated person role should be based on several factors such as the existing management structures within the school, the size of the school and the number of looked after children and their specific needs, which may vary markedly. The Headteacher should consult with the appointed governor about this appointment.

The School Community:

1. Understands that children who are CLA are often likely to have practical and cultural barriers to learning or to feeling and being fully included in school life.
2. Builds effective multi agency relationships with parents/carers and social workers.
3. Implements strong pastoral support systems and whole school approaches to emotional health and wellbeing, such as the use of TIS and ACE approaches, as well as having appropriately trained staff (such as ELSAs).
4. Tracks the attainment, attendance and exclusions of children who are CLA and is aware of why these learners may need additional support.
5. Ensures that there is a smooth transition from one school to another and that the receiving school has relevant information before a child moves, and proactively seeks this information when a CLA learner is due to join the schools. As a result, the school can plan for a CLA learner's transition more effectively.
6. Understand that CLA and former CLA learners may need extra support in both practical and pastoral ways to enable them to have ambitious, high expectations and to enable them to fulfil these at all education phases.

Additional Support

Additional support for a CLA or former CLA learner may look like this:

- Direct and indirect support is outlined and agreed for CLA learners through their PEP plan.

Providing a welcoming admission process which seeks the input of social workers and LACE officers as appropriate to ensure successful intake with

enhanced transition into school when agreed to be in the best interests of the CLA learner.

- Working with the LA ALN Statutory Officer supporting CLA learners to identify the ALN needs of learners as appropriate and develop a good understanding of the additional learning provision (ALP) required to meet these needs.
- Working with the LA if a CLA learner is determined to have an ALN that needs ALP for the LA to create an LA individual development plan (LA IDP).
- Working together with the ALN team and relevant officers for CLA in other LAs in instances where a CLA learner is at an MCC school but is looked after by another LA, to ensure their ALN needs are identified, met and incorporated into the LA IDP and PEP as needed.
- Ensuring that appropriate targets and outcome measures are set for learners who are CLA, that these are recorded on the child's PEP or PEP/IDP where appropriate and are regularly reviewed with the child, the social worker, and their parent/carer.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the need to work to 'close the (attainment) gap' for CLA learners¹.
- Seeking to avoid reduced timetables, unless a multi-agency professional PSP meeting has clearly set out why this is in the best interests of the learner, during which the process to support the learner back into full time education as soon as possible is outlined and agreed.
- Seeking to avoid the exclusion of CLA learners by trying every practicable means to maintain the learner in school² by ensuring schools seek appropriate LA and/ other professional advice at the earliest opportunity.
- Maintaining the professional learning of school staff to enable them to be confident in supporting the needs of CLA and former CLA learners at any point in time.
- Ensuring that there is dedicated time to enable the designated CLA lead to collate, analyse and feedback on progress information on of CLA and former CLA learners to ensure individual and strategic oversight and to present this at least annually, to governors to enable the progress of CLA and former CLA learners to be part of school development planning.
- Using of LA self-audit CLA tool to identify areas of strength and areas for development with regards to being a school that is always 'CLA friendly' and 'CLA ready'.

Name:

Name:

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/education-in-wales-our-national-mission.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/exclusion-from-schools-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

Chair of Governing Body

Headteacher

Name

Name

Chair of Governing Body

Headteacher

Date:

Review Date (annually):

This document is also available in Welsh

Appendix One
School Self Audit Tool for CLA and former CLA

MCC APRIL 2023 Inclusion Team