

Children Looked After Policy (CLA)

September 2026

Introduction

Worcester Sixth Form College is an inclusive college committed to supporting vulnerable learners to enhance their educational experience, personal development and progression opportunities. The College believes in opportunity for all and works proactively to remove barriers for learners who have experienced instability, disadvantage, trauma, loss, care experience, learning difficulties or disabilities.

This policy sets out the College's commitment to supporting Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers (CL) to achieve positive educational, personal and progression outcomes. It also explains how the College will identify, support and monitor these students from application and transition through to successful progression beyond College.

The College has developed strong working relationships with Worcestershire Local Authority and neighbouring local authorities. These partnerships demonstrate the College's commitment to collaborative working so that young people in care and care leavers achieve the best possible outcomes in post-16 education.

Through a consistent and coordinated approach, the College aims to provide CLA and Care Leavers with an excellent learning experience, the support needed to participate fully in College life, and the skills and confidence to succeed in further study, employment and wider adult life.

2. Legislative and Guidance Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989, including the definition and duties relating to children looked after by a local authority.
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Equality Act 2010.
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Local Authority and Virtual School arrangements for Children Looked After and care-experienced young people.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Child Looked After (CLA)	A child or young person is looked after by a local authority if they are in the care of the local authority or provided with accommodation by the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under the Children Act 1989.
Care Leaver (CL)	A young person who has previously been looked after by a local authority and is entitled to ongoing support from the local authority according to their legal status and individual circumstances.
Previously Looked After Child (PCLA)	A child or young person who was previously looked after but ceased to be looked after because of

	adoption, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, or who was adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	A statutory education plan for a Child Looked After. It forms part of the wider care plan and sets out educational needs, targets, support, progress and actions.
Pathway Plan	A plan for eligible, relevant and former relevant care leavers which sets out support for transition to adulthood, including education, training, employment, accommodation, health and finances.
Virtual School	A local authority service responsible for promoting the educational achievement of Children Looked After and, in some circumstances, supporting wider care-experienced cohorts.
Personal Adviser	A local authority professional who supports care leavers, normally from age 16 and potentially up to age 25 depending on entitlement and need.

4. College Responsibilities

The College's vision for CLA and Care Leavers is to provide the support, guidance and high expectations needed for them to achieve, progress to higher education, apprenticeships, training or employment, and become well prepared for wider adult life.

To ensure equality of opportunity, the College seeks to identify CLA and Care Leavers at the earliest possible stage so that support can be planned from pre-entry interview through to enrolment, study, progression and transition out of College.

The College aims to provide the following support:

- Ensure transition activities such as Open Events, Taster Days and induction sessions are accessible and welcoming.
- Offer individual tours of the College where appropriate so students can meet key support staff before enrolment.
- Ensure CLA and Care Leaver interviews are carried out by, or in liaison with, the Designated Lead or Safeguarding Team.
- Offer flexible application arrangements and interviews where this helps to remove barriers.
- Use the application process to enable students to declare CLA or Care Leaver status and ensure this information is shared promptly by Admissions with the Safeguarding Team.
- Recognise CLA and Care Leavers as a priority student group within widening participation, retention and progression work.
- Ensure information about financial, pastoral, safeguarding, academic and progression support is readily and easily accessible.
- Work with Social Workers, Personal Advisers, carers, Virtual Schools and other professionals to coordinate support.
- Maintain high aspirations for attendance, achievement, enrichment, personal development and progression.

5. Designated Lead Responsibilities

The College's Designated Lead for CLA, PCLA and Care Leavers is Graham Williams, Senior Leader for Safeguarding and Pastoral Support and Designated Safeguarding Lead. Operational support is provided by Heather Anderson-Stevens, College Safeguarding Officer.

The Designated Lead will:

- Act as the main point of contact for Social Workers, Personal Advisers, Virtual Schools, carers and relevant external agencies.
- Promote educational achievement, attendance, retention, wellbeing and progression for CLA and Care Leavers.
- Coordinate support and reasonable adjustments where required.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are recognised, recorded and responded to promptly in line with the College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Support staff to understand the potential impact of trauma, attachment disruption, adverse childhood experiences, instability and disrupted education.
- Monitor progress, attendance, engagement and participation, intervening early where concerns arise.
- Ensure the student's voice is central to support planning and review.
- Contribute to Personal Education Plan, Pathway Plan and other multi-agency meetings as appropriate.
- Provide relevant information to senior leaders and governors, while maintaining confidentiality and anonymity where appropriate.

6. Trauma-Informed and Relationship-Based Practice

The College recognises that many CLA and Care Leavers may have experienced trauma, loss, neglect, instability, disrupted relationships or interrupted education. These experiences can affect attendance, emotional regulation, trust, learning, concentration, confidence and relationships with adults and peers.

Staff will seek to adopt a trauma-informed, relationship-based approach which promotes safety, trust, consistency, empathy, student voice, positive relationships and high aspirations. Support will be offered in a way that avoids stigma and respects each student's privacy and dignity.

7. Our Approach to Support

7.1 Transition Support

We offer individual tours of the College where CLA students and Care Leavers can meet key members of staff who can provide support. This bespoke arrangement is available in addition to Open Events and will be discussed at interview where appropriate.

Where relevant, the College will liaise with the student's school, Virtual School, Social Worker, Personal Adviser, carer or other professionals to support a smooth transition.

7.2 Financial Support

Students who are in care or are care leavers may be eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200, subject to current national bursary guidance and individual circumstances.

The College may also provide travel support for bus and/or train, free meals and additional support to help with the cost of trips, course equipment and other resources. Further information is available on the College website: <https://www.wsfc.ac.uk/for-students/financial-support/>

7.3 Wellbeing and Pastoral Support

All students are allocated a Personal Tutor. Students can access tutor support for wellbeing, emotional health, mental health, attendance, engagement and wider personal development.

Additional support may also be offered through the College Counselling Service, Mental Health and Wellbeing Mentor, Safeguarding Team and other internal or external services where appropriate.

7.4 Additional Learning Support

Academic and additional learning support is available for students who have previously received support in school, have an Education, Health and Care Plan, are referred by a teacher, or self-refer for support.

Support may include one-to-one support, in-class support where appropriate, study skills support, assessment for exam access arrangements and implementation of exam access arrangements where appropriate.

7.5 Attendance, Progress and Retention

The College will monitor attendance, punctuality, engagement, progress and wellbeing for CLA and Care Leavers and will intervene early where there are concerns.

Support will be coordinated through Personal Tutors, subject teachers, Progress Coaches, Curriculum Leaders, the Safeguarding Team and external professionals as required.

7.6 Careers Advice, Guidance and Progression

During their first year, students will normally be offered a careers guidance appointment to explore progression after College. Students are supported throughout the duration of their studies with higher education, apprenticeships, training and employment options.

Additional careers interviews are available where required. Appointments can be arranged through Student Services, by email, or by speaking to a Personal Tutor.

7.7 Employment and Apprenticeship Support

Student Services advertise full-time and part-time employment vacancies and apprenticeships. The College offers personalised advice and support with CV writing, applications, interviews and employability skills.

Care Leavers may receive targeted support to prepare for interviews, manage transition to work or apprenticeship training, and understand workplace expectations.

7.8 Higher Education and Independent Adulthood

Where students are applying to university, the College will provide support with UCAS applications, personal statements, student finance, contextual admissions information and transition planning.

Where appropriate, the College will signpost Care Leavers to support relating to accommodation, finances, health, wellbeing and local authority leaving care services.

8. Multi-Agency Working

To support students effectively, the Designated Lead and Safeguarding Team work with a range of external agencies and professionals. These may include:

- Virtual Schools
- Social Workers
- Personal Advisers
- Foster Carers
- Residential Care Staff

- Local Authorities
- Health Professionals
- Education providers and transition partners

The Designated Lead and Safeguarding Team will contribute to Personal Education Plan reviews, Pathway Plan reviews and other multi-agency meetings as appropriate. Feedback from relevant College staff may be gathered to inform reviews, monitor progress and identify support needs.

Terminology note

For Children Looked After, the education plan is normally referred to as a Personal Education Plan (PEP). For care leavers, the wider transition plan is normally referred to as a Pathway Plan. Local processes should be checked with Worcestershire Virtual School and relevant local authorities.

9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information about a student's care experience will be treated sensitively and shared only with staff or external professionals who need the information to safeguard the student, provide support or fulfil statutory responsibilities.

Information sharing will be managed in line with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, safeguarding requirements and College policies. Wherever possible and appropriate, students will be involved in decisions about what information is shared, with whom and why.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, information may need to be shared without consent if this is necessary to protect the student or another person from harm.

10. Student Voice

The College will seek to ensure that CLA and Care Leavers are listened to and involved in decisions about their education and support. Support should be offered with dignity, respect and sensitivity, avoiding unnecessary labelling or stigma.

Students will be encouraged to contribute to reviews, identify what helps them learn and feel safe, and raise concerns if support is not meeting their needs.

11. Staff Awareness and Training

Relevant staff will be made aware of the College's approach to supporting CLA and Care Leavers, including the importance of early identification, high expectations, trauma-informed practice, safeguarding vigilance and appropriate information sharing.

The Designated Lead will provide advice to staff where a student's care experience may be relevant to attendance, learning, wellbeing, safeguarding, behaviour, progression or support planning.

12. How to Apply and Declare Support Needs

Applications should be made online via <https://apply.wsfc.ac.uk/>. To enable support to be put in place, students are encouraged to declare on their application if they are in care, care-experienced or a care leaver.

If an application has already been submitted and this information was not included, students or supporting professionals can contact the Admissions Team at apply@wsfc.ac.uk so that the information can be added to the application and appropriate support can be considered.

13. Links with Other College Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following College policies and procedures, where applicable:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND / Additional Learning Support procedures
- Admissions procedures
- Bursary and Financial Support procedures
- Attendance procedures
- Mental Health and Wellbeing procedures
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy

14. Monitoring and Review

The impact of this policy will be monitored through safeguarding, pastoral, attendance, retention, achievement and progression processes. Relevant anonymised information may be reported to senior leaders and governors to support oversight and improvement.

This policy will be reviewed annually. The next review will take place in August 2027, or earlier if there are significant legislative, statutory guidance or local authority changes.

Appendix A: Summary of Amendments Added

Amendment	Detail
Legislative framework added	A new section has been added to reference current legislation and statutory guidance.
Definitions strengthened	CLA, Care Leaver, PCLA, PEP, Pathway Plan, Virtual School and Personal Adviser are now defined.
Sixth form college responsibilities clarified	The policy now explains early identification, transition, admissions flexibility, monitoring and progression support.
Designated Lead role expanded	Responsibilities now include multi-agency liaison, monitoring, safeguarding response, student voice and staff advice.
Care Leaver support strengthened	Additional support has been added for finance, HE, UCAS, student finance, accommodation signposting, employment and transition to adulthood.
Trauma-informed practice added	The policy now recognises trauma, loss, disrupted education, attachment and the importance of relational support.
Confidentiality and information sharing added	A new section clarifies sensitive handling of care-experience information and safeguarding exceptions.
Grammar and style improved	Wording has been revised for consistency, clarity, formal policy tone and accuracy.
PEP and Pathway Plan terminology clarified	The policy now distinguishes between Personal Education Plans for CLA and Pathway Plans for care leavers.

Appendix B: Source Guidance Checked

This revised draft has been checked against current legislation and guidance available at the time of drafting, including Children Act 1989 guidance for care planning and transition to adulthood, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025/2026, and statutory guidance relating to looked after and previously looked after children. Final approval should include local authority and Virtual School confirmation of local terminology and processes.

Review: August 2027