Education of all Children with a Social Worker

Based on Herts Virtual School model school policy for the Education of all Children with a Social Worker to include:

- Looked After Children (CLA)
- Previously Looked After Children (PLA)
- Children on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan (CSW)

2025

Policy ratified: Autumn 2025

To be reviewed: Autumn 2026

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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 (PLA) on the roll of 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'.

Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA

Gillian Harrison, Intermin SENDCo
Hannah Badger, SENDCo (maternity leave)

Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and PLA

Jennifer Shepherd

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

Gillian Harrison, Intermin SENDCo
Hannah Badger, SENDCo (maternity leave)

At Strathmore Infant and Nursery School we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (PLA) 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.

Intention

As a school, we acknowledge and understand the intention of the revised guidance issued in June 2022, 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. 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 also understand that this guidance is essential in the drive to ensure that those who have lost the most from the pandemic can recover and flourish as set out in the research within the Deaton Review, the Nuffield Foundation, 2022.

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 an ethos within the school for all children and young people to feel supported and safe and that they belong through the relationships they make with staff and pupils. 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, particularly those who have experienced a very poor early start in life.

Our aim is to establish a culture within the school that improves the well-being of both staff and pupils through an informed understanding of the inter-relationship between learning, well-being and safeguarding.

We agree with the emerging views that well-being is central to a young person's success in education and understand that it is not possible to separate well-being and learning. Our commitment is to provide all children and young people on our roll with a breadth of learning experiences that will champion the needs of **all** children to ensure they make rapid educational and social progress throughout their education journey in this school.

We will use our school policies and practice to create a '*calm, safe and supportive environment where children and young people want to attend and where they can learn and 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** September 2022. See here for new guidance.

We know that it is likely that children have experienced loss and educational damage as a result of the pandemic and as a school, we see each academic year as an opportunity to develop our school staff to engage in positive relational practice to enable all to achieve the best possible outcomes and standards.

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

We have delivered the Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Toolkit training to all school staff and will develop a school response based on the principles that it promotes. We have also prepared an action plan to ensure that the whole school takes a holistic approach to well-being for all pupils. We have delivered further training on relational practice supported

by Hitchin Primary Outreach Schools Service (HPOSS). Our staff feel confident in de-escalation and restorative practices. This professional learning for all staff will help to create an ethos where all of those working within the school feel confident in reporting and evidencing issues relating to equality and diversity. Promoting an inclusive environment is key to the well-being of all pupils, as is a commitment to deepening pupils' understanding of "democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance" (Ofsted 2019).

Our Behaviour Policy is for staff and pupils alike. We understand that positive behaviour management is completely influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children who are part of this school, and that learning is taught as well as 'caught'.

Our school's culture and values are manifested through the behaviour of all members of the school community - parents and carers, teachers, ancillary staff, visiting specialists and pupils. Our expectation is everyone within the school will interact with respect, kindness, and integrity.

Equality and Diversity:
The implementation of this Policy requires a reflection on those 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.

We acknowledge that we should train all staff to reflect on their professional responses to children and to prevent unconscious bias from affecting aspiration.

Impact

This section sets out the expected impact to be achieved through the implementation of the policy in school.

- A safe and secure environment is provided where educational progress and stability is always central to the planning
- 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 or regulation strategies that take into consideration what has been learnt from recent research on 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, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention see guidance here and to use the allocated Pupil Premium *Plus* (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- All CLA to 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.

- School systems facilitate nurturing support, that includes a strong relationship between school staff, parents or carers and children with a social worker on roll.
- 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 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 avoided. An inclusive culture and positive school ethos is created for every pupil.
- All children with a social worker and their families feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged into this 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.

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 that 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 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 PLA 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 Lead 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 complete both sections of the Report to Governors (formerly CLASEF), to share their plan for improvement and development in school for disadvantaged children and also to inform the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's developing policy and practice, and to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding for CLA and to inform the school Governing Body in an annual report.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is a Statutory Post and in 2025-2026 is Gillian Harrison (intermin SENDCo).

He/she is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or PLA has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and PLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book looks
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- 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, including attachment theory and trauma-informed practice
- delivering the Virtual School training: 'An introduction to Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' to the whole school
- providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive, relationship-based and has high expectations for CLA and PLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and PLA and school resource and staff training needs for working with this group
- working alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead to support and promote the education of children with a Social Worker on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan
- prioritising CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (see guidance here)
- ensuring that CLA and PLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their 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, by:

- attending relevant training, including the Virtual School toolkit training on 'Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' (to be found on the Virtual School website)
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher
- referring to the Designated Teacher for advice
- developing skills to be able to work in a relational way
- promoting a relational culture to help fully re-engage children as post-pandemic learners 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 will mitigate against such a situation through careful reflection and ensuring that all decisions about these children are justifiable, equitable and fair (see appendix 1).

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 and PLA during admission and transition are enshrined in the statutory codes of practice for admission:

- prioritising CLA and PLA at the point of admission

However, it is recommended that 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 staff mentor and peer buddy
- additional support and planning at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Additional Educational Needs:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for all Children with a Social Worker with additional educational needs 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)
- Use Pupil Premium strategically as follows*:* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium

Non-eligible pupils

- Schools can spend their Pupil Premium on pupils who do not meet eligibility criteria but need extra support.

Examples

Schools can use the Pupil Premium (not Pupil Premium Plus) to support other pupils, for example if they:

- Are in contact with a social worker
- Used to be in contact with a social worker
- Are acting as a carer

- 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 Annual Report to Governors.

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 and 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 and additional needs 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.

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 KCSIE guidance '*DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' (All staff) September 2024'* if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Suspensions and Exclusion:

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy (*enter date)* alongside the Behaviour in Schools Guidance 2022 and the new Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, Including Pupil Movement, guidance (2022). In force from 1st September 2022, replacing the 2017 guidance.

- We understand that our policy on behaviour concerns the conduct of staff and children alike. We understand that behaviour management is completely influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children who are part of this school, and that learning about behaviour regulation is taught as well as 'caught'
- We understand that the purpose of our Behaviour Policy is to provide all adults and children in our school with a safe, inclusive, learning environment in which everybody is respected.

- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a child looked after, 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.
- 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 Children Looked After and Previously Looked After, recognising that entire living arrangements could be affected as a result.
- Suspension must 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 suspension 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 looked after.
- We understand that 'where a looked-after child (CLA) is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher (DT) should contact the local authority's VSH 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 following methods to avoid suspending or excluding a child known to a Social Worker;
    - Follow our therapeutic behaviour plan
    - Meet regularly with parents/carers
    - Seek external support when necessary including funding

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 SEN, which will include any support in relation to behaviour management that they need because of their SEN. Our school procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of children with a Social Worker with special educational needs. (*Regulation 4(1)(c) of the Equalities Act 2010 which means that a head teacher could only lawfully exclude a child for a reason relating to their disability, even a disability that results in the child having a tendency to challenging behaviour).*

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

- *Website*: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool
- *Twitter*: @VS_HCC
- *Email*: virtualschool@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- *Phone*: 01992 556915

September 2025

Appendix 1 – the Revised New Duty June 2022

The New Duty Update 2024

Promoting the education of children with a social worker (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Government's Children in Need review (2019) evidenced for the first time that at least 1.6 million children have needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2017/18 – equivalent to 1 in 10 of all children. The review showed that these children do significantly worse than others at all stages of education and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

VSH leadership is vital now more than ever given the impact the pandemic has had on the learning of all children, but none more so than the most vulnerable. For example, in the 2020/21 academic year Children in Need (CiN) lost an average of 4.1 months of learning in secondary school reading compared with 2.4 months for all children. Children with a social worker (CWSW) are around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent from school and between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers.

Funding for this strategic leadership role for children with a social worker is confirmed until the end of March 2024.

Who are CWSW?

Includes all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker **within the past 6 years due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons**. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a CiN plan or a Child Protection plan.

The new strategic role of the VSH

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including with children's social care.
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to ensure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover educationally from the impact of the pandemic.

Identify needs and address barriers

- Use data and analysis to understand and monitor the cohort's needs, including making links to local strategic priorities e.g., attendance, suspension, and permanent exclusion rates.
- Share knowledge and expertise to strengthen how education settings and social caremppppp understand the impact of adversity on learning and educational outcomes of children.
- Promote professional practice for education settings and local authorities.

Attendance

- For children with a social worker, attending school is also a protective factor, offering a safe space when home is not, away from the threat of gangs, crime, or exploitation.
- During the pandemic in 2020/21 persistent absence figures were 12.3% for all pupils and 41.2% for CiN.
- VSHs may wish to strengthen engagement with DTs through established local networks to share advice, best practice or training to support attendance and raise awareness of the barriers these children can face.

Elective home education

- When a family notifies the local authority of their intention to home educate, we recommend that local authorities, schools, and other key professionals (such as social workers) work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible.
- This is particularly pertinent if a child has SEN or has a social worker.
- VSHs should refer to the Government guidance on elective home education.
- Introduced in the Schools Bill in May 2022, the Government will require each local authority to establish a registration system for children not in school. The measures will make each authority responsible for maintaining a register of children not in school, including electively home-educating children, and have a duty to provide support to those families where they request it.

Mental health and well-being

- VSHs should work with their local authority lead for mental health, responsible for linking with education settings.
- The VSH should ensure that mental health training includes:
  - the value of a graduated approach to assessing, understanding, and meeting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of children and young people with a social worker
  - how to identify signs of potential mental health issues for children with a social worker and how to access further assessment and support where necessary
  - understanding the impact of issues that children with a social worker can experience and that settings are able to offer targeted support to meet the needs of these children
  - how to recognise the value of engaging the child's voice in the process of identification and support.
- VSHs may also want to work with individual school senior mental health leads (SMHL), where the role exists, to ensure children with a social worker are factored into the school's strategy on mental health and well-being.

Recovery programmes

- VSHs should be aware of the following initiatives, given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on CWSW, and work with education settings to ensure these children are able to access the following support:
  - The National Tutoring Programme
  - The Summer School Programme
  - Recovery Premium

SEND

- A significant proportion of children with a social worker may also be identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- VSHs should work strategically with the local authority Head of SEND and, where appropriate, with school leaders and SENCOs, to ensure that education settings adopt a graduated approach.

Advice and guidance

- VSHs are not being asked to work with individual children with a social worker as replicating existing professional relationships and support would be counterproductive and burdensome to children and their families.
- VSHs will be best placed to offer advice and information to professionals who are providing direct support to these children.
- Identify and establish links with key professionals e.g., DSLs, social workers, headteachers, governors, SENCOs, SMHLs, other local authority officers, including Designated Social Care Officers (DSCOs) for SEND.
- Provide advice on evidence-based interventions that can address barriers to learning, such as those highlighted by What Works for Children's Social Care.
- Engage with research organisations to help develop good practice and build a strong evidence base for what works to improve outcomes of children with social workers.
- Support education settings and social care to be creative and thoughtful in building relationships with children and families.

Appendix 2

Alternative Provision: To be read in conjunction with the 2022 Behaviour in Schools guidance here

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision alternative to daily attendance at school will be:

- a plan that will retain the child with a Social Worker on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+ if CLA or PLA
- an agreed part of the overall ePEP for the child if CLA
- full time (32.5 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- meet the educational needs of the child with a Social Worker
- will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting
- will be monitored regularly and that any statutory planning, for example the Child Protection Plan or ePEPs will include both the school and the alternative provider *to physical abuse, if reasonable adjustments have been made)*.

Multi-Agency Working:

- **School staff will make every effort to** develop positive professional relationships with colleagues from other agencies, especially colleagues from Social Care, and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of children with a Social Worker.
- The Virtual School **Professional Partnership Programme** is a response to the '*Duty to promote the education of children with a social worker'* and offers the opportunity for schools and social workers to swap roles for a day to increase the understanding of the roles and responsibilities and promote better joint practice. The Virtual School website has more information about this work.

Appendix 3

Risk Assessment to Support Behaviour Policy

The importance of effective pupil assessment

Appropriate and detailed risk assessments should be undertaken for pupils who often display high levels of dysregulation in school/college, to set out the support measures available and in use, to prevent escalation. The risk assessment should focus on the child/student in question and not the other pupils within the school or class.

Children and young people who are excluded on multiple occasions

Where multiple exclusions of a child or young person have taken place, it should highlight to the school/college that the support provision being used/in place is not working. In these instances, schools should seek additional support in line with the LA or Virtual School offer for a staged intervention policy.

In line with the demands of the New Duty for 'children with a social worker', the education authority will monitor and track learners who are excluded on multiple occasions and help schools consider that **where a child or young person is excluded on multiple occasions that a different intervention is required.** It is important that schools and education

authorities are aware of the impact that exclusion can have, particularly within those groups of children where exclusions are more prevalent: those with an assessed or declared disability; looked after children and young people; children and young people from the most deprived areas; and those with an additional support need (particularly if that support need is social, emotional and/or behavioural).

The Virtual School advise that risk, health, and safety assessments should be carried out using a trauma-informed approach to determine any potential concerns arising from the child or young person's presentation. The assessment should identify any steps deemed necessary to **support the child or young person in preventing harm to themselves or others and improving their well-being**. The risk and health and safety assessments should be shared with the child or young person, their parents, and all staff who are involved with the child or young peon.

Behaviour policies should reflect that a range of factors may predispose a pupil to dysregulation, disaffection and depression or other mental health conditions, which would benefit from effective risk assessment so that procedures are in place to help create conditions for early intervention and a school culture in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn effectively.

Understanding the evidence that highlights the impact that exclusion can have will support informed decision-making about the appropriateness of an exclusion or suspension; but will also recognise that suspension when used in a proportionate and supportive way can have a positive outcome for the children young person and the wider school community.