



Hamsey Green
Primary School



Children in Care Policy

CONTEXT

The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' are often used to define the same group of young people. In documents produced by Surrey's Virtual School the use of Children in Care (CiC) is the preferred term. **PLAC is a term used to describe Post Looked After Children**

When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then undertaken by the local authority – who become their 'Corporate Parent'. Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most children in care will be living in foster homes but some may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). It is important the school attended by the child is aware of their Care status, as many children and families are supported by social care without the use of Care Orders. Foster carers will very rarely hold parental responsibility – this is assumed by the social worker. Children placed for adoption remain looked after by the local authority until the Final Order.

Many LAC (Looked After Children) & PLAC (Previously Looked After Children) will have experienced disrupted schooling and gaps in learning. In addition, a significant proportion of CiC & PLAC have some form of Special Educational Need and/or have been excluded from school. This has resulted in the attainment of this group not being in line with the attainment of their peers nationally.

A Personal Education Plan is required for every Child in Care and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed termly.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'achieve to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles;



The role of a Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care is now statutory for every local authority. Virtual Headteachers will scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all

children in care and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

The experiences and outcomes of PLAC can be very similar to those of CiC. PLAC educational needs are unlikely to have changed just because their care status has. To address this, the needs of CiC and PLAC are prioritised and addressed in a similar way. The progress of PLAC is reviewed termly and we work proactively with parents and carers and other professionals to address any areas of concern and put in place support as appropriate.

Parents and Carers of PLAC are encouraged to identify their child's previously looked after status on entry to the school and are required to produce documentation to support this. CiC & PLAC receive a similar level of support from the school. The attainment of PLAC is monitored on a termly basis by the Designated Teacher and funding for additional support is funded by the annual PP+ as outlined within our school's Pupil Premium Strategy. Concerns regarding the progress of PLAC are highlighted to parents and carers in a timely fashion so that support can be put in place swiftly. Parents and Carers are directed to the Adoption Fund via LA Social Work assessment where necessary.

Admissions (See Admissions Policy and Arrangements for detail)

Hamsey Green Primary School and Acorns Nursery acknowledges and ensures that CiC & PLAC are given priority for School Admissions as outlined in DFE School Admissions Code Guidance 2014 (updated March 2022). We work collaboratively with the Virtual School regarding any concerns that we might have in relation to the admission of CiC & PLAC. The Designated Teacher attends CiC & PLAC admissions meetings and works closely alongside the Virtual School, Social Worker, Carers and any other professionals to ensure that children feel supported, and have a successful smooth transition into school life.

Inclusion (See SEND Policy and SEND Information Report for detail)

CiC & PLAC are encouraged to take part in all aspects of school life. Through effective communication with carers, professionals and staff, as well as the appropriate use of pupil premium and the PPG, we work to remove the barriers to CiC & PLAC having a robust, enjoyable and valuable school experience. The experiences of CiC & PLAC has resulted in disproportionate levels of Special Educational Needs within these groups. In acknowledgement of this, individual attainment is monitored closely by the Designated Teacher via the PEP process and concerns highlighted to the SENCO and Virtual School. Concerns raised by Parents, Carers, Social Workers and the Virtual School are welcomed and swiftly acted upon. Where it is felt that further assessment may be needed, CiC & PLAC access to the SEND assessment process and interventions are prioritised. A significant proportion of CiC / PLAC have undiagnosed Speech and Language needs which impacts on educational outcomes. In recognition of this, all CiC & PLAC (with the consent of parents & carers) are screened on entry for Speech, Language and Communication Needs. Significant or continuing concerns are referred to specialist support.

Pupil Premium Grant & Pupil Premium Plus (See Pupil Premium Policy and Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy for details)

Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) Pupil Premium Grant for CiC is provided by the Local Authority to assist the school with ensuring that children meet the targets outlined within their PEP. It can be used to support:

- Academic achievement and progress.
- Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is gifted and talented.
- Attendance.
- Inclusion [by reducing internal and external exclusion].
- Social skills.
- Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider.

Where further funding is needed for support, advice from the Virtual School will be sought.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

While the PP+ for PLAC is not a ‘personal budget,’ should a PLAC require support over and above that which is provided for any other child, the PP+ will be used to fund this. PP+ for PLAC is also ‘pooled’ and used to provide additional support and services to raise the attainment of PLAC within school as outlined by our online Pupil Premium Report and as part of a 3 year Pupil Premium Strategy, for instance:

- Attachment Training for all staff
- Purchasing CiC SALT screening tool to use with PLAC who start school
- One to one tuition
- Mentoring programmes Attendance (See Attendance Policy for detail) The attendance of CiC is carefully monitored and reported daily to Welfare Call / the Local Authority. Parents and Carers of CiC & PLAC will be contacted regarding unauthorised absences daily. Concerns regarding attendance including identified patterns of absence will be raised with parents, carers, social workers and professionals.

Exclusions

CiC and PLAC have disproportionately high levels of exclusions from schools nationally, placing them at a further educational disadvantage.

In line with Local Authority and DfE Guidance, Hamsey Green Primary School and Acorns Nursey do not permanently exclude CiC & PLAC. In addition, we work closely with the Local Authority to avoid the fixed term exclusion of both groups. Advice and support from the Local Authority (Social workers, the Virtual School or the Permanence Educational Support Officer) will be sought where it is felt that a CiC or PLAC may become at risk of exclusion.

Support and alternatives to exclusion will be considered. Alternatives to exclusion may include:

- Internal exclusions
- Restorative Justice
- Managed Moves (in discussion with the Headteacher of the Virtual School)
- CAMHs support

- Additional therapeutic intervention via the Adoption Fund (PLAC only) Where a fixed term exclusion of a CiC is unavoidable, parents/carers and the Virtual School will be contacted prior to the child leaving the school site and work will be provided to avoid further gaps in education. Plans and support will be put in place to avoid further exclusion on the child's return to school

This policy is based on the model policy provided to schools by the Surrey Virtual School.

A. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEADTEACHER AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- We will promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out
- We will appoint a Designated Teacher for CiC
- We will empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities
- We will ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- We will recognise the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other School Policies and the School's Improvement Plan where appropriate
- We will ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- We are committed to working with local authority Virtual Headteachers to promote the achievement of children in care

B. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CIC

- to have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress
- to monitor the educational progress of all Children in Care in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community
- to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible
- to act as an advocate for Children in Care
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children in care
- to promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning
- to be the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners
- to ensure every child in care has a current Personal Education Plan that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard
- to attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings
- to provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate
- to present regular Reports to School Governors,
- to access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement)
- to cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate

C. ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

- We will ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations (Designated Teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team).
- We will ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role.
- We will monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care
- We will ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the role (governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher)
- We will examine whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for CiC.
- We will scrutinise the school's admission procedures to ensure students are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for children in care
- We will champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher

The Headteacher and Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in the Policy.

The name of our staff for CiC at Hamsey Green Primary School are: Mrs N Mace and Mr J Boffa

Approved by the Governing Body	September 2025
To be reviewed	September 2027