



Merridale Primary School

Children and Young People in Care Policy

2026-2028

Approved by Local Governing Board: June 2026

Merridale Primary School believes that, as educators and Corporate Parents and in partnership with key stakeholders, we have a legal, moral, and professional duty to safeguard and promote the education of our most vulnerable pupils, particularly children and young people in care and previously in care, and other children and young people with a social worker or who have ever had a social worker.

This policy outlines how we support the educational, emotional, and social needs of **children and young people in care (CiC)** to ensure they achieve their full potential.

Key Principle

Every child in care deserves **understanding, stability, and the opportunity to succeed**

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the school supports **Children in Care (CiC)** in line with statutory guidance including:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* (DfE, updated annually)
- *Promoting the Education of Looked-After Children* (DfE, 2018)
- *The Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children* (DfE, 2018)

We recognise that children in care are a **vulnerable group** and require proactive support to achieve positive educational and life outcomes.

We are committed to:

- Promoting **equality of opportunity**
- Providing **stability and inclusion**
- Supporting **wellbeing and achievement**

2. Definition

The term 'children and young people in care' includes children placed by a local authority with family members, foster carers or in a residential care home. They also include those placed in care through a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or by a voluntary agreement with the child's parents under section 20 of the Act. The terms can also be used to refer to children entered into police protection and those involved in the youth justice system.

Previously looked after children (DfE definition) are those who have left care via an adoption order, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangements Order (CAO).

The term 'other children with a social worker' is used to refer to all children who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan. This includes children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings.

A kinship care arrangement is when a close family member or friend look after a child for a temporary or permanent amount of time, including where an SGO or CAO has been granted. The child will not necessarily have been in care previously.

3. Aims

We aim to:

- Provide a **safe, supportive, and inclusive environment**
- Raise **attainment and progress**
- Promote **emotional wellbeing**
- Ensure **swift access to support and intervention**
- Strengthen **communication with carers and professionals**

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

In line with statutory requirements, the governing body will:

- Ensure a Designated Teacher is appointed (qualified teacher)
- Be aware whether the school has any Children and Young People in Care and how many (no names)
- Monitor the progress and outcomes of children in care
- Ensure appropriate training is provided
- If the school has any children and young people in care on roll, nominate a named governor for children and young people in care, and previously in care. The Nominated Governor will attend relevant training, such as that provided by the virtual school, and take a leading responsibility for challenge and support of the school in raising the achievement of these pupils, as well as an interest in the progress of children with a social worker and in kinship care. As part of this, the nominated governor should have a termly meeting with the Designated Teacher, with a clear agenda, to address school improvement issues related to pupils in care and previously in care. They will also ensure that an annual report (as a minimum) on the progress of pupils in care and previously in care is provided to the governing body by the designated teacher

Designated Teacher (DT) for Children and Young People in Care

The "Designated Teacher" for Children & Young People in Care at Merridale Primary is: Mrs L Towle (Headteacher)

The statutory duties of the designated teacher for children and young people in care were extended to include children and young people previously in care by the Children & Social Work Act 2017. The DfE further extended the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) in 2021 to include promoting the educational outcomes of all children with a social worker. In 2024, the VSH was further extended to include children in kinship care arrangements. DfE guidance states that the virtual head's role with regard to these wider cohorts does not include direct interventions for individual pupils, however, or the provision of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) or management of pupil premium funding. Rather, it is a broader approach which involves:

- understanding and addressing the barriers and challenges these groups face in attending school
- strengthening partnerships between education settings and local authorities
- establishing a culture of high aspirations and promoting good practice that helps these children to progress and achieve well in education.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Promote the **educational achievement** of children in care
- Be an advocate for all children in school who are in care/previously in care, ensuring their voice is heard and acted upon.
- Ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need-to-know basis and in line with school safeguarding and information-sharing protocols (in such a way that it helps to ensure that the educational and SEMH needs of the child can be understood and met.
- Be a central point of contact, working with any previous educational settings to ensure a smooth induction and transition into school.
- Ensure **Personal Education Plans (PEPs)** are in place, reviewed, and impact-driven
- Ensure staff understand the impact of **trauma and attachment**
- Monitor attendance, attainment, and exclusions
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus is used in the most appropriate way to support the individualised learning targets of children in care and previously in care, as agreed in the PEP meeting for children in care, and/or on-going communication with parents/carers, social workers and/or virtual school. For pupils with a social worker and in kinship care, ensure that Pupil Premium if applicable, higher needs funding, recovery funding and other applicable funding streams are used proactively to support the needs, strengths and targets of pupils - see below for further information.
- Advise staff on strategies to support children in care
- Work with the **Virtual School Head (VSH)** and contribute to social care review meetings and intervention plans, SEND reviews and other meetings and plans as required & appropriate.
- Fulfil school safeguarding protocols effectively, be alert to any child protection issues, and know what action to take.
- Inform the child's carer/parent and (where applicable) social worker when a child in any of the above cohorts is absent from school without notification or excluded, and consult the Virtual School, Attendance and Inclusion teams, as appropriate, if problems become persistent.
- If a pupil on the school roll enters custody, maintain an interest in the young person and provide information and transition support with the secure institution in partnership with the Youth Offending Service. Where the young person remains on the school roll, ensure that appropriate education is provided in the new setting and that attendance, attainment and progress are monitored and supported appropriately.
- Attend relevant training on safeguarding and promoting the achievement of vulnerable pupils, keep up to date with relevant legislation & guidance and cascade to school staff as appropriate.
- Provide in-school training for school staff around the needs of children in these cohorts, including attachment, trauma and recovery and its implications for emotional wellbeing and behaviour management.
- If/when the school has any children or young people in care on roll, meet with the Nominated Governor or Chair of Governors termly and report to the Governing Body annually, as a minimum, on the performance of their children and young people in care and previously in care, without naming individual children
- Ensure well planned and informed transitions when a child changes school, with timely information sharing.

The "Virtual Head Teacher" for Children & Young People in Care in Wolverhampton is: Darren Martindale

www.wolvesvirtualschool.co.uk

All Staff

All staff will:

- Be aware that children in care are a **vulnerable group**
- Have high expectations of achievement and behaviour
- Understand the importance of **early intervention and safeguarding**
- Report concerns in accordance with the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

Headteacher / Senior Leadership

- Ensure this policy is implemented effectively
- Support the Designated Teacher
- Promote a culture of inclusion and respect
- Explore every possible alternative to a temporary or permanent exclusion, in line with national, local, and school admissions policies, due to the disproportionate effect that exclusion can have on the most vulnerable pupils. Instead, we will work together proactively with all key partners including the local authority, using every resource in our control (including alternative provision where appropriate), to solve problems.
- In the event of a serious issue, which might otherwise lead to permanent exclusion, the child may be placed on a fixed-term exclusion and an emergency review of the PEP (if the pupil is in care) and/or other relevant plans / provision will be called and attended by key personnel, e.g. carer/parents, social worker and (where appropriate) representatives from the Virtual School team, Family Help/social care, Inclusion Team etc, to resolve the issue. Pupils in these cohorts will be prioritised for Educational Psychology support where appropriate, as well as referral to local authority inclusion panels and other support services including mental health support where appropriate.
- If we feel that we are unable to meet the child's needs, work with appropriate agencies to ensure that any special educational needs, including social, emotional, and mental health needs, are assessed in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) as a priority. This should include, where appropriate, referral for a statutory education, health and care needs assessment.
- On occasion, by shared agreement and in the best interests of the child, a managed move to another provision may be considered to avoid a permanent exclusion or continued underachievement. We will consult with the virtual school in such cases, and work in partnership to achieve the best outcome for the child.
- Where a modified timetable may be in the best interests of the child, and if the child is in care, this will firstly be discussed and agreed in a review of the Personal Education Plan, thereby taking into account the views of the child, carer and social worker. If the pupil is previously in care or has a social worker, the child's social worker and carers/parents will be consulted. For children in kinship care, carers will be consulted. In all cases, the local authority's Inclusion Team will be informed of modified timetables.
- Take a proactive approach to sourcing the DfE-recommended first day provision for fixed term exclusions for children and young people in care and previously in care, in view of the additional pressures and risks that exclusion can place on disadvantaged children, and extend this principle to pupils with a social worker and in kinship care.
- Make our school "attachment aware" and "trauma informed" and fully able to meet each child's learning, health & wellbeing needs, by ensuring that key staff keep up-to-date with relevant policy and legislation and attend relevant training, such as that provided by the Virtual School Team and Educational Psychology Service, and through key sources of learning such as the Attachment Research Community (ARC).

Pupil Voice

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

It is important that the young person is supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the Personal Education Plan by the Designated Teacher to inform the PEP and Care Plan review meetings.

It is important to establish the child's view of their changed circumstances and what they want others to know. It is also important to ensure that a Social Worker/teacher/carers prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home, e.g. by other pupils in the playground.

5. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Each pupil in care will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is developed jointly by the Social worker and Designated Teacher. The school will contribute actively to PEP meetings

The Care Plan/PEP must:

- Include and specific areas of concern and **clear, achievable, measurable targets**
 - Areas for consideration will include:
 - Attendance;
 - Achievement Record (academic or otherwise);
 - Behaviour;
 - Extended learning opportunities;
 - Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities;
 - Special needs (if any);
 - Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences); and
 - Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations).
- Track progress and attainment
- Identify use of **Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding**

The PEP will be updated and reviewed at least annually or at the point of any major change and contribute to the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Designated Teacher is accountable for the implementation of the educational targets within the Plan. The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all Children & Young People in Care against the key indicators outlined above.

6. Teaching and Learning

We will:

- Provide **high-quality teaching**
- Use assessment to identify gaps in learning
- Offer **additional support or interventions** where needed
- Celebrate success and progress

7. Pastoral Support and Wellbeing

We recognise that children in care may have experienced disruption or trauma. We will:

- Provide **trusted adults** in school
- Offer access to **pastoral and emotional support**
- Use consistent routines and clear expectations
- Promote self-esteem and resilience

8. Attendance and Behaviour

We will:

- Monitor attendance closely and respond quickly to concerns.
- Use **restorative and supportive approaches** to behaviour
- Be mindful of underlying needs when responding to behaviour, considering the impact of trauma, attachment and loss.
- Work with external professionals before any suspension or exclusion decision.

9. Working with Parents, Carers and Agencies

We will:

- Build strong partnerships with:
 - Foster carers / residential staff
 - Social workers
 - Virtual School
- Share information appropriately and sensitively
- Involve carers in school life where possible

10. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

For Looked After Children (LAC) in primary schools, the government allocates £2,690 per eligible pupil through the Pupil Premium. This funding is designed to help schools raise attainment and provide targeted academic and pastoral support.

Funding allocated for children in care will be used to:

- Support academic progress
- Provide enrichment opportunities
- Enhance wellbeing and emotional support

Impact will be monitored through the PEP process.

11. Safeguarding

Children in care are a vulnerable group. We will:

In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*:

- Children in care are **more vulnerable to harm, exploitation, and mental health difficulties**
- All safeguarding concerns will be:
 - Reported immediately
 - Managed in line with the **school's Safeguarding Policy**

The school recognises the importance of:

- Multi-agency working
- Early help and intervention

12. Confidentiality and Sensitivity

- Information about care status will be **shared on a need-to-know basis only**
- In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher.
- 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.
- Staff will handle sensitive information with **professional discretion**
- Children's views and dignity will always be respected

13. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Consistent with *KCSIE* and DfE advice:

- Staff will be aware of:
 - Trauma
 - Attachment needs
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- The school will provide:
 - Access to **pastoral support**
 - Safe relationships with trusted adults

14. Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with the carer/parent/Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan (PEP). An induction will take place following the school's normal induction process.

15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed at least every two years

- Updated in line with statutory guidance
- Evaluated for impact on outcomes for children in care