Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School

CLA and CPLA Policy
(Policy for children with a Social Worker)

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Next Review Date:	April 2027
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1. Policy Objective

To implement the guidance for all children with a social worker.

That is:

- the statutory guidance to promote the educational achievement and welfare of all Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (CPLA) on roll at our school
- to outline how our school will implement the non-statutory guidance that is the 'duty to promote the education of children with a social worker in the last 6 years. (To be made statutory when Parliamentary time allows.)

Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and CPLA

Victoria Pinkham

Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and CPLA

Gianpaulo Surfaro

Name of the Designated Safeguarding Leads with responsibility for children with a Social Worker

Hannah Rimmer and Helen Flanagan

At Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (CPLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the DfE guidance.

2. Intention

As a school, we acknowledge and understand the intention of the revised guidance implemented in September 2025 by the DfE to local authorities, that **extends** the role of the Virtual School Head to use strategic influence with **schools and social care** to improve the educational outcomes for all children known to a social worker and those in kinship care arrangements. We will extend the priority for additional support to this group as part of our implementation of the New Duty.

We understand that this new guidance includes all children who are most vulnerable and educationally disadvantaged, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and in care or previously in care.

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a supportive and stable base for all children known to a social worker including CLA, and in promoting their academic, social, and emotional development. We understand the need for annual whole school staff training on trauma informed and attachment aware practice in the school, so that all adults, both non-teaching and teaching, fully understand and are sensitive to the barriers to learning that children can experience.

We want to develop a culture within the school where all children and young people feel supported, safe and can thrive. We foster a sense of belonging through the relationships children make with staff and their peers. We understand the need to work in a 'relationship-based' way so that all children feel valued, nurtured and a part of our school community.

Our aim is to establish a culture within the school, that supports the wellbeing of both staff and children through an informed understanding of the inter-relationship between learning, wellbeing, and safeguarding. Our aim at Bernards Heath, is for every child, to develop a positive sense of self and the skills for lifelong learning.

We agree with the view that wellbeing being central to a young person's success in education and understand that it is not possible to separate wellbeing and learning. Our commitment is to provide all children at Bernards Heath with a breadth of learning experiences and to champion the needs of **all** children to ensure they make rapid educational and social progress throughout their education journey in this school.

3. Implementation

We apply our school policies and create a '*calm, safe and supportive environment where children and young people want to attend and where they can learn and thrive'.*

Our Therapeutic Thinking (behaviour) Policy is the starting point for laying out our vision and communicates how we aim to achieve a culture where all children thrive. We will do this in recognition of the wider context where; '*The behaviour policy is the starting point for laying out our vision and is one of the important ways this school culture is communicated to pupils, staff, and parents and carers'*. **DfE: Behaviour in schools Advice for headteachers and school staff** February 2024. See here for full guidance.

In addition to this we have been recently engaged in further learning about Executive Function. We know that Executive Function Skills can be delayed in children who have experienced trauma. We have also learnt that all children benefit from learning strategies for developing Executive Function.

The Virtual School Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed training supports a greater understanding of diversity and equality and enables all staff to better understand the behaviours of all children.

We have delivered the Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Toolkit training to school staff and respond to children based on the principles that it promotes. The Therapeutic Thinking (behaviour) Policy is based on the understanding that positive behaviour management is completely influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children. It is a priority that adults, employed and visiting Bernards Heath are role models for 'Kind, Respectful, Safe' and work to build positive and professional relationships with children. Working in this pro-active way to create a positive culture is the core of our policy. We prioritise relationships and outlines how our team can use de-escalation and restorative practices to support children. This creates a culture where all of those working within the school are curious rather than judgemental and feel confident in their work.

Equality and Diversity:

Promoting an inclusive environment is key to the wellbeing of all children, as is a commitment to deepening children's understanding of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance. Staff have had training on managing bias (Sept 2025) and our Equalities and Diversity Plan outlines our priorities which includes being part of the HfL Great Representations Project and subsequent work on becoming an ant-racist school.

The implementation of this Policy requires a reflection on those vulnerable learners who have many overlapping experiences: discrimination because of a protective characteristic, SEND, poverty, other adverse childhood experiences. Supporting these learners to achieve will raise achievement for all. The expectation is that all learners receive a high-quality, ambitious education; that is inclusive of all learners. All schools and other education providers must meet their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010. All protected characteristics are supported to enable Hertfordshire schools to provide opportunity for all. See here for the Hertfordshire strategy.

4. **Impact**

This section sets out the expected impact to be achieved through the implementation of our policies in school

- a safe and secure environment is provided where educational progress and a calm purposeful environment for learning is prioritised
- all adults are equipped with the understanding of the impact that the experience of trauma and neglect can have on the way children form relationships and learn

- staff feel confident to work within a relational approach to behaviour management and apply regulation strategies that take into consideration the effect of trauma on the brain and the potential long-term impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- the gap between the attainment of children with a social worker and their peers is narrowed, **accelerated** and **rapid** progress is made.
- school-based interventions are accessed, the allocated Pupil Premium *Plus* (PP+) is used to ensure effective impact
- all CLA will have at least termly Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings each academic year and for the joint planning and quality first teaching to have measurable impact on each child's learning on a daily basis (see guidance here.)
- all adults provide sensitive, child-led support, adopting a relationship-based approach and there will be at least one key adult with whom the child or young person has a trusted relationship and who will act as an advocate for them and take a special interest in their progress in all school activities (usually their class teacher, a pupil champion and the CLA/CPLA lead)
- school systems facilitate nurturing support, that includes a strong relationship between school staff, parents or carers and children with a social worker on roll, a good example of this is around transition into school or from one year group to the next
- CLA/CPLA and Children with a social worker are positively identified within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for (see guidance here)
- the Therapeutic Thinking (Behaviour) Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour, and it is understood that all behaviour is communication and staff respond with compassion and care. Sanctions that shame and ostracise children from their peers, school, community or family are not part of our policy or practice.
- All children with a social worker and their families feel part of the school community; they are actively welcomed, involved and engaged into our school community (see guidance here)

Statutory Educational Planning for all Children Looked After: Statutory Personal Education Plans (ePEP) The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer, and other relevant professionals. In any one school year there will be at least 3 PEP meetings for each CLA.

5. Roles and Responsibilities: Education planning for all children with a Social Worker

The Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for all children through high quality learning and teaching and a drive to best possible outcomes for each and every child.
Children known to a social worker, as shown in the Government's Children in Need review (2019) evidenced for the first time, achieve significantly less well than others at all stages of education and poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

The Headteacher and Governing Body

- will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role and have at least 2 days per year training to remain fully informed.

- will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and CPLA and Children with a Social Worker make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receive appropriate training.
- will also ensure that there is an expectation of significant communication, joint planning, and training with the Designated Safeguarding Leads for the school so that there is a full and informed response to understanding the needs of children with a Social Worker within the school and a collaborative approach with Social Care.
- will report to Governors sharing plans for improvement and development in school for disadvantaged children and to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding for CLA and CPLA.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is a Statutory Post and in 2025-2026 is Victoria Pinkham.

She is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and CPLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA/CPLA have access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA/CPLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book reflection
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently (separate budget line)
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- developing expertise in the field of CLA/CPLA, including attachment theory and trauma-informed practice
- delivering the Virtual School training: 'An introduction to Attachment Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' to school staff
- providing and attending training and offering advice to school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive, relationship-based and has high expectations for CLA/CPLA and Children with a Social Worker.
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment and progress of CLA/CPLA and Children with a Social Worker
- working alongside the Designated Safeguarding Leads to support and promote the education of children with a Social Worker on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan and children in Kinship Care.
- prioritising CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (see guidance here)
- ensuring that CLA/CPLA are not overlooked for positions of responsibility within the school because of their care / former care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform their annual CLA health review.

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for all Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care, by:

- understanding and promoting this policy
- attending relevant training, including the Virtual School toolkit training on 'Attachment Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice'

- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead
- referring to the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead for advice
- developing skills to be able to work in a relational way, following the school policy for Therapeutic Thinking (Behaviour)
- promoting a relational culture to help fully re-engage children to make rapid progress through access to any additional school-based support available and from quality first teaching.
- be aware of the existence of potential unconscious-bias about children with a social worker and mitigate against such a situation through careful reflection and ensuring that all decisions about these children are justifiable, equitable and fair.

6. Attendance:

School attendance procedures will reflect the specific needs of all children with a Social Worker to ensure that they have good school attendance and punctuality. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools, the local authority and other local partners.
Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality, the school will contact the social worker, and other professionals (including the Virtual School for children who are looked after), promptly.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support CLA/CPLA during admission and transition are enshrined in the statutory codes of practice for admission:

- prioritising CLA and CPLA at the point of admission

We follow these recommendations for all children known to a social worker who are in the process of admission to the school or transition from school elsewhere:

- there is a swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school
- early identification of pupil champion and peer buddy is in place
- additional support and planning at times of transition is planned for
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss are included
- home visits from all key adults in the new class setting as part of the transition process are agreed
- extra visits to new settings and opportunities to spend more time with new adults are planned
- early discussions with parent/carer at the beginning of the transition period happen

7. Additional Educational Needs:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for all CLA/CPLA, Children with a Social Worker (CSW) and Children in Kinship Care who have special educational needs and disabilities by:

- having high expectations

- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria (see guidance here)
- using Pupil Premium strategically as follows*:* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium
- ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified and teaching to the plan is systematic; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the targets set as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit, ePEP and reports to Governors

We are aware that PPG+ cannot be used to support other pupils who are not directly in receipt of this funding.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for all Children with a Social Worker who have special educational needs & disabilities by ensuring:

- that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic
- that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal provision
- that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEND Code of Practice
- that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- that with the school SENCo, the EHCP review is held in a timely way with all relevant professionals invited and their views obtained.

8. Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on any child with a Social Worker by familiarising themselves with the school's child protection policy and the current DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance if there are any safeguarding concerns.

9. Suspensions and Exclusion:

We have reviewed the school's Therapeutic Thinking (Behaviour) Policy alongside the Behaviour in Schools (2024) and the new Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, Including Pupil Movement, guidance (2024) In force from 1st September 2022, replacing the 2017 guidance.

- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a Child Looked After or Child Previously Looked After or child with a Social Worker, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will always discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School as soon as possible, so they can

help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary.

- We will explore alternative positive options which prioritise the young person's learning.
- We will keep the number of days out of the in-school routine to a strict minimum.
- We will only consider Permanent Exclusion from school as the last possible resort for CLA/CPLA, recognising that entire living arrangements could be affected as a result and will seek to find an effective solution which best meets the needs of the child.
- Suspensions will be for as short a period as possible with the aim of improving outcomes for the child or young person. The time during and after the exclusion period will be used constructively to resolve the situation and ensure positive and appropriate support is in place for all.
- We will always contact The Virtual School for support to find an effective solution which best meets the needs of the child.
- We understand that where a child looked-after is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher should contact the local authority's Virtual School Head as soon as possible to discuss support for the individual child to reduce harm to the child's future education and to plan the best way to resolve the situation. (Section 59: Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- We will use the proactive practices listed in our Therapeutic Thinking (Behaviour) Policy to avoid suspending a child known to a Social Worker or a child in Kinship Care.

We understand that the Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. This duty can, in principle, apply both to the suspensions and permanent exclusions process and to the disciplinary sanctions imposed. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, governing boards of relevant settings must use their *'best endeavours'* to ensure the appropriate special educational provision is made for pupils with SEND, which will include any support in relation to behaviour management that they need because of their SEND. Our school procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of children with a Social Worker with special educational needs. The Equality Act 2010 means that a head teacher could not lawfully exclude or suspend a child *because of* their disability. A head teacher can lawfully exclude or suspend a child for a reason relating to their disability (e.g. behaviour) if the suspension or exclusion is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. For more information about what might lead to exclusion see our Therapeutic Thinking (Behaviour) Policy, Annex 1.

The Headteacher, Designated Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Governing Body will ensure that all staff are briefed on the Statutory Guidance and practice outlined in this policy.

Date: April 2026

Review date: April 2027

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

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