[Staffordshire Virtual School Handbook]

Staffordshire County Council

**A picture containing logo

Description automatically generated**

**Staffordshire Virtual School Guidance**

**Updated September 2025**

|  |
| --- |
| Guidance to Readers |
| While this Handbook is intended for all professionals, carers and parents, and children and young people, the different groups may want to focus their initial attention on the following.  **Everyone should look at the Introduction** on pages 3 – 5, but: |
| **Social Workers** should consider reading prioritising pages 5-7 and 9 – 16 |
| **Designated Teachers** should consider prioritising pages 5 - 18 |
| **Foster Carers** and **Residential Carers** should consider prioritising pages 5 – 16 |
| **Parents of Previously Looked After Children** should consider prioritising pages 4 and 20 |
| **Children and Young People in Care** should consider prioritising pages 11 – 16 |

Contents

[Guidance to Readers 2](#_Toc209694252)

[Section 1 5](#_Toc209694253)

[Introduction to the Virtual School 5](#_Toc209694254)

[Service offer to our children in care 5](#_Toc209694255)

[Service offer to Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and those in Kinship Care 6](#_Toc209694256)

[Service offer to Children with a Social Worker (CiN/CPP) 7](#_Toc209694257)

[Expected Practice 7](#_Toc209694258)

[Admission to School 7](#_Toc209694259)

[Change of Care Placement 8](#_Toc209694260)

[In-Year Change to Educational Placement 8](#_Toc209694261)

[School Attendance 9](#_Toc209694262)

[Part-time Timetables 10](#_Toc209694263)

[Alternative Provision 10](#_Toc209694264)

[Suspension/Exclusion from School 10](#_Toc209694265)

[If a Permanent Exclusion is being considered 12](#_Toc209694266)

[Transition to Post 16 Education, Employment or Training 12](#_Toc209694267)

[Personal Education Planning 12](#_Toc209694268)

[The first Personal Education Plan meeting 13](#_Toc209694269)

[Subsequent PEP Meetings 16](#_Toc209694270)

[Between PEP meetings 17](#_Toc209694271)

[Quality Assurance of PEPs 18](#_Toc209694272)

[Pupil Premium for our children in care 18](#_Toc209694273)

[Delegation of PP+ to schools and education settings 18](#_Toc209694274)

[Statutory school age Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) 18](#_Toc209694275)

[Early Years PEP and PP+ 18](#_Toc209694276)

[Post 16 PEP and PP+ 19](#_Toc209694277)

[PP+ and children not in education, employment or training 19](#_Toc209694278)

[Centrally Managed Pupil Premium Plus 19](#_Toc209694279)

[Pupil Premium for previously looked after children (PLAC) 19](#_Toc209694280)

[Who are our previously looked after children on a school’s roll? 19](#_Toc209694281)

[Pupil Premium for previously looked-after children 20](#_Toc209694282)

[Education Planning Previously looked after children 20](#_Toc209694283)

[SEND Support 21](#_Toc209694284)

[Links between Personal Education Planning and SEND planning 21](#_Toc209694285)

[Education Psychology Support for our children 21](#_Toc209694286)

[Relational and Restorative Team support for children who have or have had a social work involvement 21](#_Toc209694287)

[RADY pathway 23](#_Toc209694288)

[Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters 23](#_Toc209694289)

[Section 2 25](#_Toc209694290)

[Suspensions and Exclusions: Advice and Guidance 25](#_Toc209694291)

[Universal Offer in School 29](#_Toc209694292)

[The Personal Education Plan (PEP) Meeting 30](#_Toc209694293)

[Universal Offer Alternative Provision 31](#_Toc209694294)

[The PEP Meeting 32](#_Toc209694295)

[Possible actions following PEP meeting 32](#_Toc209694296)

[Outcomes 32](#_Toc209694297)

[Managed Move 32](#_Toc209694298)

[The PEP Meeting/TAC Meeting 33](#_Toc209694299)

[Actions following PEP meeting 33](#_Toc209694300)

[Outcomes 34](#_Toc209694301)

[Previously Looked After Child (PLAC) Guidance 34](#_Toc209694302)

[Education Care Plan meeting 34](#_Toc209694303)

[Strategies to consider 34](#_Toc209694304)

[Outcomes 35](#_Toc209694305)

[Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Guidance 35](#_Toc209694306)

[SEND / EHCP 36](#_Toc209694307)

[The PEP meeting 37](#_Toc209694308)

[Actions to follow up after PEP meeting 37](#_Toc209694309)

[Outcomes 37](#_Toc209694310)

[Post 16 Student disciplinary procedure good practice guidance 38](#_Toc209694311)

[Good practice 38](#_Toc209694312)

[Our Expectations for Children in Care 38](#_Toc209694313)

[How the Virtual School can support General Further Education (GFE) and Vocational Training Providers (VTP) 39](#_Toc209694314)

[Appendix 1: The Virtual School Team 40](#_Toc209694315)

[Appendix 2 – Education Plan for Children and Young People with a Social Worker 43](#_Toc209694316)

[Appendix 3 - ePEP Guidance for Designated Teachers 46](#_Toc209694317)

[Appendix 4: PEP grading criteria 48](#_Toc209694318)

[Appendix 5 – Special Educational Needs and the Graduated Response 49](#_Toc209694319)

[Appendix 6 – One Minute Guide 51](#_Toc209694320)

[Appendix 7: Pupil Premium Plus Policy 53](#_Toc209694321)

Section 1

Introduction to the Virtual School

The Virtual School advocates for any child or young person in the care of Staffordshire and aims to ensure that all our children or young people access excellent education and achieve their potential. This responsibility extends to every child or young person in the care of Staffordshire, whether they are placed within the county boundaries or outside them. We support our children in the early years and through Post 16 education. Please do not hesitate to get in touch regarding any educational query relating to these groups of children and young people.

As a team, we model relational and restorative practices and will refer to children in care in this document as ‘our children’.

The Virtual School team offer advice and guidance for previously looked after children whether they are adopted, living with a special guardian or are subject to a Child Arrangement Order.

The responsibilities of the Virtual School team have recently been extended to encompass strategic advice and guidance relating to ‘children with a social worker’.

**Contacting the Virtual School**

For your key contacts visit our webpage: <https://www.staffordshirevirtualschool.co.uk/Contact-us.aspx>

For generic queries: [virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk)

For E-PEP related queries please email: [virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Service offer to our children in care

1. Each child will have a **named Virtual School Co-ordinator and Advisor** linked to them.

The VS work is divided into 3 key areas:

* Early years
* Statutory school age
* Post-16

Within these teams, each Virtual School Advisor is allocated a range of schools for whom they will be the first point of contact. This applies equally to schools in Staffordshire and those outside the county’s boundary with a child in the care of Staffordshire on their roll.

The Co-ordinators oversee all the children in the care of Staffordshire who are on the roll of one of the schools within their District. All contact details can be found on our website.

The Relational and Restorative Practice team (RRP) will offer advice and guidance where children are on a Child Protection, Child In Need plan or is a Previously Looked After Child. (see Appendix 1)

The Co-ordinator for previously looked after children will offer strategic advice and guidance.

Schools outside Staffordshire have been allocated to Co-ordinators and Advisors on a Local Authority district basis, depending on where the child or young person has come into care.

* Each school will be **allocated Pupil Premium +** as described in the Virtual School’s Pupil Premium + Policy.
* Each school will have access to the **RADY (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) principles and resources** commissioned from Challenging Education by Staffordshire County Council.
* Each school will receive **training and development opportunities** to support our children.
* Each child will benefit froma **bespoke offer of support**,dependent on their level of need.
* Each child will benefit from **arts and sports opportunities**, provided by the Virtual school as extra-curricular activities and events.
* Each child in year 4-6 within Staffordshire schools will benefit from **FREE Entrust music lessons** funded by the Virtual school.

The needs of children and young people in the care of Staffordshire are assessed from the most recent Personal Education Plan (PEP), modified by information received by the Virtual School.

Service offer to Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and those in Kinship Care

**Advice** **&** **Guidance**

Since September 2018, Virtual Schools have had a responsibility to support the improvement of the educational outcomes of previously looked after children by providing advice, guidance, and information to schools, parents and a range of professionals.

From September 2024, Staffordshire Virtual School offers advice and guidance for those living with kinship carers.

[Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/championing-kinship-care-national-kinship-care-strategy)

This includes any child who has left the care system via a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or Placement Order leading to an Adoption Order. This is the case regardless of whether the child left the care of Staffordshire or another local authority.

**The role of the Designated Teacher** was extended to encompass this group of children at the same time. For advice and guidance see our regional adoption agency website.

[Virtual School – Together 4 Children](https://www.together4children.co.uk/virtual-school/)

Schools can receive **Pupil Premium** for previously looked after children (see below)

As Virtual Schools are not Corporate Parents for this group of children, the Pupil Premium for Children Previously Looked After is paid directly to schools, without any involvement from the Virtual School. Once received, it is schools’ responsibility to ensure it is spent in line with the DfE conditions of grant.

[Quick PP+ guide](https://www.staffordshirevirtualschool.co.uk/Documents/Pupil-Premium-Plus-Use-July25-1.pdf)

The Virtual School does not have records of all its previously looked after children in Staffordshire so the best advice to schools is to sensitively encourage parents and guardians of eligible children to self- declare their child’s status to the school where their child is on roll. Schools will also need to ensure that parents/carers/guardians give their permission to have the child’s status recorded on the school systems used to generate the annual census return. Schools should be prepared to offer parents/carers/guardians reassurance about the confidentiality with which their self-declaration will be treated.

**Questions and queries about previously looked after children** should be addressed to [virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Service offer to Children with a Social Worker (CiN/CPP)

In March 2024, the DfE published updated guidance on how local authorities should extend the role of the Virtual School Head to promote the education of **children with a social worker and kinship care**. [Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker/promoting-the-education-of-children-with-a-social-worker-and-children-in-kinship-care-arrangements-virtual-school-head-role-extension) This cohort has been identified as a group of children who face significant barriers to education because of experiences of adversity and trauma, most commonly abuse and neglect.

Within the guidance, children with a social worker are defined as 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...

The three key aspects of this extension of the role of the Virtual School Head are to:

* enhance partnerships with education settings
* identify the needs and barriers to learning for this cohort
* provide advice to key professionals.

The Virtual School has produced an Education Planning Tool to support children with a social worker where there are concerns about education (Appendix 2).

Expected Practice

Admission to School

The [statutory School Admissions Code](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf) gives **priority for school admissions to children in care , and to previously looked after children.**

**Normal Round Admissions** comprise:

* Entry into Primary School Reception
* Progression from Primary School (Year 6) to Secondary School (Year 7)
* Progression from Secondary School (Year 11) to post-16 provision (Year 12)

Admission of children seeking a **mainstream school place within Staffordshire** at these transition points will be managed by **Staffordshire School Admissions.**

Admission of children seeking a **mainstream school place outside Staffordshire** at these transition points, will be managed by the Admissions Team of the Local Authority where the child goes to school.

Admission of children with an **EHCP**, will be managed by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND) of the Local Authority in which the child resides. This includes children transferring to a **special school**.

**Our children should ONLY be placed in schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be ‘Outstanding or ‘Good’**. Carers and social workers must take account of this when considering school preferences and seek advice from the Virtual School where a local school does not meet this criterion.

**Our child**, their **carer**, their **social worker** (in conjunction with those with Parental Responsibility) and the **Designated Teacher** at our child’s current school, **must** discuss plans around the school our child will move to at the end of year 6, and their plans at the end of Year 11, during the first PEP meeting of the academic year prior to the September when transition will take place.

This discussion must be recorded in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and reviewed at each PEP meeting until transition takes place, to ensure appropriate support is being offered by both the current and destination school. Just prior to transition, the school moves page needs to be completed.

It is good practice to invite the Designated Teacher from the destination school to attend PEP meetings in the run up to transition once the school is confirmed as the destination for our child, so they can make plans to support the transition both before and after it takes place.

Change of Care Placement

**If there is a risk that a care placement will change**, then our child’s social worker must contact the Virtual School as soon as they become aware of that risk. This is to ensure that plans for a parallel change in educational placement can be put in place if that proves to be necessary.

Once a social worker has informed the Virtual School, they must follow the advice below to ensure any change to our child’s educational placement is as orderly as possible.

**Where the change in care placement is due to a significant emergency**, the social worker must put every practical measure in place to enable our child to continue to attend their current school until an orderly transition to a new school can be planned through an emergency PEP to include the Virtual School.

In-Year Change to Educational Placement

Wherever possible, in-year school moves should be avoided, however when this is unavoidable e.g., because a care placement has changed, the social worker must speak to the Virtual School in advance of planning a change of school. A PEP should be convened in advance of the move to record the rationale for the move on the school moves page and plan transition.

Moving our children who need a **complex education package without first planning for appropriate education, contravenes care planning statutory guidance, puts our children at risk and may result in a delay in accessing education and put additional pressure on the placement**. Confirming a new school can take weeks not days, and the more complex our child’s needs are the longer it can take.

**If the change has already happened because of an emergency**, the social worker should talk to the Virtual School as soon as the care placement has changed, even though it **does not manage school admissions either within or outside of the county or make applications for school places**. Its role is to offer advice and support.

**It is the social worker’s responsibility** (in conjunction with those with Parental Responsibility), to make an application for a new school after getting advice from the Virtual School.

**Our children should ONLY be placed in schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be ‘Outstanding’ or ‘Good’**. Carers and social workers must take account of this when considering school preferences and seek advice from the Virtual School where a local school does not meet this criterion.

In-year admissions are dealt with by individual schools to which the application should be submitted. Our children and previously looked after children should be admitted without delay. The Admissions Team can support our children seeking a school place at a Staffordshire school, whether it is a Normal Round or an In-Year application.

The statutory **School Admissions Code** is clear (Sections 3.10 – 3.13) that, though a school may not wish to admit a child because it has good reason to believe that the child may display challenging behaviour, **it may NOT:**

* **‘refuse admission to looked after children, previously looked after children ...’,** or
* **refer them to the Fair Access Protocol**, or
* **require ‘that the child is first to be assessed for special educational needs’**.

School Attendance

**School attendance is not only an educational priority it is a safeguarding priority. The safest place for our children to be during the school day is in school**.

We expect all of our children to have 100% attendance unless there is a very good reason for it to be less. Research shows that school days lost are directly linked to low attainment.

**The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, November 2015**. Key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England. The analysis reveals that the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Time in care** | Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (i) do better that those ‘in need’ but not in care, and (ii) better than those who have only been in short term care. So, it appears that care may protect them educationally. |
| **Placement Changes** | Each additional change in care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE. |
| **Placement Type** | Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over 6 grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care. |
| **Feeling secure and cared for** | Young people can engage with learning better when they feel secure and cared for in a placement. |
| **School Changes** | Young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less than those who did not. |
| **School Absence** | For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored 2 grades less at GCSE. |
| **School Exclusions** | For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusion, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE. |
| **School Type** | Young people in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared with those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in PRUs with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower. |

*This research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford. Educational progress of looked after children, Rees Centre, November 2015.*

1. **Holidays in term time** should not take place.

**Carers and social workers should not request time off for our children during school term time. The Virtual School will not approve absence for a holiday in term time.**

**If the social worker believes there is an exceptional reason** **for time off during a school term**, they **must** complete the Unavoidable Term Time Holiday form, which is available from the District Coordinator, and send it to our child’s school, the Virtual School and District Lead for comment.

b) **Monitoring attendance**.

The Virtual School monitors attendance weekly and, where there are concerns, will contact the Designated Teacher and the social worker to discuss the school’s response. The Virtual School expect half termly PEPs where there are attendance concerns.

Part-time Timetables

**Our children should not be placed on a part-time timetable.**

**If the school believes there are exceptional circumstances that make a part-time timetable appropriate, advice and support must be sought from the Virtual School and the social worker before that timetable is put in place and it must be time limited. This should not be used to manage behaviour and should be a last resort. A PEP meeting should be convened which clearly outlines the rationale with an agreed review date. The timetable should be updated on the ePEP page.**

Given the educational disadvantage our children in care already face, a part-time timetable can:

* Expose them to additional safeguarding risks
* Leave them with further gaps in their learning
* Add to any sense of rejection they already feel
* Intensify existing emotional health and well-being issues

The Virtual School will therefore want assurances that the school has:

* Considered other approaches to meet the child’s educational needs
* Put in place a time-limited plan for the re-integration of the child into full-time education before any part-time timetable is put in place

Further guidance can be found at: [Part-time-timetable-Policy-August-2025.pdf](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Documents/Part-time-timetable-Policy-August-2025.pdf)

Alternative Provision

**All our children should access full time, mainstream, education unless they have an EHCP that recommends special school provision**. Research shows that children in care accessing mainstream provision have higher attainment and make greater progress than those that do not.

If a school believes our child might benefit from an alternative provision, they should consult the Virtual School. They should also call an early review of the PEP and invite a representative of the alternative provision to attend. They must be central to setting the PEP targets in consultation with our child’s school.

The school’s Designated Teacher retains responsibility for the child and their PEPs so long as our child remains on the school roll.

Suspension/Exclusion from School

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a9015d4e5274a5e67567fbe/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf) states that: *head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any looked-after child.*

**Exclusion means a child is not only missing out on their opportunity to make educational progress, but it also increases their risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Exclusion therefore presents a safeguarding risk. The safest place for a child to be during the school day is in school**.

Exclusion often reinforces a sense of rejection some of our children already feel, causing further damage to their emotional health and well-being.

School Behaviour and Discipline Policies should recognise the safeguarding and emotional health risks presented by exclusion by making reasonable adjustments for children who face barriers to engaging with learning due to their early life experiences.

Schools should seek the advice of the Virtual School to ensure a relational and restorative focus; including being more attachment and trauma informed and to help make their policies more attachment and trauma aware.

**If an exclusion (either suspension or permanent exclusion) is deemed appropriate in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school’s behaviour policy**, all exclusions must be: Lawful, Rational, Reasonable, Proportionate, Fair, and must be in accordance with the **school’s published behaviour policy** and the DfE’s Statutory Exclusions Guidance. There is also an expectation that schools make reasonable adjustments in the application of their policy based on the child’s needs.

**The school should also be able to evidence:**

* A **graduated response** to support a child’s educational and emotional needs.
* Proactive contact with the Virtual School to consider what **additional support** may be required and whether an early PEP review is appropriate.
* **Proactive engagement** with carers and social workers (and those with Parental Responsibility)

1. If a period of **suspension** is unavoidable, the headteacher must:

* Without delay, **notify** the carer, the social worker (and the person holding Parental Responsibility) and the Virtual School, by entering any suspensions onto the ePEP system at the time of issue and include the period of the exclusion and the reason(s) for it. Ideally, notification should be in person or by telephone in the first instance. Details of the exclusion should be followed up in writing.
* Ensure **work** for the pupil to complete at home is provided during the first 5 days of the exclusion.
* Fulfils the school’s statutory duty to **arrange suitable full-time education** for any excluded pupil of compulsory school age that begins no later than the 6th day of the exclusion.
* Consider DfE guidance stating that ‘the school and the local authority should work together to arrange **alternative provision** from the first day following exclusion’ for Looked after Children.
* The social worker and Virtual School should be **notified of any governor meeting and should be given opportunity to arrange attendance**. Social workers should be given the opportunity to **share information** regarding the child’s circumstances which might have an impact on their presentation in school.

1. If a pattern of **suspension** emerges:

The Virtual School will ask the social worker to call an urgent PEP meeting and invite the Local Authority Inclusion Officer. The purpose of the meeting will be to consider what additional support could be provided to avoid any further suspensions. For schools within Staffordshire, any child in care who receives 2 or more suspensions should be referred to the Send and Inclusion Hub for discussion.

1. If a child is subject to more than 15 days of **suspension** in any term:

The exclusions must be reviewed by the school’s governing board. The school should circulate the pack used for the meeting to carer, social worker (and those with Parent Responsibility), and the Virtual School at least 5 school days prior to the meeting.

1. If a child is nearing 45 days of **suspension**:

The Virtual School will ask the school to assess whether suspension is providing an effective sanction and explore what alternative strategies could be implemented in preference to suspension.

If a Permanent Exclusion is being considered

Statutory guidance states that school can ***only*** permanently exclude a pupil:

* In response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school’s behaviour policy; and
* Where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

All Exclusions, Fixed Term and Permanent are governed by **statutory guidance which should be followed by all schools in England.** [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance September 2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ef773513ae1500116e30db/Suspension_and_permanent_exclusion_guidance_september_23.pdf)

In Staffordshire, the Inclusion Team can offer advice, guidance and clarification regarding exclusions. They are contactable at [inclusion@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:linclusion@staffordshire.gov.uk) . The relevant Education Inclusion Officer (EIO) will then be notified for your district.

**Please see Section 2 Suspensions and Exclusions: Advice and Guidance**

Transition to Post 16 Education, Employment or Training

In September 2015, government ‘raised the age of participation (RPA)’. Since then, all local authorities have been required to ensure that all young people are in education, employment or training (EET) until they are aged 18.

The local authority duty to promote the educational achievement of a looked-after child extends to looked-after young people aged 16 or 17 preparing to leave care. These are referred to in the Children Act 1989 as ‘eligible children’.

The Virtual School is reviewing its service offer to post-16 young people in care and care leavers but all young people in Year 12 and 13 (age 16-19) must have a termly PEP. We will continue to offer PEPs for those young people continuing into Y14.

Personal Education Planning

Personal Education Planning comprises a termly cycle that sees Personal Education Plans (PEP) produced or updated and then reviewed at a Personal Education Plan meeting (PEP meeting).

Personal Education Planning is a process NOT just a series of termly events.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP):

* Summarises the story of a child in care’s journey through education.
* Identifies all the good things that happen during a child’s educational journey, as well any barriers they encounter on the way.
* Details the strategies that support the child to maximise their attainment through accelerated progress, allowing them to reach their potential.

Taken together, the child’s Personal Education Plan provides an invaluable resource for those adults working with the child during the next stage of their educational journey. However, they will also help the child/young person in their adult future as they get to know how to best support themselves and thrive in society when there is less support available to them. The PEP should be attended by the allocated social worker, Designated Teacher and any other relevant school staff, carers, and anyone else involved with our child, e.g. a mentor or YOS worker.

The Personal Education Plan is a statutory component of the child’s wider Care Plan and a PEP must be initiated as part of the Care Plan and reviewed at least 3 times per year. Where there are concerns that mean our child is ‘high risk’ or attending an RI or Inadequate setting, PEPs should take place more frequently.

All young people in care, from pre-school until age 18 (even if they are not in a formal education provision) must have a PEP meeting at least once per term, and should be invited to attend each meeting.

In Staffordshire, we have PEPs for children from early years (aged 2-3) until the end of Year 13 (aged 18-19) a Pathway Plan (EPP) for those aged 18 - 21 years.

The first Personal Education Plan meeting

If this is the child’s first Personal Education Plan (or your first PEP, as a social worker, Designated Teacher or carer) the Virtual School will help!

If you are not registered on our ePEP system, please contact our team on:

Logo

Description automatically generated

**07812 515084**

[Virtualschoole-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Virtualschoole-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk)

The PEP is a statutory document for each of our children.  In Staffordshire, we use ePEP to record PEP documents. The PEP should promote aspirational educational achievement with our child’s needs at the centre. All PEPs should adopt **RADY** principles (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils). A PEP should have at least two academically focused targets including one focused on reading dependent on the needs of the child. Where our child is NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) the PEP should still contain 2 relevant, aspirational targets.

The PEP document will play a role in tracking and monitoring the child’s progress as they move through education.  Each term, aspirational targets will be set with the aim of supporting our children to achieve in education.  PEPs should be completed at least termly but may need to be completed more frequently.

For our children who have recently come into the care of the local authority, a PEP meeting should be initiated within 10 working days and completed within 20 days. PEPs can take place earlier where there is a planned entry to care.

**Responsibility for initiating the first PEP meeting sits with the child’s social worker.** **Both the social worker and Designated Teacher are responsible for ensuring that the first electronic PEP document is accurate and complete prior to the first meeting taking place**.

* When a child comes into care, the **Virtual School will contact the social worker** to advise that a PEP meeting needs to take place.
* Our child’s **social worker** must contact the school’s Designated Teacher and arrange a date and time for the first PEP meeting which must be arranged within **10 school days** of the child coming into care. It is the social worker’s responsibility to send out invitations for the PEP meetings.
  + If the education provision does not know that the child is in care, they will be unable to update their safeguarding records or respond to the needs of the child that arise from leaving their birth family and/or moving into foster or residential care.
* Please ensure that the Virtual School is invited to the first PEP meeting. If they are not, they will be unable to gain an accurate understanding of the child or provide the most appropriate advice or support.
* Our child’s **social worker** must contact the child’s carer (and/or parent if the child is placed with them or the parent retains Parental Responsibility) as soon as possible to ensure they are able to attends the PEP meeting. The child’s carers are essential members of the team around the child and must be involved at every stage.

Please see our ePEP guidance document (Appendix 4) for more information on ePEP completion.

* Our child’s **social worker, carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate) and **Designated Teacher** should agree who is best placed to support the child to complete our child’s views in PEP Section 1 ‘About Me’ in advance of the first PEP Meeting. A PEP cannot be quality assured as ‘good’ if the child has not contributed to it.
  + This is the child’s Personal Education Plan and they should be supported to express their views about their education and the support they feel they need.
* Our child’s **social worker** must ensure that ‘My Care Information’ section of ‘My Meeting Agenda’ in Section 2 of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the first PEP Meeting.
  + This is an essential part of the PEP as it provides the essential background context for the child.
* Our child’s **Designated Teacher** must ensure that Section 3 of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the first PEP Meeting, even if the child is new to their school, in which case they should liaise with the child’s previous school. When a child has special educational needs, Designated Teachers should liaise with the school’s SENCo and upload IEPs/EHCP documents.
  + This is an essential part of the PEP as it provides the essential educational context for the child.
* Our child’s **social worker** and **Designated Teacher** must work together to encourage our child to attend this first PEP meeting and subsequent PEP meetings.
  + As well as the Plan being theirs, so is the Personal Education Plan meeting.
  + Children who are not invited and supported to attend and whose views are not valued early in their time in care can become disillusioned with the process and, indeed, with education in general. Every adult involved should be encouraged to listen and respond as positively as possible to the child’s views.
* We would advise that the Designated Teacher leads the meeting following the meeting agenda template in Section 2 of the ePEP (unless the child is in full time Alternative Provision in which case the AP will lead the meeting, BUT the school’s Designated Teacher must still attend). This will allow the social worker to complete the meeting agenda within the meeting. All sections should be fully completed on the meeting agenda page to ensure the ePEP can be judged ‘good or better’ when quality assured by the Virtual School.
  + This is an education meeting, so the Designated Teacher is best placed to ensure that the others attending understand the educational issues being discussed.
* The social worker’s role during the first PEP Meeting is to support the child to express their opinion, to advocate on their behalf if necessary, and to behave like a good parent and support the carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) to do that, too, by:
  + Asking for the educational data to be explained if they are not certain what it means.
  + Asking what the support offered will look like and when it will be in place.
  + Asking what the potential consequences of decisions about the nature of provision might mean for the child’s future educational options.
  + Asking how it will be clear whether the support being suggested has made a difference or not by the time of the next PEP meeting
  + Asking for time to get advice from the Virtual School before agreeing to sign off a plan they are not certain is right for the child.
* Our child’s social workershould use the ePEP system to record the outcomes of discussion, ensuring all sections are complete. Once this has been done, Section 2 can be signed off as complete on the ePEP sign off page.
  + The Virtual School wants to avoid creating separate ‘leading the meeting’ and ‘writing up the outcome’ tasks for the social worker by encouraging them to update the ePEP during the meeting.
  + The sooner that Section 2 is signed off, the sooner the Virtual School can quality assure the ePEP and release Pupil Premium + funding to the school to support the child.
* Our child’s social worker, Designated Teacher, carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) and child (and Virtual School representative if attending) should agree the date of the next PEP Meeting and add it to the ePEP before the meeting ends. The date must be before the end of the next school term.
  + The ePEP cannot be signed-off until the date is agreed and added to the ePEP.
* Our child’s **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** will receive a prompt from the ePEP system when the PEP has been completed, if they are attached on ePEP. If they have any queries or concerns about the ePEP they should raise them with the Virtual School.
  + The IRO cannot ensure that our child is receiving the support they need, and are entitled to, if they do not have a complete and accurate PEP to inform their views on the quality of the education provision our child is receiving.

Subsequent PEP Meetings

**PEPs are held at least termly** and more frequently when needed. **If a school is in an Ofsted Requires Improvement or Inadequate category, half-termly meeting as a minimum, should be held.**

**A PEP meeting must take place and an updated ePEP signed-off and submitted before the end of each school term.**

Responsibilities for initiating, issuing invitations and leading the PEP meeting and completing Section 2 of the PEP, are those of the social worker.

* Our child’s **social worker** must contact the child’s Designated Teacher, carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) and other relevant invited professionals and **confirm the date, time and location of the PEP review meeting**.
* **At least one meeting a year should be held face to face in our child’s education setting.**
* Our child’s **social worker**, **carer** (and/or **parent,** if appropriate) and **Designated Teacher** should agree which of them is best placed to support the child to gather our child’s views in the About Me section of the ePEP in advance of the PEP meeting.
* Our child’s **social worker** must ensure that ‘My Care Information’ section of ‘My Meeting Agenda’ in **Section 2** of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the PEP meeting.
* Our child’s **Designated Teacher** must ensure that **Section 3** of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is up to date and accurate before they attend the PEP review meeting, even if the child is new to their school, in which case they should liaise with the child’s previous school.
* Our child’s **social worker** and **Designated Teacher** should work together to encourage the child to attend every PEP review meeting.
* Our child’s **Designated Teacher** leads the meeting using the meeting agenda in **Section 2** as with a **particular focus** on:
  + Reviewing the impact of the previous plan on the SMART targets that were set.
  + Reviewing the relevance and appropriateness of the support that the previous plan had put in place.
  + Agreeing, where any of the targets were not achieved, whether those targets need to be adjusted or whether the support offered to the child to achieve them needs to be intensified or otherwise changed.
  + Liaising with the school’s SENCO, when a child has special educational needs, and uploading IEPs/EHCP documents to the ePEP.
* The **social worker’s role** during the PEP Review Meeting is to support the child to express their opinion, to advocate on their behalf if necessary and to continue to behave like a good parent and support the carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) to do that, too by:
  + Asking for clarification if it’s not clear how the Designated Teacher knows that the SMART targets from the previous ePEP have been met (or not).
  + Ensuring that the support described in the previous ePEP was delivered as expected.
  + Ensuring they understand the Designated Teacher’s rationale for either changing the SMART target(s) or support previously.
  + Ensuring that any recommendation by the Designated Teacher to change the nature or extent of the child’s education provision makes sense as part of the child’s Care Plan.
* Our child’s **social worker** should use the ePEP system to record the outcomes of discussion.
* Our child’s **social worker**, **Designated Teacher**, **carer** (and/or **parent,** if appropriate), **child** (and **Virtual School** representative if attending) should agree the date of the next PEP review meeting and add it to the ePEP before the meeting ends. **The date must be before the end of the next school term**. If a representative from the Virtual Schol is in attendance, they will complete their section in addition to the other professionals.
* The **child’s Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** will receive a prompt from the ePEP system when it has been completed. If they have any queries or concerns about the ePEP they should raise them with the Virtual School as soon as possible.

Between PEP meetings

No one should take a significant decision about a child in care’s education without reviewing the PEP in consultation with the child, our child’s school, carer, Virtual School, IRO and, where appropriate, their parents.

Our child’s **Designated Teacher** must, though:

* Ensure that the support agreed at the PEP meeting/review meeting is implemented **in the timescales agreed at the meeting**.
* Monitor the impact of the support offered regularly and, if they have concerns that the support is not making the expected impact, **ask our child’s social worker to initiate an early PEP Review Meeting** to agree how the support will be adjusted to better support the child.

Our child’s **social worker** must, though, use their **statutory visits**, and **other contact** with our child to:

* **Update their understanding** of our child’s experience of education.
* **Check** that our child is receiving the support agreed at the PEP meeting.
* **Ask** our child if that support is making a difference, and if so, what the difference is.
* **Contact** the Designated Teacher if they believe the support is either not being provided as agreed at the last meeting or that our child does not see any impact and ask the Virtual School for advice about next steps.

Our child’s **carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate) must see their everyday contact with the child as an opportunity to discuss their experience of education and the support agreed at the PEP meeting. Where they have concerns, they should contact our child’s social worker.

Our child’s **IRO** **must** contact the Virtual School as soon as they have **any concerns about the PEP or the child’s experience of education**.

Quality Assurance of PEPs

The submitted ePEP will be quality assured and signed off by Virtual School. Each PEP will be RAG rated and social workers, Designated Teachers, and IROs will be able to see this rating on our child’s ePEP front page. The current Quality Assurance criteria can be found in Appendix 4.

Pupil Premium for our children in care

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is additional grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for Children who are looked after by the Local Authority. This additional funding is provided by the DfE to secure improvements in the progress and attainment of our Looked After Children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. PP+ is different to other kinds of Pupil Premium in that it is the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH), not schools, who is responsible for allocating and managing PP+ for Children in the care of Staffordshire. To ensure effective use of the PP+ grant, the Virtual School Headteacher can decide to retain and/or administer some/all of the PP+ Grant funds they receive. Staffordshire Virtual School administers the PP+ for Staffordshire Looked After Children irrespective of where they live or attend school as described in the [DfE Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium).

Our children, educated in Staffordshire, but in the care of another Local Authority (LA) receive their PP+ from their ‘home’ Authority. To this effect, each Local Authority’s Virtual School sets its policy concerning this management. Looked After Children of statutory school age (Reception-Year 11) become eligible as soon as they come into care. A child is eligible to receive a portion of PP+ if they have been in care for 24 hours. Even if they quickly exit care, a PEP should still be held and any concerns or needs relating to education discussed.

Delegation of PP+ to schools and education settings

Statutory school age Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

In Staffordshire, £1500 is available to schools per child in care. To receive the available funds, schools and education settings need to complete our child’s PEP each term and set SMART targets that are designed to close the gap in attainment and progress (see below for guidance). The PP+ funding request needs to be documented in the PEP and show how the money will be used. The £1500 is available in three termly payments of £500 (Autumn, Spring, and Summer). If no PEP is in place, or the quality of the PEP is judged too low, then no PP+ funding will be authorised and released.

If a child/young person is temporarily without a school place during any one term, then the termly payment may be retained by the Virtual School Head to provide tutoring or any other, additional, interventions to maintain educational progress and engagement during this time.

For support on how it can be used refer to appendix 7

Early Years PEP and PP+

Our children are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium the term after their 3rd birthday.

Early Years Pupil Premium is additional funding used to improve our children’s learning and development. The funding is paid directly to the childcare provider as part of their normal funding claim with the local authority. This is approximately £388 per academic year and is paid as a top up to the hourly rate.

For our looked after children, the use of pupil premium is discussed in their termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting with the childcare provider, social worker and parent/carer.

Some children may be eligible for 30 hours provision where they meet the published criteria.

All looked after children aged 2 years+ should have an Early Years PEP in place until they reach statutory school age. In Staffordshire, it is the Virtual School’s responsibility to ensure that each child has an up-to-date PEP that is reviewed termly. Social workers and childcare providers have a responsibility to work in partnership to ensure this plan is meaningful and ensures access to high quality Early Years education.

Post 16 PEP and PP+

PEPs are completed via our online ‘ePEP’ system and must be reviewed termly in the school or setting with the Designated Teacher, carer, social worker and our child until the end of year 13. For training and support with the ePEP system please contact [Virtualschool-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk.](mailto:Virtualschool-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk.)

PP+ and children not in education, employment or training

It is essential for PEPs to be held and PP+ allocated to children currently not in education, employment or training, (NEET).

Centrally Managed Pupil Premium Plus

Because of their vulnerability and high degree of mobility, our children need an ‘insurance policy’: a central service that supports in relation to these risks and provides services that a school could not have on permanent standby. The Virtual School therefore retains some funding per child to fund a range of services and interventions.

The funds will not be accrued and PP+ cannot be carried forward beyond any one financial year. Any unspent PP+ funding is taken back by the Department for Education at the end of each financial year.

Please see Appendix 7 for our Staffordshire Virtual School Pupil Premium + Policy

Pupil Premium for previously looked after children (PLAC)

Who are our previously looked after children on a school’s roll?

A previously looked after child is a child who has left care in England and Wales because they became the subject of:

* an adoption order
* a special guardianship order (SGO); or,
* a child arrangements order (CAO).

**Adopted children who have never been in care** are **not** previously looked after and are **not** eligible for PP.

The Virtual School is unlikely to have accurate lists of previously looked after children as the child may not have been in the care of Staffordshire though they now attend a school in Staffordshire. Schools should, therefore, put in place arrangements to encourage the parents/carers of these children to self-declare.

It is important that schools are sensitive in seeking this information as some parents/carers/guardians will be concerned about sharing it. Schools can reduce this concern by stressing the confidentiality with which they will treat such declarations and by offering to meet parent/carers/guardians of previously looked after children face-to-face, to develop a relationship of mutual trust.

Schools should put in place arrangements to satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the parent/carer/guardian for documentary evidence of their previously looked-after status or a copy of the relevant order (above).

Pupil Premium for previously looked-after children

The DT and school finance manager should familiarise themselves with the relevant sections of the current DfE Guidance, which also details the timing of payments, but in summary:

Schools receive PP for previously looked after children, direct. The Virtual School Head is not informed of these payments and does not receive, manage, or allocate this funding; they have no role in defining school policy on how it is spent.

It is the school census which is used by the DfE to determine how many previously looked after children are on roll at a school and hence how much PP is allocated. This is why schools should ensure their management information systems are up to date with respect to this status.

Schools should ensure their Pupil Premium Strategy includes details of how they deploy PP for previously looked after children.

Children who are educated at home or attend private schools are not currently eligible.

Early Years Pupil Premium - the grant is payable at £388 per academic year. The child is eligible for the funding the term after their 3rd birthday. For nurseries/settings/childminders to access the funding, parents/guardians/carers must declare their child's status directly to the provider.

[One Minute Guide Pupil Premium PLAC](https://www.staffordshirevirtualschool.co.uk/Parents-Carers-and-Guardians/Adopters-and-special-guardians-kinship/Adopters-and-special-guardians.aspx)

Education Planning Previously looked after children

Rationale and Purpose:

* For those in education to be fully aware of the needs and issues faced by our previously looked after children and their parents/carers/guardians.
* To encourage further positive collaboration across home and school/early years provision.

Staffordshire has introduced an Education Plan for Previously Looked after Children (EPPLAC). The EPPLAC’s main function is as an awareness raising document that ensures that relevant information is available to those who need to know and that effective communication routes are established. It draws on the pro-active nature of our Children in Care Personal Education Plan (PEP). The intention of the PEP process is to ensure collaborative planning and support across home, school/early years provision and other agencies. The EPPLAC is not intended to replace other (more reactive) education-based plans such IEPs (Individual Education Plans) or PSPs (Pastoral Support Programmes).

EPPLACs can be initiated by either school/early years provision or parents/carers/guardians. The process will establish ongoing reviews.

It is intended that the EPPLAC process is initiated when:

* A school/early years provision aged child becomes adopted, i.e., at the last Children in Care Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting before an Adoption Order/SGO is in place.
* The child starts at a new school/early years provision.

However, the process can be initiated at any point should the above not have taken place.

EPPLAC tool and further resources can be accessed [here.](https://www.staffordshirevirtualschool.co.uk/Parents-Carers-and-Guardians/Adopters-and-special-guardians-kinship/Education-Planning-Tool-P-LAC-EP-PLAC.aspx)

SEND Support

SEND and Inclusion Hub and SEND local offer

Where schools have concerns that a child may have additional needs, or would benefit from further support, they should refer the child to the District SEND and Inclusion Hubs. Information about the [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer | Staffordshire Connects](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0)

can be found on the Virtual School website, and Virtual School staff should be invited to the PEP to discuss any concerns, so that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner.

Links between Personal Education Planning and SEND planning

Personal Education Plans (PEP) for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) should, as much as is possible, be written so that PEP targets present termly stepping stones towards the longer-term objectives of the EHCP. The Virtual School understands that the incremental progress of children with the most significant needs may be small, but target setting should seek to recognise and credit those steps no matter how small they may be. **One PEP meeting a year should take place at the same time as the EHCP Annual Review.**

**Schools should attach Individual Learning Plans and/or EHCPs to the PEP document and these should be regularly reviewed to reflect the current needs and support in place.**

Education Psychology Support for our children

Educational settings in Staffordshire, including maintained schools and academies, have the opportunity to purchase Educational Psychology time to support children and young people.

The Local Authority also commission Educational Psychologists to fulfil statutory duties relating to special educational needs and disability. Full details of the service can be found [here.](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/service.page?id=bfE2ISe4SPU)

Relational and Restorative Team support for children who have or have had a social work involvement

Staffordshire Virtual School has developed a team to support new duties of children who have, or have had, a social work involvement. The team comprises:

* Relational and Restorative Practice Co-ordinator
* Relational and Restorative Practice Advisors, working across a double-district with statutory education age provision
* Relational and Restorative Practice Advisor working countywide with post-16 provision

The Virtual School Relational and Restorative Practice team may be able to provide training for schools, foster carers, social care and other agencies on Relational, Restorative (RRP) and Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed (AATI) approaches. This is central to the aspiration for every school in the county to become a relational school. The training is intended to prepare schools to be more inclusive by better meeting the needs of children, whether looked after or not, who have experienced difficulties in their lives. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and training on topics with an RRP/AATI basis may also be offered to meet the needs of the child/young person.

Staffordshire is keen to ensure that Staffordshire schools can work towards an accredited Staffordshire Relational Schools Pathway (SRSP). We recognise that ARC accreditation offers schools a meaningful, nationally recognised award that acknowledges the endeavours of schools to ensure TIAA approaches are integral to their systems, processes and daily practice.

It is our blueprint for what an inclusive school looks like. We have identified core elements that are applicable to all settings, with additional standards for those following one of our pathways.

The standards are intended to be completed over a period of 3-5 years to enable culture change and to embed practice. The four levels of accreditation are reflected in certification of Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum Awards. The core standards 1-6 are to be completed by all provisions, regardless of the pathway chosen. There are then additional standards that relate to the individual pathways:

Pathway 1: Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware

Pathway 2: Relational and Restorative Practice

Pathway 3: Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY)

Level Descriptors:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **BRONZE** | **SILVER** | **GOLD** | **PLATINUM** |
| **Exploring organisation knowledge.** | **Developing and identifying strategic options and deciding how resources will be allocated across the organisation, to achieve objectives through implementation.** | **Embedding practice by establishing processes for change and engaging people in the process throughout the organisation.** | **Sustaining and enhancing practice through actionable steps and review to improve impact on the community and environment.** |

It is expected that you complete the **Bronze** Award within 12 months of starting the journey. Your setting will need to have a consultation with one of our advisors, who will guide you through the process and standards. They will complete a training needs analysis, identifying strengths and development opportunities to form the baseline for a training plan. We will use the ARC Matrix to underpin the Trauma-Informed and Attachment Aware journey.

We offer termly ‘Relational Network Meetings’ with professionals from a variety of services invited. There are opportunities for educational professionals to anonymously bring children’s scenario’s, to discuss through a solution circle process. We would advocate that schools utilize this opportunity, to enable a real supportive approach to sharing ideas and best practise. This process can also be used as part of a graduated response and evidence for APDR cycles.

Further to the training with school staff, Staffordshire has developed a Student Ambassador programme for schools. This will be offered to schools on the Relational Schools Pathway and where initial training has been delivered. The sessions will be offered to a group of pupils in Staffordshire schools, with a mix of children with a social work involvement and children who do not.

The RRP team can offer solution circles and/or restorative conferencing where these are deemed appropriate approaches. They will be facilitated by the RRP advisor for your district and will be available for children with a social work involvement, currently on Child Protection or Child In Need plan. Any support will be limited to a maximum of 3 interventions, including the initial solution circle or conference and 2 further review meetings. An action plan will be produced and shared. An appropriate professional will be identified to take over the chairing of review meetings should more than 2 be necessary.

Where education settings require further support for our children, please discuss this with the Virtual School Headteacher or your district Co-ordinator.

RADY pathway

Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters

Working with our partners at Challenging Education, Staffordshire Virtual School has embedded Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) principles into all areas of our work, creating a golden thread of aspirational attainment for all disadvantaged children including children who have, or have had, a social work involvement. This aligns with the new extended duties to include a non-statutory responsibility for the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker.

The RADY principles cover four key areas –

***TARGET AND ATTAINMENT UPLIFTS*** *-* where schools, settings and individuals working with our children acknowledge untapped potential and set challenging targets based on where the learner would be without the disadvantage they have faced.

***EQUITY*** – encouraging everyone who works with disadvantaged children and young people to consider what additional support they are receiving that is above and beyond the universal offer.

***PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION*** – ensuring our children are represented in all aspects of school life, including school councils, clubs and wider community engagement.

***GOLDEN THREAD*** – where schools, settings and teams working with our children ensure their principles and policies always consider the needs of disadvantaged children first.

The Virtual School offers various support around RADY that can be divided into two areas - training and support for schools and settings, and development with Children’s and Families teams within the local authority.

For schools and settings, the Virtual School has developed the “RADY Pathway” where ongoing bespoke support is provided to help introduce and embed the RADY principles above to promote outcomes for disadvantaged children and those on free-school meals. The RADY pathway aligns closely with the Relational and Restorative Practice work done in the Virtual School and is intended to be a real culture change completed over 3-5 years. This is supported financially through the Virtual School.

All Staffordshire schools have access to “Thinking differently of disadvantaged learners – Professional Learning Programme” for free using their school URN. These award-winning resources offer a vast range of videos, worksheets, tutorials and CPD materials on all things RADY. We would highly encourage any school to look through ‘Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners’ and examine how these principles apply to their setting.

<https://challengingeducation.co.uk/professional-learning-programme/>

For more bespoke support, schools and settings can request a session with the RADY coordinator to discuss data, the RADY pathway or other attainment-based subjects with SLT or as whole staff CPD.

Where education settings require further support for a specific child, please discuss this with the Virtual School Headteacher or your district Co-ordinator who can support with RADY principle advice and guidance.

Within the Staffordshire local authority, ongoing training and development is being implemented within various Children’s and Families teams. All Children’s and Families members have access to RADY training on the Learning Hub, where sessions are held on a regular basis to discuss the RADY principles and how these can be embedded within their practice. This training is mandatory for all Children’s and Families members.

Just as with schools and settings, teams are offered bespoke RADY training during development days to better explore RADY principles, how this data applies to their team more specifically and how they can implement a more equitable approach for our disadvantaged learners.

Section 2

Suspensions and Exclusions: Advice and Guidance

**Virtual Headteacher Overview**

In March 2021, the Department for Education’s statistical first release reported that children in care are 4.5 times more likely to be excluded from school. Many of these children have suffered neglect, abuse or the loss of one or both parents. This inevitably has a significant impact on their neural development, particularly when suffered in early childhood, and on their ongoing social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Once in care, they can regularly experience instability, resulting from frequent changes to school or care placements. This combination of circumstances affects both their sense of belonging and their ability to form positive long-term relationships with peers and adults.

As the corporate parents for children in care, we need to work together to reduce exclusions and suspensions for our children. In the 2018 DfE Guidance ‘Promoting the education of looked after & previously looked after children’, it states clearly on page 32 that “head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any looked-after child”.

Historically, suspensions in Staffordshire have generally been in line with the figures seen nationally, both for Children in Care and for all school aged children. Latest 2022/23 data, however, appears to suggest a greater increase in suspensions for both groups in Staffordshire compared to the increase seen nationally (*Figure 1*).

When broken down by key stage, we see most suspensions for our children in care occur in KS3/4, with suspension rates of 80.6 compared to 11.9 in KS1/2 in 2022/23. Again, both rates in 2022/23 are above those seen nationally for Children in Care (*Figure 2*).

Staffordshire has historically seen a greater rate of exclusion than the rate seen nationally for all school aged children. Our Virtual School has worked hard to reduce the number of exclusions for children in care and has seen no exclusions upheld in recent years (*Figure 3*).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Suspension Rate - Number of suspensions / cohort population | | | |
| Cohort | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
| National | - | 6.1 | 8.8 |
| Staffordshire | - | 6.2 | 9.3 |
| National - CIC | 23.3 | 36.0 | 40.8 |
| Staffordshire - CIC | 22.9 | 32.7 | 46.2 |

*Figure 1* – Suspension rate (number of suspensions / cohort population) taken from Nexus. Please note that suspension data during 2020/21 may not be a true representation due to COVID restrictions that academic year.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Suspension Rate - Number of suspensions / cohort population | | | |
| Cohort | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
| National - CIC - KS1/2 | 6.5 | 9.2 | 10.5 |
| Staffordshire - CIC - KS1/2 | 7.3 | 5.2 | 11.9 |
| National - CIC - KS3/4 | 38.9 | 60.9 | 68.6 |
| Staffordshire - CIC - KS3/4 | 37.6 | 59.0 | 80.6 |

*Figure 2* – Suspension rate (number of suspensions / cohort population) broken down by Key Stage taken from Nexus. Please note that suspension data during 2020/21 may not be a true representation, due to COVID restrictions that academic year.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Exclusion Rate - Number of exclusions / cohort population | | | | | |
| Cohort | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
| National | 0.10 | 0.06 | - | 0.07 | 0.10 |
| Staffordshire | 0.14 | 0.09 | - | 0.10 | 0.17 |
| National - CIC | 0.11 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 0.12 | 0.17 |
| Staffordshire - CIC | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.12 | 0.00 | 0.37 |

*Figure 3* – Exclusion rate (number of exclusions / cohort population) broken down by Key Stage taken from Nexus. Please note that suspension data during 2019/20 and 2020/21 may not be a true representation due to COVID restrictions in those academic years. Some Staffordshire children in care had exclusions before entering our care.

It is essential that school leaders recognise that the implications of a suspension are much more severe when it is issued to a child in care, than when the same punishment is given to a child who is living with their own family, who have not experienced the same disadvantage or who have not had prior social care involvement. The reason being that for a child who has experienced trauma, its impact is to retraumatise the child further as:

***“Exclusion lights up the same regions of the brain as physical pain.”***

Andretta B, Wired To Connect (2018), Mind Publishing

We therefore ask schools to consider different strategies and outcomes for children in care, due to the following factors:

Suspensions are an ineffective way of changing challenging behaviours for many children in care, as they do not address the underlying causes which arise from the trauma they have experienced. These children need directed support in learning to self-regulate.

Absence from school due to a suspension causes further disruption to what is often an already interrupted learning journey. It also removes the child from the significant protective factor their school often provides.

It exposes them to further adult and social rejection, which increases the likelihood of risky behaviours, often related to gangs, sexual or criminal exploitation.

The consequences and negative impact of a suspension can often result in the loss of their home, not just their education, as foster care placements have been known to break down following lengthy exclusions from school.

For children in care, we act together as their corporate parents, and in the words of the former Children’s Minister, Edward Timpson, “we need all professionals to ask themselves, before they make a decision or fill in a form, ‘Would this be good enough for my own child?’” DfE (2015)

The Virtual School has an advice and signposting function to support children with a social care involvement, including previously looked after children, children in need and children subject to a plan. Previously looked after children can experience the impact of their journey into care, long after their move to a stable family environment. Trauma informed approach continues to be needed to support their engagement in education. Exclusions and suspensions have sadly played a factor in the breakdown and ending of some of these ordered home arrangements.

The DfE ‘Children in Need Review’ (2019), highlighted that children with a social worker are 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded. Over half of children who have needed a social worker, due to known safeguarding risks at home or in the community, are in need due to abuse and neglect, a further quarter due to family dysfunction or stress. The Help, protection, education: concluding the Children in Need review (Dfe, 2019) is clear in stating:

“*Staying in education is a protective factor for these children, at best it offers a safe space to access support, ensures oversight and support from professionals, and helps children discover their talents, develop resilience, and realise their potential. Where children are not in school – or if school ceases to be the safe place it should be – they miss both the protections and opportunities it can provide, whilst becoming more vulnerable to harm. The cost of missing education, particularly for children where there are safeguarding concerns, is therefore simply too high.”*

To reduce suspensions or permanent exclusions of children with a social care involvement requires us all to reflect on our actions and decisions. The interventions of school leaders vary across the county, as do the cultures and guidelines laid out within school behaviour policies. We can reduce the risk of both suspensions and permanent exclusions for children in care through good, relational, trauma-informed practice.

There is an abundance of good practice across the county; we have many settings on the journey to become attachment and trauma aware; and many schools are changing their behaviour and sanctions policies to develop more relational based approaches. This guidance aims to signpost a range of support and interventions, as well as set out key actions required, if a Staffordshire child with a social care involvement is at risk or has been excluded.

Lesley Gill

Staffordshire Virtual Head Teacher

A diagram of a company

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A diagram of a flowchart

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Where a suspension has been issued, please work with the relevant teams around the child, to look at what the team can learn, a review of support strategies and sharing of ideas and solutions. Please always be professionally curious about our children’s behaviours and what could be going on for them externally, or within school, which could be creating a cycle of emotional dysregulation, and the need for co-regulation to be able to realistically think and behave ‘logically’ and access the learning environment. Consider SEN needs and is your behaviour policy something which our child is cognitively and realistically able to adhere to, without some reasonable adjustments, based on their learning needs, cognitive age and SEMH needs at the time.

A blue rectangular object with black text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

If our child is at risk of permanent exclusion, we would like to work with you to avoid this, if there are escalating concerns please call a PEP meeting and make sure all relevant professionals, as well as parent/carers are invited for a positive solution focused approach, to understand the underlying issues that are the root cause of the behaviours and a review of strategies tried so far, as part of a graduated response.

If it is felt that all strategies and options have been exhausted, and the Headteacher feels that they are now at a point where Permanent Exclusion from school would be the only option; please do contact your Virtual School Co-ordinator as we may be able to work together further, to identify another path for our child. If Designated Teachers/ Headteachers wish to escalate concerns about our child, beyond the current level of workers involved, Headteachers can contact the Deputy Virtual Headteacher ([joy.oakes@Staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:joy.oakes@Staffordshire.gov.uk) ) and Virtual Headteacher: ([lesley.gill@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lesley.gill@staffordshire.gov.uk)).

Universal Offer in School

This is the first step when a young person is starting to display challenging behaviours in school, the points below would be the first stages regarding preventing suspension and exhausted before moving through the stages in this guidance. The expectation is that the designated teacher for looked after children will play a key role in coordinating planning for the child and ensuring all stages are recorded in detail on the PEP, with clear actions and review dates. Please contact Staffordshire Virtual School for additional support and guidance – [Contact us - Virtual School - Staffordshire County Council](https://www.staffordshirevirtualschool.co.uk/Contact-us.aspx)

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) Meeting

* Ensure SENCO knows the young person well in school, so any unmet learning or social emotional needs are assessed & attends the meeting alongside key staff i.e Head of Year, Class Teacher, SEN Teaching Assistant or Mentor.
* Ensure the social worker (SW), carer and professionals involved are in attendance or sent a report to be shared at the meeting.
* Focus/review current school timetable to identify triggers.
* Set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic & Time specific (SMART) targets and link to PP+ spend.
* Consider if additional funding is required to enhance your current offer.
* Young person’s plan shared with all key staff – tutors – subject leads. PEPs - Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP), Individual Education plan (IEP), Student Passport (SP) SEN Support Plan (SSP), Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS) and Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) – interventions/initiatives.
* Discuss appropriate assessments to identify need.
* Arrange a review date in the meeting, record on the PEP.

**Possible strategies/interventions following PEP Meeting**

* Small group or 1:1 intervention – focused on social and emotional skill development, naming and regulating emotions or targeted and precision teaching to support learning.
* Bespoke/reduced timetable –Virtual School need be involved in planning any proposed changes to the timetable. Where appropriate, source tuition to support reduced timetable.
* Weekly sessions set to allow time to talk.
* Safe space/card system - when time is needed away from difficult lessons.
* Advocate/ critical friend.
* Planned activities around interests that build around time to talk with a trusted adult.
* Referral for external agency support.
* Pastoral plan – include carers/parents/care home key worker.
* Bespoke early intervention behaviour support plan
* Team building – peer relationships – friendship groups.
* Restorative justice programme.
* No blame bullying approach - group intervention plan.
* See resource page at the end of the document, for links to services advertised on the local offer.
* All staff (whole school) trained in Attachment, Trauma and Emotion Coaching. Emotion coaching is used in daily communication and interactions with the young person to reduce dysregulation and support co and self-regulation.
* Work with your school Educational Psychologist on writing and implementing a Multi-Element Plan for the child.

**Outcomes**

1. Current PEP with clear SMART targets linked to PP+.
2. Actions clearly recorded on the PEP, with timeframes and people responsible.
3. Review date arranged and agreed by all parties.
4. Plan in place if behaviours continue to escalate.
5. All teaching staff aware of difficulties and plans in place.
6. Young Person (YP) has a clear understanding of the support available and how to access it.
7. Having a key person - discuss issues hopefully leading to less dysregulation.
8. Young person being able to work alongside other peers and building positive relationships – able to relate to others in similar positions.
9. Young person being actively involved in their own behaviour plan.
10. Using positive ways to show emotions.
11. Daily communication between home and school (young person aware of this taking place)

Universal Offer Alternative Provision

Alternative provision (AP) should only be considered in consultation with all professionals including Staffordshire Virtual School. The provision and attendance at the AP should be recorded clearly on the PEP. Actions under the ‘universal offer’ in school (previous page), should be followed first.

Staffordshire Connects | Alternative provision for all ages.

[Staffordshire Connects | Alternative provision for all ages](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=2-1-5)

The PEP Meeting

Ensure someone who knows the young person well in school attends the meeting i.e. Head of Year, Class Teacher, TA or Mentor.

Carefully consider the needs of the young person, are they better placed to have access to a more vocational, bespoke curriculum than an academic curriculum? Are plans aspirational enough and stretching/ challenging enough?

Plans must be clearly recorded on the PEP – is this a long/short term option? Is the plan for the young person to return to be dual registered for a set time and return full time to the school where they are on roll? What happens if the AP does not go to plan?

Funding – how will the AP be funded? AWPU? SEND notional budget? Delegated funds? PP+/Additional PP+ request? Record funding source on the PEP and confirm prior to PEP meeting with SLT.

Possible actions following PEP meeting

Designated Teacher (DT) to confirm funding for alternative provision.

Explore suitable providers, this may include small independent schools, providers on the local offer and PRU’s.

Arrange regular review meetings planned with the Team Around the Child (TAC), with a clear exit strategy i.e. return to home school or move to new education provision.

Referral to EAPDR

Work with your school Educational Psychologist on writing and implementing a Multi-Element Plan for the child.

Outcomes

Young person attends an appropriate provision that meets needs. Funding is agreed by all parties involved.

Short term intervention – return to home school, or alternatives are explored.

Appropriate assessments to support need have been actioned if agreed in the PEP.

Managed Move

A managed move is often not in the best interests of a child who needs to build strong and consistent relationships, to feel secure and regulate their behaviour. In exceptional circumstances a managed move is an alternative school’s strategies and where there is a risk of permanent exclusion. It should be used as an opportunity for the young person to be able to refocus and re-engage with education, in a setting that will support their needs and promote a fresh start. It is vital that the young person, along with all professionals, are included in the process and it is jointly agreed that this would be a positive approach to supporting improved behaviour. A managed move of a child in care does not fall within the remit of fair access or school sharing panels. It can only be pursued after discussion with the child/young person’s social worker and the Virtual School. If agreed, the Virtual School will then support the work with schools and admissions to locate a new school place.

The PEP Meeting/TAC Meeting

Have you followed the previous guidance under the universal offer? Have the agreed strategies been actioned and recorded on the PEP? Is there evidence of a graduated response?

Have all internal options (and if appropriate alternative provision) been explored, and the young person’s views considered?

Has an advocate been secured for the child so they can be supported to share their views on a proposed move.

Ensure all professionals agree with the managed move and consideration has been made of placement and future travel needs. This must include the social worker and Virtual School Advisor.

Confirm who will have the conversations with the proposed school/s. If this is not the professional in the meeting, are they in agreement?

Agree appropriate timescales for the conversations between school to have taken place and set a date to confirm transition plans/arrangements.

Opportunity for the young person to visit the proposed school.

Ensure that the pupil remains on roll at home school and the attendance is recorded by the home school at least weekly.

Actions following PEP meeting

Transition meeting between schools arranged. Virtual School Advisor to attend meeting and contribute to plan. Included our child in the meeting and planning.

Strategies to support the managed moved are recorded on the PEP and linked to Pupil Premium+. Schools should discuss transfer of termly PP+ from home school to new school.

PEP review date arranged (half termly) and agreed methods of communication between professionals.

Ensure that our child remains on roll at the home school and the attendance is recorded by the home school at least weekly, using the correct codes.

Where there are concerns, the receiving school organises a meeting for all professionals to support the placement and ensure its success.

Work with your school Educational Psychologist on writing and implementing a Multi-Element Plan for the child.

Outcomes

Our child is taken onto new school roll following review date or start the process again/ review plans if unsuccessful.

Previously Looked After Child (PLAC) Guidance

The role of the virtual school for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational attainment through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators, and others. The points below would be the first stages to prevent suspension/ exclusions and exhausted before moving through the stages in this guidance. The designated teacher for previously looked after children will play a key role in coordinating support. Advice and planning tools are available on the Virtual School website. [Adopters and special guardians - Staffordshire County Council](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Virtual-school/Adopters-and-special-guardians/Adopters-and-special-guardians.aspx). The relational and restorative practice team can offer advice and support through solution circles and conferencing.

Education Care Plan meeting

The designated teacher for previously looked after children will convene a meeting to identify and co-ordinate interventions to prevent exclusion.

Ensure that the pupils voice, a review of targets set, strengths and barriers to learning, parent’s views and support from other professionals is shared in the meeting with previous strategies used and the outcomes.

Strategies to consider

Everyday being greeted by key person – positive praise to enhance the pupil’s day.

Weekly sessions to allow time to talk with named trusted adult/key person.

Portable hand (sad face pic) – time needed away from a difficult lesson - safe space to go – to regulate emotions.

Opportunities where the child’s positives can be used e.g. supporting another child with reading.

Team building – peer relationships, friendship groups.

Solution circles

Planned activities and interests with a similar group to enable, time to talk.

Pastoral plan – include Parents/Guardians, trusted adult.

Behaviour specialist – pastoral groups/ social activities

No blame bullying group intervention.

Restorative justice programme

Strategies to support emotional regulation.

All plans should be shared with the Young Person and Parents/Guardian.

Involvement of Ed Psychologist, CAT and PSS teams

Work with your school Educational Psychologist on writing and implementing a Multi-Element Plan for the child.

Outcomes

Having a key person - discuss issues hopefully leading to less dysregulation.

Young person being able to work alongside other peers and building positive relationships – able to relate to others in similar positions.

Young person being actively involved in their own behaviour plan.

Using positive ways to show emotions.

Daily communication between home and school (young person aware of this taking place)

Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Guidance

Solution Focused Circle meeting

The RRP advisors can offer Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to anyone who wishes to facilitate a solution focused circle.

Someone from school who can make decisions to attend, along with someone who knows the child – this can be the same person, looking holistically at the child’s situation. As a group, establishing a SMART action plan to follow with strategies to support areas of difficulty.

Ensure that the pupils voice, a review of targets set, strengths and barriers to learning, parent’s views and support from other professionals is shared in the meeting with previous strategies used and the outcomes.

Can be focused on attendance and/or suspension/ threat of exclusion.

Strategies to consider

Everyday being greeted by key person – positive praise to enhance the pupil’s day.

Weekly sessions to allow time to talk with named trusted adult/key person.

Portable hand (sad face pic) – time needed away from a difficult lesson - safe space to go – to regulate emotions.

Opportunities where the child’s positives can be used e.g. supporting another child with reading.

Team building – peer relationships, friendship groups.

Planned activities and interests with a similar group to enable, time to talk.

Pastoral plan – include Parents/Guardians, trusted adult.

Behaviour specialist – pastoral groups/ social activities

No blame bullying group intervention.

Restorative practice intervention

Strategies to support emotional regulation.

All plans should be shared with the Young Person and Parents/Guardian.

Involvement of Ed Psychologist, and/or BSS teams

Work with your school Educational Psychologist on writing and implementing a Multi-Element Plan for the child.

Outcomes

Having a key person - discuss issues hopefully leading to less dysregulation.

Young person being able to work alongside other peers and building positive relationships – able to relate to others in similar positions.

Young person being actively involved in their own behaviour plan.

Using positive ways to show emotions.

Daily communication between home and school (young person aware of this taking place)

SEND / EHCP

Always make sure the SENCO is involved in the preventative support of children at risk of exclusion. Consider any unmet learning needs, which may be contributing to the social and emotional challenges being seen. For such children, we would expect their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs to be identified on the school’s SEN register with a clear pathway of support evidenced in APDR cycles along with how funding at school’s disposal is being used.

For those groups of pupils with additional needs, school should, as far as possible, avoid any form of suspensions. Where there are escalating concerns for children with an EHCP, consider holding an [annual review](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/document.page?id=qvSZlAzqWII), ensuring to invite the child’s social worker and Virtual School Coordinator. For children with SEND needs and no EHCP, refer to the SEND & Inclusion hub, via the [One Form](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SpecialEducationalNeeds/EAPDR-Request-Form-Guidance-Document.aspx), for consideration of the Enhanced Assess Plan Do Review [EAPDR pathway](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SpecialEducationalNeeds/Enhanced-Assess-Plan-Do-Review.aspx), as part of the Graduated Approach to support for the child. If successful, an EP will be allocated and a Team Around the Child created.

If the child’s SEND (for example, social, emotional and mental health) requires special educational provision to be made for the child in accordance with an EHC Plan, schools should request an [EHC Needs Assessment](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/advice.page?id=H2NHUGE_yzY).

The Head Teacher and Governing Body must comply with their statutory duties in relation to SEND when considering exclusions. Where there are concerns for a young person with SEND, it is good practice for schools to review their policies and practices to ensure that they are effective and inclusive for ALL. If a suspension/exclusion is issued, school should inform the following professionals: Social Worker, Carer, Staffordshire Virtual School. If child has an EHCP, inform their SEND keyworker. Please also see Exclusions information for children with SEND in the [SEND Code of Practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25) (11.56).

The PEP meeting

Make sure the SEN page in Section 3 of the PEP is fully completed and all relevant documents attached, for example, IEPs which show APDR cycles implemented.

If the child has an EHCP, include date of last review. Consider whether a review is needed.

If a part time timetable is being used to support, ensure this is a short-term intervention with a clear plan to increase time in school and with an end date identified.

Look closely at the child’s current timetable. Where are the hot spots? Can these times/subjects be altered? Can the young person change groups? How can further support be put in place for these more challenging lessons.

Actions to follow up after PEP meeting

External Agencies consulted/support/intervention, e.g. [EAPDR](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SpecialEducationalNeeds/Enhanced-Assess-Plan-Do-Review.aspx)

EP referral – assessment completed and recorded.

Recommendations from EP and other agencies implemented and evidenced in APDR cycles

Reintegration meeting needed?

Action plan outlining support in place to assess and reduce the risk of further exclusions.

Monitor interventions and review regularly with all professionals.

An early EHCP review is requested if the child’s needs have changed.

Outcomes

Child is attending a provision.

Child’s needs are being met, e.g. through EAPDR collaboration and support.

Annual review has been held and amended EHCP reflects the needs of the child.

Post 16 Student disciplinary procedure good practice guidance

The guidance shown below should be considered good practice when a student is starting to display behaviours that may result in them being withdrawn from their course. In these circumstances, the Virtual School’s expectation for Children in Care (CiC) is that all development and disciplinary procedures/ meetings should be recorded, in detail, on the PEP, with clear actions and review dates. The key professionals supporting the student should be immediately informed of any concerns/incidents including the Designated Professional/ Teacher for looked after children in your setting in order to convene a PEP as soon as possible.

Good practice

A student development and disciplinary procedure policy is in place.

Student is fully aware of the provider’s expectations and has signed a Code of Conduct agreement.

Student is fully aware of the procedures which should be followed if their promises are breached- in that repeated breaches or a single very serious breach may result in a student being temporarily or permanently withdrawn.

Examples of misconduct are available to students.

Reasonable adjustments are made where necessary.

Consideration should be given to students with disabilities, learning difficulties and speakers of other languages.

Our Expectations for Children in Care

When a case of misconduct arises the student’s Social Worker and/or Carer, and your named Virtual School Advisor should be informed immediately.

Misconduct interviews should take place within an urgently arranged PEP meeting. If you are unable to contact your named advisor, please email [virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk)

In the event of misconduct being deemed of a serious nature and the student is to be withdrawn with immediate effect the student’s Social Worker and/or Carer, and your Virtual School Advisor should be informed immediately.

Any misconduct/panel meetings should not go ahead without any prior notification and communication with the student’s Social Worker and Care provider, copying in the Virtual School Coordinator/Advisor.

Copies of any form of written warning, recommendations or action plans should be sent to the Social Worker and/or Carer, and your Virtual School Advisor.

The student should have the right to appeal any hearing/panel outcomes.

See resource page at the end of the document, for Virtual School commissioned offer and links to additional interventions and external agencies such as Birmingham Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Right Help, Right Time.

How the Virtual School can support General Further Education (GFE) and Vocational Training Providers (VTP)

A Virtual School Education Advisor will be assigned to offer support to avoid continued escalation and possible risk of permanent withdrawal.

Attachment and trauma training.

Training for the Designated Teacher for Children in Care and post 16 PEP Coordinators.

Training on PEPs and the needs of Children in Care.

Appendix 1: The Virtual School Team

**The Virtual School Head Teacher**

**The VHT reports to the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Skills** and works collaboratively as part of the leadership of the Children’s System to create a culture of inclusion, innovation to drive improvement and improve education outcomes for children with a social care involvement.

Responsibilities include:

* Work with partners nationally, regionally and locally to drive the improved attainment and progress of care experienced children and children with a social care involvement
* To inform policy and planning across the children’s system with the aim of improving education attainment and progress of care experienced and children with a social care involvement.
* Ensure the best use of resources including financial and team to improve education outcomes

**The Virtual School Deputy**

The Virtual School Deputy Head will support the VHT in implementing statutory and non-statutory duties promoting the education of previously looked after children and children who have, or have had, a social work involvement.

Responsibilities will include:

* Providing the highest level of professional and operational leadership to the co-ordinator team.
* Supporting service improvements through audits, quality assurance, identifying training, benchmarking and the interpretation and dissemination of legislation
* To deliver advice, guidance and training on evidence-based approaches and best practice in relation to educational stability, raised attainment, attendance and effective use of resources such as Pupil Premium for care experienced and children with a social care involvement.
* Ensure that effective professional practice and supervision is delivered throughout the team to endure oversight of quality and consistency of practice including advice and guidance for children at high risk of poor outcomes.

**The Co-ordinators**

Each co-ordinator has an overview of a locality or specific cohort of our children, e.g. early years, and tracks and monitors attainment and progress of our children.

Activities include:

* Reviewing the attainment and progress of each of our children termly through the PEP process and supporting commissioning and targeting of initiatives using their detailed knowledge of the children in their cohort.
* Review and sign off PEPs for all our children with a focus moving from compliance using the system, to quality assurance and coaching to improve PEP quality.
* Intervention to overcome barriers for individual children at risk of poor outcomes.
* Offering advice, guidance, and training to key external and internal partners to promote understanding of the education needs of our children in care, previously looked after children and social care experienced children.
* Leadership of identified priority area.

**SENCo**

The SENCo is a part time position to support our children with EHCPs and those needing additional support or assessment. She also offers advice and guidance to staff, schools, carers and social workers around the graduated response and strategies to aid our young people.

Activities include:

* Working with schools and VS staff to make individual and personalised EHCNAs
* Advising and updating internal and external professionals with SEND related information
* Looking at interventions and strategies that can improve academic attainment to support children who are below age related expectations

**The Advisors (previously ‘Mentors’)**

The advisors undertake an element of direct work supporting our children to engage in wider learning opportunities projects and initiatives.

Activities include:

* Support planning for our children new to care ensuring PEPs are in place
* Tracking and support for individual children
* Support for projects and initiatives e.g. A2U, RADY and arts and sports events
* Attendance at PEPs at the direction of the co-ordinator.

**The Relational and Restorative Co-ordinator**

The relational and restorative co-ordinator with lead on the co-ordination and implementationof restorative and relational practice across education settings in Staffordshire.

This will include:

* Promote the development of relational and restorative approaches with education partners and key children system teams including EIOs, social workers etc
* Development and delivery of a comprehensive training programme for education settings
* Co-ordination of the Relational and Restorative Advisor team
* Oversight of performance and quality
* Work with other Local Authorities to develop Staffordshire’s RRP offer

**The Relational and Restorative Advisors**

Support the Relational and Restorative Advisor on the implementation of Relational and Restorative Practice in education settings in Staffordshire

Activities include:

* Co-ordinate restorative responses for individual children with a social care involvement e.g., where there is danger of exclusion, emotional wellbeing, SEND Needs, attendance issues, challenges in securing appropriate education, children not achieving their potential
* Offer support and advice to education settings developing their practice
* Support co-ordination and delivery of training, including delivery of Student Ambassador training

**Wider opportunities and events Coordinator**

This post is to promote arts and sports activities and engage care experienced young people. The post delivers a range of consultation activities for children with a social work involvement and to improve access and engagement to services

Activities include:

* Specific aim to increase engagement in arts and sport for our children in care
* Support our children to influence future arts and sports programme planning
* Support the Virtual School in responding to views of our children and ensuring our actions are fed back to them

**RADY Coordinator**

The RADY Coordinator role is to raise awareness of RADY principles across the local authority workforce and schools and settings. By applying RADY principles, our children will feel more included in their community and will have aspirational targets set, resulting in higher attainment. By closing the gaps between our disadvantaged children and those without that disadvantage, our children will realise their potential, had they not faced adversity.

**Business support**

The Virtual school are supported by SCC Business Support team who help to maintain the e-PEP system and functionality for the team.

Activities include:

* Supporting the VS team with admin tasks
* Supporting schools, social workers, carers and staff with e-PEP queries
* Processing pupil premium payments and providing financial guidance/support
* Collating and providing data for analysis
* Processing tuition referrals and commissioned contracts

**Contacting the Virtual School**

For your key contacts visit our webpage: <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool>

For generic queries: [virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Visit the e-PEP page for support and links: <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool/epep>

For E-PEP related queries please email to: [virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Appendix 2 – Education Plan for Children and Young People with a Social Worker

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| https://www.intra.staffordshire.gov.uk/comms/Branding/SCClogocolour-1.jpg | **Education Plan for Children and Young People with a Social Worker** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Child/Young Person’s Name |  |
| Date of Birth |  |
| Education Setting |  |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead |  |
| SENCO |  |
| Date of Meeting |  |
| Date of Review |  |
| Attendees |  |

**Child/Young Person’s View**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is going well? |  |
| What subjects are you interested in or want to get better at? |  |
| What Sports or Arts activities are you interested in? |  |
| What do you find more difficult and what would help? |  |

**Attainment and Progress**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Does the child/young person have an EHCP or are they on the SEN Register? Date of next review: |  |
| Is attainment at age related expectations? |  |
| What are the barriers to learning? |  |
| What academic interventions are in place to support accelerated progress? |  |
| What pastoral interventions are in place to support accelerated progress? |  |
| How do we know interventions are effective? |  |

**Attendance and Inclusion**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Attendance % |  |
| Is there a full-time offer? If not, please provide details \* |  |
| If attendance is below 95% what are the reasons for absence |  |
| Provide details of the Support Plan to improve attendance |  |
| Is the SENCO involved and the child on the SEN register with SEMH as the barrier to learning? |  |

**Wider Considerations**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What are the reasons for social care involvement and how is this likely to impact on learning? |  |
| How can we encourage participation in the wider life of the school? |  |
| Consider how social, emotional and mental health are impacting on learning |  |
| Is transition planning aspirational? |  |

**Actions**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Action | By Who? | By When? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Appendix 3 - ePEP Guidance for Designated Teachers

When you have been added to the ePEP system by Virtual School you will receive an email from ePEP Online with a link to the log on page <https://secure.epeponline.co.uk/login>

If you have never used the system before, please click **First Time Registration** and complete your details. You will be asked to set up a password and memorable word and will be sent a link to verify your email address. You will then be able to log in.

Please click **First Time Registration** on the homepage using this link <https://secure.epeponline.co.uk/login> (or in the separate email you will receive from ePEP Online).  If you already have your account set up you will now see this young person as one of your learners.  There has been a national single sign-on system since April 2020. If you have used the old ePEP system before this date (with a User ID) but have never used single sign-on you will need to register first.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

If you forget your password, it can be reset by clicking Request password/password reset

Appendix 4: PEP grading criteria

A screen shot of a sign

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Appendix 5 – Special Educational Needs and the Graduated Response

Supporting our children with Special Educational Needs -

**SEND local offer**

Most pupils with special educational needs and disabilities will be educated in mainstream settings.

We expect the vast majority of pupils will be educated in their home community and have their special educational needs and disabilities met by early years settings, schools or colleges, through a graduated response.

**What extra support can be provided?**

Settings can provide special educational needs (SEN) support for a child if their educational needs mean that they require additional or different support than is generally given to most children or young people of the same age. This is referred to as the [graduated response](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/advice.page?id=J9rS4V94_r4).

SEN support has a clear cycle of assessment of progress, planning and putting in place the appropriate support, and reviewing a child or young person’s progress. This is known as 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review'.

**EHCNA/ EHCP**

In a small number of cases, a child or young person may require a higher level of specialist resourcing which is different from and additional to that which is usually provided in school and it may be necessary for the local authority to complete an [Education and Health Care Needs Assessment](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/site.page?id=aYb6AfFVT1s) in order to determine whether it is necessary for provision to be made through an Education and Health Care Plan.

You will need to speak to us if the child or young person you are working with has an EHCP or is undergoing assessment for an EHCP and they have a change in circumstances. Further information can be found [here](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/site.page?id=aYb6AfFVT1s).

For example; if they move to a new address in or out of Staffordshire, they need to change school, they are struggling to attend school, they have a new health/ social care problem which may not be recorded within their EHCP or their EHCP needs updating.

**If a child or young person moves to a different address within Staffordshire**

If a child or young person moves to a different address within the boundaries of the county, then please contact us to let us know. In most cases, the child will be able to retain their current education placement, but we may need to look at any necessary transport arrangements. The sooner we know about this, the quicker we can respond. A change in transport can sometimes take up to 4 weeks to complete and we really do not want our children to be unable to access education for any length of time.

**If a child or young person moves out of the county**

If a child or young person with an EHCP moves out of Staffordshire, then we may need to review their education placement. If they are residing in Staffordshire, then the school placement may be able to be retained by re-organising transport arrangements. If a child or young person moves further afield, we have a different process to follow and must be contacted as soon as a move is considered. Any new school being considered, has a 15-day statutory consultation period to outline whether they can meet the child or young person’s needs followed by admission to school- **this can lead to a delay in accessing education**- please contact us asap.

Click [here](https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/staffordshire/hub/files/easy_read_-_starter_.pdf) for an easy-read guide to the EHCP process.

SEND Keyworkers: Each child with an EHCP will have a SEND keyworker who monitors and supports their individual case.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Appendix 6 – One Minute Guide | |
| |  | | --- | | **Virtual School for children in care and those previously in care.** | | |
|  |  |
| Legislative background and guidance frameworks | |
| Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014, Children and Social Work Act 2017  [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance for Local Authorities. February 2018.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)  [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities. February 2018](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children).  [Pupil premium: conditions of grant 2021 to 2022 for local authorities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022-for-local-authorities)  [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-effective-use-and-accountability#pupil-premium-plus)  [Recovery premium: conditions of grant for local authorities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-recovery-premium-funding-allocations/recovery-premium-conditions-of-grant-for-local-authorities)  [School-led tutoring guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1031705/School-Led_Tutoring_Guidance.pdf)  [Using pupil premium | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium?mc_cid=7dd3e8a0be&mc_eid=21c21929c6)  The statutory guidance requires schools to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after and previously looked-after children and to appoint a member of the teaching staff, known as the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (DT LAC), to ensure this duty is properly discharged.  Our children and those previously in care, start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and often have special educational needs. For these reasons this cohort of children are entitled to additional funding to help improve attainment by closing the gap between them and their peers. This funding is known as Pupil Premium Plus and is funded by the Department for Education.  As part of the local authority’s corporate parent role, the Virtual School Head is the educational advocate ensuring that children in care have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential wherever they live, or are educated, in the country. The Virtual School is the collective of all the children currently in care. The performance of the Virtual School is compared to other Virtual Schools and outcomes for children in care nationally.  For those children previously in care the Virtual School is a source of information, advice and guidance. | |
| Background in Staffordshire | |
| |  | | --- | | Staffordshire has a Virtual School Head in line with the statutory duty.  Our children are entitled to Pupil Premium Plus support of £1,500 per child, per annum. The Virtual School Head is responsible for distributing this funding to settings and schools to support children in reaching their potential. Funding is allocated in completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP).  Children *must* have an individual PEP each term and in Staffordshire this is completed face to face (minimum of once per year), or virtually, by key professionals involved with the child. This monitors the SMART targets set for the child and tracks their progress and attainment in school. | | |
| Who leads and who else is involved in Staffordshire Virtual School | |
| |  | | --- | | **Post** | | Virtual School Head | | Virtual School Deputy Head | | Statutory school age Coordinators | | SENCo | | Early Years/PLAC Coordinator | | Post 16 Coordinator | | Relational and Restorative Practice Coordinator | | RADY Coordinator | | Virtual School Advisors(Statutory school age) | | Virtual School Advisors(Early years) | | Virtual School Advisors(Post 16 and UASC) | | Virtual School Advisors(Relational & Restorative) | | Wider opportunities and events manager | | E-PEP administrator and business support |   Please see our website for individual contact details <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool> | |
| **Contact for more information** [virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk) | |

Appendix 7: Pupil Premium Plus Policy

**1 Introduction**

The Staffordshire Pupil Premium Plus policy is informed by two key Departments for Education (DfE) documents:

Pupil Premium DfE Conditions of Grant

[Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2025-to-2026)

Pupil Premium Virtual School Head Responsibilities 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities>

Pupil Premium overview

[Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium)

Throughout our policy, the Pupil Premium for Children Looked After will be referred to as Pupil Premium Plus to distinguish it from other forms of Pupil Premium allocation.

The changes are as follows:

* From 2023, 'Pupil Premium Plus' funding to support children and young people in care at school has increased to £2630 per child.
* Children and young people will be eligible from the first day of the care episode, rather than the previous criteria requiring a child to be in care for six months.
* The Local Authority that looks after the child will continue to be responsible for distributing the Pupil Premium Plus payments to schools and academies.
* The Virtual School Head Teacher is responsible for making sure that there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium Plus funding to benefit children looked after by their Authority.
* The grant must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve attainment “outcomes” and “narrow the gap” as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher.
* As a result, the PEP will need to be monitored even more closely by the Designated Teacher, the Virtual School team, the Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officers.
* The overall grant allocated to each Local Authority will be calculated on a per capita basis. However, the allocation of the grant must take account of the differing level of need for looked after children at different stages of their journey through care, managed through high quality Personal Education Plans.

**2. Pupil Premium Plus Policy**

2.1. Overall principles underpinning the allocation

* Looked after children have needs that can change rapidly during their time in care and will need differentiated funding accordingly.
* Looked after children are now eligible for funding from the first day of the care episode.
* Up to £500 per term will be allocated to the schools they attend both in and out of the local Authority. How the funding is used must linked to clear targets outlined in the e-PEP.
* The Virtual School Governing Body will agree the outline annual budget priorities for the use of centrally retained funding.
* The Head Teacher of the Virtual School will be accountable for managing the efficient use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding for the purpose it has been provided. Schools remain accountable for the educational attainment and progress of all disadvantaged pupils.
* Schools can apply for additional funding according to the needs of the child as a one-off intervention. This needs to be done in consultation with their local Virtual School Education Co-ordinator and linked to clear SMART targets outlined in the e-PEP
* The Local Authority is not permitted to carry forward funding held centrally into the following financial year. The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools to ensure that any underspend is used to pilot new approaches to promote positive educational outcomes for looked after children.

2.2. How and why will the amount of Pupil Premium Plus vary?

* Children may come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are behind academically.
* Children may have to move into or out of county in an emergency.
* Children may be placed out of Staffordshire in other Local Authorities where the level of support from Virtual School Teams may not be the same and who therefore will lose out without additional help.
* Children may have a significant and often delayed reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in episodes of very difficult behaviour in school.
* In view of this, it is expected that there will be differentiation in the level of additional funding and it will be allocated on a ‘needs-led basis’.
* Proposals to pool Pupil Premium Plus in a school or a school cluster to enhance services would be welcomed; providing the use is directly linked to the needs of looked after children as detailed in the PEP process.

2.3. Circumstances in which Pupil Premium Plus will not be provided

Pupil Premium Plus will not be used to double-fund or replace funding which has already have been allocated to the school to support the child for example:

To fund services that should be provided via an EHCP or an exceptional needs funding request.

Other statutory work e.g. speech and language or occupational therapy, statutory assessment or other support from health, CAMHS or education.

For interventions put in place that do not require any funding.

When the PEP action plan does not meet requirements (see section 3.1).

Decisions about the use of the funding must be based on a justifiable rationale discussed during the Personal Education Planning meeting and common sense must prevail.

Pupil Premium Plus funding must be used for interventions above and beyond what would normally be provided by the school for other pupils.

Whereas in the past, some schools have used the Pupil Premium Plus to fund interventions for other learners, interventions which had no link to the needs of looked after children will no longer be possible.

2.4. Activities covered by fostering allowances

All looked after children should be encouraged to participate in social and leisure activities to encourage them in their social and personal development as well as helping them build resilience within their own communities. Foster Carers receive fostering allowance that should cover the expenses for caring for a child and it is expected that some leisure activities will be paid for from the allowance.

On occasions there may be specific activities outlined in the e-PEP that improve self-esteem or social skills that would have a positive impact on educational attainment which foster carers will arrange beyond the school day. Where this has been agreed by all parties as an educational priority Pupil Premium Plus funding may be used. The use of funding would need to be clearly linked to the child’s targets in the e-PEP along with how it will contribute to improved educational attainment and outcomes.

Foster carers allowance and contracts with Independent Fostering Agencies and Children’s Homes include funding for school trips and residentials. In addition, there are arrangements to support one off “life time trips” through Children’ Social Care. Where carers are experiencing financial hardship there are provisions through Staffordshire Foster Service and through commissioners for IFAs and Children’s Homes to explore support as it is in the interests of our children to be able to participate in school and essential curriculum focused trips.

**3. Management and accountability**

Local Authority level:

The Virtual School Education Co-ordinators will approve expenditure for individual children up to £500 per term and up to £1000 additional funding in exceptional circumstances where it is clearly linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP.

The Virtual School Headteacher will approve any additional funding request over £1000 for an individual child.

The Virtual School Headteacher will approve expenditure in line with Virtual School priorities up to the value of £30,000. Any spend above this amount the VHT will seek approval in line with SCC scheme of delegation.

The Virtual School Headteacher is accountable to the Virtual School

Governing Body who will provide scrutiny for the expenditure of the

centrally retained budget on an annual basis.

School level:

The Designated Teacher will submit any funding requests linked to appropriate and SMART targets agreed as part of the e-PEP to the Virtual School for approval.

The Designated Teacher should report annually to their schools Governing Body on outcomes for looked after children and previously looked after children including the use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus. Please see Appendix 3 for report template.

3.1. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Pupil Premium Plus should be used to meet the needs identified in the e-PEP. This should accelerate learning and have clear quantitative targets for improvement, underpinned by well-targeted and identified support.

Pupil Premium Plus must be used to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:

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 where they are a barrier to learning.

Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider.

Examples of the types of activities that Pupil premium might be used to support children include.

Additional one to one tuition to support learning.

Additional support in school that will build a child or young person’s self-esteem, confidence or develop their learning skills e.g. pyramid clubs, nurture groups, peer mentoring.

Aspiration raising activities that will benefit the child or young person’s learning and development.

Extra learning resources that may support these individuals.

Additional support for vocational training eg equipment.

Alternative education packages.

Revision courses.

See Appendix 1 for guidance developed in partnership with social workers, carers and designated teachers.

**4.0 Allocation of funding to Schools:**

All Pupil Premium Plus funding for individual children should be applied for through the e-PEP system and be linked to appropriate and SMART targets agreed as part of the personal education planning process.

4.1 Staffordshire Schools

Maintained schools will receive up to £500 per term. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP approved by the Virtual School. Payments will be vired to the school’s budget.

Academies will receive up to £500 per term. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP approved by the Virtual School as part of the monthly payment’s routine. Details of the payment will be provided to the academy at the same time.

Additional funding from the centrally held resource to meet exceptional need should be discussed with the Virtual School Coordinator before any application is submitted through the e-PEP system. The request for additional funding from centrally held resources will be approved by the Virtual School Team.

Looked after children who enter care will be able to apply for funding through the e-PEP system. They are eligible for up to £500 for the current term from day one of their entry into care.

If there is a need to clarify what funding a school is providing from its own resources, the school may need to provide evidence to the Virtual School.

Impact of the use of funding should be reviewed at subsequent personal education planning meetings, and the SMART target should be marked as ‘achieved’ or ‘not achieved’.

4.2. Allocation of funding to Out of Authority (non-residential) Schools

The basic allocation of up to £500 per term will be paid to schools. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP approved by the Virtual School. Payments are made either to the Local Authority, where an agreement is in place for them to pass the funding onto their schools, or by a direct payment to the school either by BACS or cheque. Information on the payments will be emailed to either the LA or the school.

Additional funding from the centrally held resource to meet exceptional need should be discussed with the Virtual School before any application is submitted through the e-PEP system. The request for additional funding from centrally held resources will be approved by the Virtual School Team.

Looked after children who enter care will be able to apply for funding through the e-PEP system. They are eligible for up to £500 for the current term from day one of their entry into care.

Where there is a need to clarify what funding a school is providing from its own resources, the school may need to provide evidence to the Virtual School.

Impact of the use of funding should be reviewed at subsequent personal education planning meetings.

4.3. Allocation of funding for Independent Schools

We will provide Pupil Premium Plus and additional funding to independent providers only in exceptional circumstances because these placements are already funded at a high level by central budgets to deliver a tailored education provision to meet the individual’s needs. Any requests need to be discussed in advance with a Virtual School Representative.

Any requests will be reviewed by the VHT and the commissioner of the placement.

**5. Requests for additional resource from centrally held funding**

Children’s needs vary greatly depending on their individual circumstances in their journey through the care system. In certain exceptional circumstances, schools may require additional funding from the Virtual School to overcome barriers to learning. Any applications for additional funding should be discussed with your local Virtual School Education Co-ordinator

An application for additional funding should be wherever possible be discussed as part of a personal education planning meeting and applied for through the e-PEP target setting section.

The Personal Education Planning meeting is an opportunity to discuss and agree additional funding to meet the exceptional needs of the child. In an emergency, where a PEP Planning meeting cannot be held quickly, please contact the Virtual School to discuss before completing the application.

**6. Pupil Premium Plus for Children and Young People from other Local Authorities**

Different approaches to allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus Funding will be adopted by other Local Authorities who have freedom to administer funds according to their own policy.

Staffordshire schools that have Children and Young People looked after to other Local Authorities on their roll must contact the Virtual School Head from that Local Authority to request their Pupil Premium Plus policy. The name and contact details of Virtual School Heads in English Local Authorities can be found on the individual Virtual School Website.

**7. Promoting the best use of pupil premium plus**

Evidence based strategies.

Wherever possible we promote the issue of evidence informed practice to underpin Pupil Premium Plus funding is used

There is limited research available on strategies that promote the education of looked after children. There is some research of the beneficial impact of 1 to 1 tuition by a qualified teacher and paired reading.

The Rees centre in partnership with Oxford University and the University of Bristol published research in 2015 on “The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data”

[Linking care and educational data: the educational progress of looked after children in England | Rees Centre](https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/rees-centre/project/linking-care-and-educational-data-the-educational-progress-of-looked-after-children-in-england/)

This outlined the importance of understanding the impact of care factors on education. The Virtual School will continue to deliver joint training opportunities for Designated Teachers, foster carers and social workers to support a greater shared understanding of the experiences of looked after children and how these impacts on education. Good practice would show careful consideration of education and care perspectives to inform the use of pupil premium plus to set targets for looked after children.

What Works in Education for Children who have had Social Worker is a re-analysis of data from 63 randomised controlled trials, funded by the EEF, to look at the impacts of educational interventions on the attainment of young people who have had a social worker. The documents highlights some promising interventions.

<https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/what-works-in-education-for-children-who-have-had-social-workers/>

Many looked after children have mental health and wellbeing issues linked to their journey into care and can continue through their care journey. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence has published guidelines in November 2015 “Children’s attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care” This highlights the importance of supporting children with attachment difficulties in education settings. [Overview | Children’s attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care | Guidance | NICE](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng26)

**8. Innovative and Individual Approaches to Pupil Premium Plus**

We understand that the best use of Pupil Premium Plus is based on a very individual approach, is flexible and aspirational. We would like to celebrate excellent practice where schools have shown outstanding and individual tailored approach to the use of pupil premium plus.

**9. Voice of the Child**

Audits across all aspects of Staffordshire Social Care services consistently identify that positive outcomes for children and targets are more likely to be met where the voice of the child is listened to and informs their plans. Virtual School audits of personal education plans and the use of Pupil Premium Plus have had the same findings. Where the voice of the child is listened to and acted upon, educational outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

PEPs are graded inadequate where the voice of the child is not included in shaping their education plans.

**10. Central Pupil Premium Plus Allocation.**

The Governing Body have agreed the following principles for the use of the central allocation of pupil premium plus.

Additional support for individual pupils at particular risk of poor educational outcomes e.g. risk of exclusion, emergency school transition support.

Central based whole or target population initiatives to promote attainment e.g. tuition for children not reaching age related expectations, Letterbox Reading Scheme.

Out of school learning opportunities e.g. transition summer school for year 6 and year 11,

Training focused on improving educational outcomes for looked after children for social workers, carers, independent reviewing officers, education partners including designated teachers, school leaders and governors.

Partnership working with groups of schools to develop innovative ways to support looked after pupils.

Developing attachment aware settings and services for looked after children.

Initiatives focused on minimising risk factors including, children placed out of the local authority boundaries and reducing child sexual exploitation e.g. out of county support, positive activities for unaccompanied asylum seekers, year 6 transition support.

Developing school use of self-assessment approaches to improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

Opportunities to promote wider learning and engagement in education.

**Pupil Premium Plus Guide for Looked After Children.**

Your school has up to £500 per term to support you to do your best at school.\*

The funding is there to help you overcome barriers to your learning. Having good skills in maths, reading and writing are a priority.

Your social worker, carer and designated teacher will work closely together to plan how the funding will be used to support you at your personal education planning meeting.

It is really important that your views on school, learning and what you want to do in the future are heard so that they can be considered carefully and help them to shape your plan.

It is really important that everyone works with you to support you to be your very best at school.

You might be doing very well at school, but the funding is still available for you and could be used to help you do even better, to develop new skills and have new experiences that may support you in the future. Our expectation is that RADY (Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) is a golden thread through all PEPs and encourage schools to access [these resources](https://challengingeducation.co.uk/professional-learning-programme/) from Challenging Education.

Sometimes you may need additional support if things are not going so well at school, we will work with you, your social worker and the school to see if some additional pupil premium plus funding will help you to get back on track at school.

\*If you are in an independent school we will review whether up to £500 per term is needed as you may already have in place a specialist education provision found for you to help you be your best. If pupil premium plus funding is requested to help you, we will consider the request very carefully.

**11. Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children**

From September 2018 the Virtual Head Teacher has new statutory functions relating to previously looked after children. The functions are primarily advice and sign posting.

Pupil Premium Plus of £2,630 is available for Post LAC pupils. This is paid directly to schools as part of the general pupil premium allocation.

The Virtual School will promote good practice in the use of Pupil Premium for previously looked after children.

See appendix 2 for principles for allocating Pupil Premium for previously looked after children where the local authority is arranging education provision.

**12. Early Years Pupil Premium**

There is an allocation of £570 per year for looked after children accessing early years provision funded via the Nursery Education Fund for three- and four-year-olds.

The use of the funding should be evidenced in the early years e-PEP and linked to a SMART Target.

Payments will be paid to settings by the local authority that they are based in. For Staffordshire settings this is paid as a top up to the hourly rate. For settings out of county the setting will need to invoice the Virtual School who will arrange payment following review of the e-PEP.

For previously looked after children the early years pupil premium is paid directly to the setting in accordance with their local authority arrangements. The Virtual School will promote good practice in the use of Early Years Pupil Premium for previously looked after children.

**13. Post-16 Pupil Premium**

There is an allocation of £300 per year for looked after children who are post-16, regardless of what education, employment or training they are assessing.

The use of the funding should be evidenced in the post-16 e-PEP and clearly linked to a SMART Target.

Payments will be made to educational settings, where relevant. If a young person is not in any educational setting, funding will be paid to the relevant Social Care team.

**Appendix 1: Pupil Premium Plus Use**

We are regularly requested to share information on the use of Pupil Premium Plus. This is not an exhaustive list, but a guide based on the experience of designated teachers, social workers, carers and the Virtual School governing body.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil Premium Plus Areas of Spend** | **Agreed examples of expenditure** | **Excluded areas of expenditure** |
| **Academic interventions** | * 1:1 tuition * EPATT * Targeted interventions * Exam preparation support/ revision support * Educational apps and revision guides | Universal entitlement offer |
| **Emotional wellbeing to support engagement in education** | The commissioning of Tier 1 and Tier 2 emotional and mental health services such as counselling, mentoring, behaviour support that are not available through locally and centrally commissioned provision e.g. [Staffordshire Connects](https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/advice.page?id=0rWBovMeR5E)  - Specific therapeutic support e.g. Lego Therapy, Play Therapy, Art Therapy.  -Mentoring, coaching  -ELSA support, regulation  -Mindfulness  -Key adult time for check-ins | Giving access to pastoral support or clubs that are available to all pupils. |
| **Enrichment and engagement** | Music lessons  -Drama coaching (accredited)  -Accredited sports clubs e.g. gymnastics, referee, D of E,  -Summer Schools | Carers have allowances to support regular clubs e.g., swimming, football, Guides etc |
| **Staff training** | Whole school or individual staff training to benefit our child |  |
| **Transition support** | Additional visits, or staff accompanying on school transition sessions |  |
| **Technology and equipment** | Laptop or IT equipment  Necessary equipment for vocational training, as agreed by Education Coordinator. | School equipment should be paid for by parent/ carers e.g., DT equipment and essential stationery, e.g., school bag, pencil case, pens, pencil, calculator etc. |
| **Transport** | None | To be explored in line with local authority transport policy and social care carer agreements. |
| **Clothing /Uniform** | None | To be covered by parent/ carers. |
| **Trips** | None | To be covered by carer allowances. For big ticket trips, discussion with social care about potential contribution to the cost. |
| **School Meals** | None | To be covered by parent/ carers. |

**Appendix 2**

**Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children Local Authority Allocation Principles.**

*The PPG conditions of grant state clearly that PP+ is paid to schools and cannot be allocated to home-schooled pupils. (see condition 4 re allocation to mainstream schools and condition 5 re academies of the Conditions of Grant 20/21:* [*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021)*).*

*There are exceptions listed in paragraph 9 of the conditions of grant where it states “ESFA allocates PPG to each local authority for Ever 6 FSM, Ever 6 service child and post-LAC pupils in general hospital schools and alternative provision settings not maintained by the local authority but where the local authority pays full tuition fees”:*

* The final decision as to how this funding is used is made by the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement.
* Pupil Premium is awarded in recognition that many adopted and permanently placed children need extra support in education because of the circumstances that led to them being placed into care and later being adopted or being placed on a SGO or CAO.
* For children with an EHCP the annual review will consider any additional education needs arising from the impact of the child’s care history and any allocated grant funding will be used to meet these needs. This will be reviewed annually as part of the annual review process.
* For children without an EHCP the Virtual School will review the education provision using the PLAC Education Form and will consider any additional education needs arising from impact of the child’s care history and any grant funding will be used to meet these needs. This will be reviewed annually by the Virtual School.
* A partnership approach will be used to explore needs seeking the views of parents, carers, education providers and any social care professionals supporting the child as appropriate.
* Evidenced based strategies and interventions should be used wherever possible.
* Strategies to gather evidence of impact needs to be built into the planning and review arrangements.
* Advice on the use of Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children can be gained from the Virtual School Previously Looked After Children Co-ordinator.

**Appendix 3 : Designated Teacher Annual Report for Looked After & Previously Looked After Children**

Information for Governors on their roles and responsibilities in relation to Looked After and Previously Looked After Children is contained in the following statutory guidance. **“The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children” *Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities 2018*** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>

All governing bodies should make arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of the school’s provision for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

This document provides a suggested format for the annual report and a checklist for the nominated school governor. It could be adapted to provide a termly update if required

The purpose of the report is to:

* Enable the governing body to hold the school to account for the outcomes of looked after & previously looked after children
* Highlight the work of the Designated Teacher
* Inform the school’s self-evaluation
* Be part of the school’s evidence base for Ofsted

The governing body:

* Should nominate a specific governor with responsibilities for looked After and P
* previously Looked After Children. (good practice)
* Should ensure that school policies acknowledge the needs of looked after and previously looked after children. Ensure they are regularly reviewed
* Should ensure that additional support is offered to meet the needs of children in this group who are at risk of underachieving and that the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to increase accessibility for vulnerable pupils
* Ensure that the Designated Teacher’s statutory report is considered annually and minute any resulting actions
* Can also keep up to date on anonymised issues impacting on the attainment and progress of looked after and previously looked after children

***NB – A school may not have any looked after children on role. However, governors should be mindful that a child can become looked after at any time and without warning. They should therefore be satisfied that arrangements for the children are in place****.*

**For more information please check the Virtual School Website: http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool**

|  |
| --- |
| **“The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children” *Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities 2018*** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>  **The role of the governing body - they must ensure that:**   * The school has a designated member of staff “Designated teacher” (DT) in place to promote the educational achievement of this group * The designated teacher undertakes appropriate training * The governing body and the designated teacher must have regard to the above guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the secretary of state   **Good practice** **would expect:**   * That as a minimum, governors consider at least an annual report from the designated teacher; and act on any issues it raises in order to support the designated teacher and maximise the impact of their role * A regular link between the designated teacher and nominated governor   **The role of the Designated Teacher within the school:**  **The designated teacher should have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how looked after children learn and achieve. The designated teacher should:**     * Be a central point of initial contact within the school to ensure that arrangements are joined up and any disruption to a child’s learning is minimised * Have a school leadership role and take lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of every looked after and previously looked after child, including working with the Virtual school headteacher * promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how looked after/previously looked after children learn * monitor the progress and attendance of all looked after/previously looked after children in order to reduce any attainment gap * make sure each young person has a voice in setting learning targets * be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children * ensure that staff are informed, trained and updated on issues related to this cohort * make sure that looked after children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home * See that each looked after child has an up to date pep within timescales and take lead responsibility for its’ development and implementation * Ensure that school records are kept up to date and transferred speedily when a child moves * Ensure that pupil premium plus (PP+) funding is used to support the learning of each looked after/previously looked after child * For previously looked after children, understand the importance of involving the child’s parents of guardians in decisions affecting their child’s education, and be a contact where they might require advice or have concerns. The Virtual School have available a Previously Looked After Children Education Planning Tool which is free to use. Available via our website or email   [Julie.roper@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.roper@staffordshire.gov.uk) Whilst this is not mandatory, it is considered best practice. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Report to Governors** | |
| Name of School: |  |
| Date report prepared: | Report for the academic year/term: |
| Prepared for the full Governing Body Meeting to be held on: |  |
| Name of Designated Teacher and Position within the School, e.g. Phase Leader, SENCO, Assistant Headteacher: |  |
| Name of Nominated Governor |  |
| *N.B. Information within the report and background details are confidential. Names and specific circumstances must not be discussed.* | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section 1: Basic Information** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Numbers of Looked after children |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Total |
| School Years | EYFS | R | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |  |

|  |
| --- |
| List the Local Authorities responsible for the looked after children in the school : |
|  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Numbers of previously looked after children |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Total |
| School Years | EYFS | R | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Overview** | **looked after/previously looked after** **No’s** |
| Entering the school during the academic year |  |
| Leaving the school during the academic year |  |
| Children who have been in care for 1 year or more |  |
| Children identified as Gifted, Able or Talented: |  |
| Children with a Statement of SEN or an EHC plan |  |
| **Exclusions** | Looked after/ Previously looked after No’s |
| Number of individuals excluded |  |
| Number permanently excluded |  |
| Total days lost |  |
| Number who have moved school during the academic year: |  |
| **Attendance** | Looked after/previously looked after No’s |
| Attendance for last full academic year |  |
| Attendance all other pupils, not looked after, (same period) |  |
| Unauthorized absence, looked after/previously looked after, |  |
| Unauthorized absence all other pupils not looked after, (same period) |  |
| How does the pattern of attendance and exclusion relate to that of all children in your school? |  |
| How many looked after/previously looked after children on part time or reduced timetables: |  |
| **Section 1: Suggested actions for the Governing Body:** | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section 2: Special Educational Needs/EHCP** | |
| How many looked after/previously looked after children have a Statement of SEND or an EHCP? |  |
| How is the school meeting the needs of the identified children? |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section 3: Attainment and Progress** | | | | |
| Number of looked after/previously looked after children in the school: | Achieving in line with peers | | Achieving **above** age-related expectation | Achieving **Below** age- related expectation |
|  |  | |  |  |
| How was impact of the Pupil Premium/interventions used to close the education gap for looked after/previously looked after children, (particularly Literacy and Numeracy)? | | | | |
| Please comment on any usage of additional funding from the virtual school to support individual pupils | | | | |
| Intervention | | Impact (qualitative and quantitative) | | |
|  | |  | | |
|  | |  | | |
|  | |  | | |
|  | |  | | |
|  | |  | | |
| **Section 2/3: Suggested actions for the Governing Body:** | | | | |

**It will be helpful to append an extract from the school tracking system to illustrate the achievement and progress of looked after/previously looked after children by year group and/ or key stage.**

|  |
| --- |
| **Section 4: Roles and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked after/previously looked after children** |
| **Report any workload, or other challenges, relating to the role of the Designated teacher or other staff, arising as a result of the number of looked after/previously looked after children on roll at the school and the number of local authorities involved.** |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **List the training (with dates) that the Designated Teacher for looked after/previously looked after children has attended during the academic year.** |
| e.g. any offered by the LA/ Virtual school, attended D.T network meetings, or worked with the V.S to complete an audit of provision (audit format for ongoing annual self- audits available from Staffordshire Virtual school) |
| **Staffordshire Trauma Informed & Attachment Aware Pathway**  Award gained/in progress: (give details)   * School have completed an audit Y/N * School has a lead member staff trained and leading practice Y/N * Whole school staff have had attachment and trauma training Y/N * Have implemented a focused piece of research or project work Y/N * Have showcased and shared their practice with other colleagues Y/N |
| **Section 4: Suggested actions for the Governing Body:** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Section 5: Personal Education Plans (PEPs)** |
| **Please report any issues arising from PEPs:**   * Are PEPs reviewed termly * Do young people entering care have a PEP in place within a week * Are governor reviews of PEPs routinely undertaken * Are all relevant staff involved in the implementation of the PEP * Is each young person consulted and invited to attend their PEP * Are carers involved * Use of EPLAC for those children previously looked after |
|  |
| Please list any special arrangements made during COVID |
| **Section 5: Suggested actions for the Governing Body:** |

**CHECKLIST FOR NOMINATED SCHOOL GOVERNOR**