

DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILDREN WE CARE FOR AND PREVIOUSLY CARED FOR CHILDREN UPDATE



Issue 49

Term 5
2024/25



The aim of this publication is to provide some information updates, contacts, useful strategies and ideas to support the work you do with our pupils. Watch out for each edition and do pass on, print and display. The more we can raise awareness, the better equipped schools are to do their best for our children. Please also take time to look at our webpages – [click here](#). If you have any questions/requests for content of upcoming issues, contact virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

CONTACT US

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Training Programme 2024/25

*** BOOK HERE ***

Upcoming training:

Tues 22nd April and Thurs 8th May

PACE for school staff

Thurs 16th October

Oxfordshire Virtual School Conference

Theme: *Transforming lives through
human connection*

**We will share our updated 2025-26
training and support offer with you in an
email very soon and in next term's
newsletter.**

2025/26 Pupil Premium Plus for Children We Care For

Now that the 2025/26 financial year has started, settings now have a full Pupil Premium Plus pot for Children We Care For (CWCF). Summer Term funding can be useful to bridge the transition between year groups with interventions such as tutoring to boost confidence, key worker support, time with new teachers, etc. Are there any trips, visits or other enrichment opportunities coming up in the Summer Term that your children would benefit from? You may also think about how you can use funding strategically to upskill new and existing staff in September.

For CWCF attending primary and secondary settings, their individual 2025/26 Pupil Premium Plus allocation is:

- Oxfordshire-based: £2000*
- Out of County: £2500*
- Early Years - £570

* N.B. Year 11s are only entitled to 1/3 of the above as Post-16 funding comes from a separate pot.

For more information, refer to our updated [Pupil Premium Plus Policy](#).

Oxfordshire Virtual School presents:

2025 Annual Conference

Transforming Lives Through Human Connection: Empowering Care-Experienced Children to Achieve Their Dreams



Join Oxfordshire Virtual School and contributors for our 2025 Annual Conference - a day of connection, learning and sharing of best practice.

This conference is dedicated to exploring the transformative power of human connection in the lives of care-experienced children.

When people feel truly seen and supported, extraordinary things happen.

With insights from a guest keynote speaker, along with practice activities and collaborative discussions, we will explore the vital roles that educators, caregivers and community members play in nurturing the holistic growth and development of children in need and those with care experience. Our focus will be on practical strategies and innovative approaches that empower these young people to overcome challenges, build resilience and confidently pursue their aspirations.

Keynote speaker:



Ashley John-Baptiste is a BBC reporter, presenter (The One Show / BBC News / Con Or Cure / Expert Witness / For Love Or Money) and author of 'Looked After: A Childhood in Care'.

From the age of two until he was 18, Ashley grew up in four foster families and spent two years in a residential care home. He was suspended several times from secondary school, and had already been issued a final warning when the opportunity arose to visit a summer school organised by the Sutton Trust at Cambridge University. This was when he realised that he would have to take responsibility for himself and that he had the potential to succeed.



Transforming Lives
Through Human
Connection: Empowering
Care-Experienced Children
to Achieve Their Dreams

Thursday 16th October
09:00 - 15:30

Unipart House
Garsington Road
Cowley
Oxford
OX4 2PG

Join us as we come together to share insights, celebrate successes and commit to making a lasting impact on the lives of children in need and care-experienced children through the power of human connection. Together, we can create a supportive environment where every child is encouraged to dream big and achieve their best outcomes.

Book here

[Oxfordshire | Education Services](#)

Tel: 03300 249046

Email:

OxfordshireEducationServices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

** BOOKINGS NOW OPEN **

Our 2025 Annual Conference will be taking place on Thursday 16th October at Unipart House. We understand that this is a change from the date promoted in the previous newsletter. The change is due to the availability of our keynote speaker, Ashley John-Baptiste.

Open the email attachment that accompanies this newsletter to view a clear copy of the poster on the left.

Primary settings will be entitled to 1 free space for their DT on a first-come-first-served basis. Secondary and FE settings will be entitled to up to 2 free spaces on a first-come-first-served basis.

Go to: [Oxfordshire Virtual School Conference 2025 | Oxfordshire | Education Services](#)

Transition Planning for Terms 5 and 6

Summer Term is a key time for planning new beginnings and endings. Change is unsettling and for many children a move up a year or to another setting is tricky. The Designated Teacher plays an important role in helping our children prepare for their next steps.

Designated Teachers will know the story of each child and will be able to notice changes in behaviour or motivation and recognise these as potential anxieties about the end of the school year.

Look out for tummy aches, attendance wobbles, lack of motivation, bravado or ambivalence. All these may be masking feelings a child may not be able to articulate. **Year 6s and Year 11s particularly will be realising that they are leaving.** It is a good time to hold a PEP and make sure there is good communication and planning between year groups and settings.

Don't leave things to chance - invite the DT from the new school or college to the review, set-up extra visits and talk to staff in the next year group or setting so there so someone holding the case and keeping that pupil in mind. Talk to your Virtual School case workers for ideas about how best to support a smooth transition.

- ☐ Create a Transition Pupil Profile – see Virtual School [PEP Toolkit](#) for more guidance and templates.
- ☐ Keep carers or parents up-to-date and listen to their worries and hopes.
- ☐ Liaise with the SENCO for identification and sharing of SEND information.
- ☐ Booster groups and 1-1 tuition are great at transition times.
- ☐ Plan for endings – don't forget opportunities to say goodbye such as creating a memory book, signing a card, special goodbye sessions with key adults in school. This makes a huge difference to our children.

Y6 and Y11 Transition Profiles

Transition profiles for Year 6s and Year 11s need to be written for all our young people moving on this September. The templates can be found [here](#). Once completed, the profiles need to be uploaded into the documents section of the ePEP. Please contact your Virtual School case holders for support (if needed) and feel free to share the profile by email with them. We need profiles in place by the end of this term.

Policies and End of Year Reporting Expectations

Have senior leaders and governors reviewed all school policies considering the needs of children we care for, previously cared for children, children with a social worker and children in kinship care? If not, please refer to:

- [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#)
- [Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)

What we know is that the above guidance is being reviewed by the Department for Education to take into account changes outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which is due to come into force in September 2026.

Do you have a DSL report template to support your annual report to governors? If not, [click here](#) and scroll down to the 'School Governors' section for an example you can use.

Year 11s

Good luck to all Year 11s as we approach exam season. Please continue to encourage them to attend additional revision sessions, support with revision timetables and exam technique and put in further one-to-one tuition, where necessary. See overleaf for upcoming open days/events.

Post 16 Plans: Hopefully, your Year 11s will now have a conditional offer from a college or Sixth Form, but if not, please encourage and support them to apply or follow up with applications **as soon as possible**. Please do let the social worker and Virtual School caseworker know the details when an application has been made.

Any Year 11s with EHCPs: The deadline for the Post-16 destination to be named on the EHCP has now passed. If there are still concerns about your Year 11 not having a clear plan for next year, if funding has not yet been approved, or you are concerned that things have changed significantly, please flag this up with the EHCP Caseworker, copying in the Virtual School caseworker. For mainstream colleges, your young people will still need to apply to their chosen course, ensuring they mention having an EHCP on the application.

Thinking ahead to Results' Day: It's really important that your young people plans how they are going to collect their results on **Thursday 21st August**. If they are not able or willing to go in person, please help them arrange in advance how their results will be collected or sent to them, especially if they are moving over the summer. Ideally, they need to receive them on the day, so that they can submit their results to college to enrol in their chosen course. Young people have sometimes missed out or gone on waiting lists when they have not enrolled on Results' Day or the day after. They should plan to enrol **in-person** at the college, as sometimes the online enrolment can be unreliable. **It's important that we also receive a copy of their results on Results' Day so that we can support those who need it.** An email will be sent out nearer the time with instructions and a link to our Results' Form which we ask you or your Exams Officer to complete on Results' Day.

Mock Results: If these have not been included on a recent PEP, please send these to the Virtual School caseholder, including a full list of qualifications they are expected to achieve. Please use these results to measure whether they are on track to meet the entry requirements for their Post-16 course and put in additional support where needed.

PEPs and Transition Meetings: Please arrange a third PEP or transition meeting to take place towards the end of the year, after exams have finished. The DT at the college or Post-16 destination should be invited. If a full PEP is not needed (e.g. if no further PP+ funding is required), this [Year 11 Transition Planning Form](#) can be used to record the meeting instead of the ePEP. Please also use the [Transition Profile](#) in place of the Pupil Voice sheet.

There are more **College Open Events** coming up. The more visits your children in Year 10 and 11 can make to the different Post-16 destinations, the easier their transition will be, so please do encourage them to go along with support.

CITY OF OXFORD COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:

City Centre Campus, Oxpens Road, Oxford OX1 1SA
[City of Oxford College - Wednesday 23rd April 4:30 - 7pm](#)

Blackbird Leys Technology Campus, Cuddesdon Way, Oxford OX4 6HN
[Blackbird Leys Campus - Wednesday 7th May 4:30 - 7pm](#)

BANBURY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:

Banbury College, Broughton Road, Banbury OX16 9QA
[Banbury and Bicester College - Wednesday 30th April 4:30 - 7pm](#)

ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:

Abingdon College, Wootton Road, Abingdon OX14 1GG
[Abingdon College - Wednesday 18th June 3:30 - 7pm](#)

Witney College, 6, Holloway Road, Witney OX28 6NE
[Witney College - Wednesday 18th June 3:30 - 7pm](#)

Bicester Construction Skills Centre, 126 Churchill Road, Bicester OX26 4XD
[Bicester Construction Skills Centre - Wednesday 25th June 4 - 7pm](#)

OUFC Advanced Football Programme Trials, Oxford United's Bangkok Glass Training Complex, Oxford, OX4 2RY

[OUFC Advanced Football Programme Trials - Wednesday 9th April 12 - 3pm](#) ([Sign up here](#))

THE HENLEY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:

The Henley College, 1 Deanfield Avenue, Henley-On-Thames RG9 1UH
[The Henley College - Thursday 24th April 5:30 - 8pm](#)

Please get in touch if you have any questions or concerns about supporting your young person with their plans for next year.

Latest School Readiness Newsletter



[Go to this Sway](#)

Building Connections: A Collaborative Event for Adopters in Education



On Tuesday 25th March, representatives from the Virtual School, ATTACH Team and Adopt Thames Valley co-hosted an evening get-together for adopters of school-aged children who work in education at the Westgate Collaboration Space. This gathering provided a wonderful opportunity to share experiences related to education, reflect on what's working well (and what isn't), and collaborate on next steps.

The event's journey began when a Headteacher, who is also an adoptive parent, reached out to the Virtual School. Building connections and fostering understanding within this unique community feels like a step in the right direction. Indeed, it was very well received.

A huge thank you to everyone who participated and contributed.

Here are some of the pledges made during the event:

- ☐ Revise existing guidance documents related to previously cared for children, including our PEP-like template. Form a working party to develop resources.
- ☐ Initiate early engagement with adopters and special guardians post-Order (not before). As part of this, provide a 'goodie bag' with sources of support and bitesize guidance document.
- ☐ Establish networks for professionals who understand and can offer support and practical advice.
- ☐ Build on our existing training by developing a learning module for all school staff on best practices when working with care-experienced children, including a 7-minute briefing.
- ☐ Review training available for governors on their duties in relation to care-experienced children.
- ☐ Participate in National Adoption Week activities and do more to promote best practice regarding education at this time, and throughout the year (in collaboration with our Comms Team).
- ☐ Organise a similar event for special guardians and kinship carers.

Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Cared For Children

From April 2025, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation for children adopted from care, children who left care under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and children who left care under a Child Arrangement Order (CAO) will be £2,630.

For more information on how to access and utilise this funding, visit our [Previously cared for children | Oxfordshire County Council](#) webpage.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

After some delay and worry, it was recently announced that the ASGSF will continue into financial year 2025/26. For more information on this, also visit our [Previously cared for children | Oxfordshire County Council](#) webpage.

Year 9 Aspirations Audit

We recently conducted an Aspirations Audit by analysing the most recent Personal Education Plan (PEP) for 45 Year 9 CWCF (Children We Care For), so those aged 14. This was something recommended following a visit by Mark Riddell OBE.

Our findings reveal that **a significant proportion of these children have special educational needs**, with 42% having an EHC plan and 36% on SEN Support. When asked about their future aspirations, 24% of our young people either didn't respond or were unsure of their career goals. **Among those who did respond, the career interests were diverse:**



Overall, the career interests of this year group can be summed up as **a mix of creative, practical and service-oriented aspirations.**

A large majority (67%) of the young people did not know what qualifications or experience they need to achieve their career goals. Most have not had any work experience yet, with many indicating that it takes place in Year 10. Additionally, many have not had the chance to visit universities or engage in university activities, though some are interested in doing so. While some have received career guidance from supportive adults, many have not had recent career guidance interviews. Given that many schools/settings don't offer work experience or careers guidance until Key Stage 4, this wasn't surprising. **Why can't we start earlier? Would this not motivate some more?**

Year 9 Aspirations Audit



Empowering Our Young People for Future Success

The [Gatsby Benchmark](#) is the gold standard framework that schools should strive to achieve for Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance (CEIAG) for all young people. However, **children we care for require additional support to build self-belief and confidence in accessing careers advice.** Unlike their less vulnerable peers, they need to be consistently reminded of their strengths and encouraged to aim high.

Please keep this in mind and ensure that your colleagues are aware that our young people need more time and attention to help them think about their careers and future planning.

Here are some strategies you can adopt to raise our young people's aspirations and nurture their ambitions:

- **Inspiring Role Models and Mentors:** Showcase diverse paths to success through role models from various fields. They provide tangible examples of achievement, instilling the belief that success is attainable.
- **Encouraging Exploration and Exposure:** Expose students to a wide range of experiences through field trips, guest speakers, workshops and cultural exchanges to ignite curiosity and introduce different professions.
- **Setting High, Attainable Goals:** Teach students to set both short-term and long-term goals, fostering their aspirations.
- **Providing Supportive Environments:** Encourage open dialogue, celebrate achievements and offer resources and guidance to help students overcome obstacles, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.
- **Extracurricular Activities and Personal Development:** Allow students to explore interests beyond academics, leading to the discovery of untapped talents and personal growth.
- **Building a Growth Mindset:** Teach students that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and hard work, cultivating resilience and a willingness to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth.

By implementing these strategies, you can help our young people to aspire higher and achieve their dreams.

Children Dealing with Loneliness – NSPCC

Loneliness is a difficult feeling for anyone, so it's not surprising that children and young people in care can really struggle when they feel lonely. By learning more about loneliness, settings can reflect on how to go about combatting it. The Campaign to End Loneliness defines this feeling as: 'a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that we have, and those that we want'.

While loneliness can be caused by being physically alone, being alone doesn't necessarily lead to feeling lonely. Sometimes children can feel lonely even if they're often with other people. This is especially true for children we care for, who experience unique challenges that contribute to feelings of loneliness. They might be feeling this way if they don't feel properly seen or understood, which can be exacerbated by frequent changes in caregivers or living situations.

For children we care for, the sense of not belonging or being different from their peers can intensify feelings of isolation. Loneliness can look and feel different for everyone, but if you're worried about a child or young person, it's good to talk to them about what they might be feeling and experiencing. Open and empathetic conversations can help them feel more connected and supported, reducing the impact of loneliness on their well-being. The NSPCC's new guidance on this issue is well worth a read - find it by following the link below:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/how-help-child-feels-lonely>

Relate to Educate

“Relationships matter: the currency for systemic change is trust, and trust comes through forming healthy, working relationships. People, not programs, change people.” – Bruce D. Perry



For more information to support you and your school in **understanding and embedding relational approaches in your setting**, refer to this excellent guidance put together by Wakefield Educational Psychology Service [click here](#)

Contact Laura East laura.east@oxfordshire.gov.uk to find out more about your school participating on Oxfordshire's [Relational Schools Programme](#).

OSCB Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board](#)

Free downloadable resources

[Click here](#) to view free downloadable behaviour resources from the Beacon School.

Have you any children with a parent in prison?

If so, you must [click here](#)





Becoming a Trauma-informed Restorative Educator

Wednesday 7 May 2025, 12-1pm (Online)

<https://www.minthouseoxford.co.uk/events/2025/5/7/becoming-a-trauma-informed-restorative-educator>

Margaret Thorsborne and Joe Brummer will discuss how individual educators can bring trauma informed restorative practice into their day-to-day work.

Margaret and Joe will share theory and research from their book [*Becoming a Trauma-informed Restorative Educator: Practical Skills to Change Culture and Behaviour*](#), including insights from neuroscience and theories about shame.

More info and booking: <https://www.minthouseoxford.co.uk/events/2025/5/7/becoming-a-trauma-informed-restorative-educator>