

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



Issue 51

Term 1  
2025/26



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](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## CONTACT US

### Website:

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool)

Direct Line: 01865 328550

### Email:

[virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Training Programme 2025/26

\* **BOOK HERE** \*

Upcoming training:

Weds 17<sup>th</sup> Sept

eGov training for Designated Teachers

Weds 24<sup>th</sup> Sept

Designated Teacher (DT) Induction

Thurs 16<sup>th</sup> October

Oxfordshire Virtual School Conference

Theme: *Transforming lives through  
human connection*

Tues 4<sup>th</sup> Nov and Tues 18<sup>th</sup> Nov

PACE for school staff

## **IMPORTANT: ePEP Platform Transition – Action Required**

As previously communicated, we are moving to a new platform for ePEP and attendance monitoring from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. The new contract has been awarded to [eGov Solutions Ltd](#), a provider already working with 87 Local Authorities across England.

If you've supported children from other local authorities, you may already be familiar with eGov. While the platform offers the same core functions (and more), it has a different interface - so it's essential that all Designated Teachers (DTs), both new and experienced, prioritise training. See below options:

- **Self-help materials:** Pre-recorded guidance from eGov will be shared in-line with logins and passwords.
- **Live online training:** Scheduled for Wednesday 17th September, 3.30–4.30pm. [Book on here!](#)
- Additional sessions will be arranged, as needed.

Please speak to your **Virtual School Link Worker** if you need support or have questions.



# The Role of the Virtual School

[Click here](#) for more  
information on the role  
of the Virtual School

## Oxfordshire Virtual School Team 2025-26:

**Headteacher (Interim):** Clare Pike

**Primary Lead / SENCo:** Sarah Hazell

**Primary and Early Years case holders:** Kate Hardy, Ruth Thornburn and Verity Banbury

**Secondary Lead:** Lucy Byford

**Secondary case holders:** Georgina Trafford, Jen Tupper, Izzi Crowther and Kim Taylor

**Year 11 Transition Worker:** Izzi Crowther

**Post-16 Lead / EET:** Mark Walker

**Post-16 / EET case holders:** Faye Barker, Nichola Collins, Rod Noble and Sarah Kelly

**Extended Duties Lead Officer:** Sandra Miller

**Extended Duties Education Officer (Year 1 to 9):** Anne Gibson-Sexton

**Extended Duties Education Officer (Year 10 and 11):** Susan Long

**Performance Data Lead:** Emma Comer

**Administrator:** Debbie Hewings

There is a wealth of experience in the team across all phases of education. If you need advice or support, please do get in touch –  
[virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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 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 reflective activities, creative workshops 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. The day will include Appreciative Inquiry, body mapping exercises, a Conversation Café and open space discussions - each designed to deepen understanding, build relationships and inspire innovative practice.

Our focus will be on practical strategies and approaches that empower these young people to overcome challenges, build resilience and confidently pursue their aspirations. We hope that attendees will leave with renewed energy, actionable insights and a stronger sense of community in their role as corporate parents.

#### 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:OxfordshireEducationServices@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **\*\* BOOKINGS STILL OPEN \*\***

Our 2025 Annual Conference will be taking place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October at Unipart House.

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](#)

## Congratulations!

We are immensely proud of our children and young people and, with your support, will do whatever we can to ensure every one of them is enabled to move closer to where they want to be. Thank you for everything you put in before and throughout the stressful assessment periods for our Year 6s, Year 11s, Year 13s and all others who sat exams.

Click on the link below for a snapshot of 2024-25 Virtual School success:

[\(12\) Celebrating educational success: A Level, T level, GCSE and VTQ results | LinkedIn](#)

For many of our young people, simply sitting exams is a huge achievement. Especially when you consider what we know from [experience and research](#).



## Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Cared for Children

To secure the above Pupil Premium Grant for children subject to an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order or other Child Arrangement Order (where a child is not returned to their birth parents), it is the responsibility of the educational setting to prompt parents and guardians to inform them of their child's status before the January census.

For more information, visit: [Previously cared for children | Oxfordshire County Council](#) and go to 'Pupil Premium Grant'

**Any Year 11s with EHCPs** should have had an Annual Review towards the end of Year 10 or have one booked before the end of Term 1 to ensure the EHCP that is sent out to Post-16 providers reflects the most current, accurate picture of the young person and their needs. It is also the opportunity to capture the young person's wishes and pull together everyone's thoughts on preferred Post-16 destinations. Schools can then request that the EHCP Casework Team send out consultations to providers as soon as possible before Christmas - this allows plenty of time for places to be agreed before the end of March deadline when the destination is named on the EHCP. If the Annual Review has not yet happened or been booked, or you are concerned that things have changed significantly, please flag this up with the SENDCo, copying in their Virtual School case holder.

## Year 11 Options

Please encourage your current Year 11s to start thinking and getting a bit excited about their Post-16 options. This term is the perfect time to attend the next College Open Events (see overleaf for links), especially if they have not been before or are very uncertain about what is on offer. Please let their Virtual School case holder know if they may need some extra support from our Year 11 Transition Worker, Izzi Crowther, to explore their interests and go through the different pathways with them – face to face (where possible) or online.

Ideally, they should start submitting applications as soon as October half term; it is always possible to make additional applications later as a 'Plan B' and if circumstances (or their goals!) change, but the earlier the better when it comes to starting the process. It is also never too early to encourage your **Year 10s** to attend open days to start getting some ideas!



## Personal Education Plan (PEP) reminders for the new academic year

- If you have new pupils starting this term, dates for the first PEP should already have been set up. Check [eGov Solutions Ltd](#) or ask their Virtual School case worker. If no date has been set, the first PEP in a new school should take place within 20 school days.
- If you are delegating any PEPs to other staff within your team, you can add them to the [eGov ePEP platform](#) as a designated user. Ask your Virtual School case worker to set this up.
- If you are working with Year 6 pupils, the Term 1 PEP is really important because discussion about secondary school applications need to be prioritised to meet deadlines for submission. Social workers generally make the application, so liaise early with the carer and social worker to agree which secondary school will be best suited. Virtual School advise that only 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted-rated schools are considered - do get in touch to discuss this with us.
- Most PEPs will be held online and ideally the invite should be set up by the social worker. Virtual School caseworkers cannot attend every meeting but will join as and when needed. Virtual School caseworkers are always on hand for queries, advice and guidance, so do get in touch.

## Sixth Form and College Open Days

There will be Open Days for the current Year 11s (and Year 10s if they want to get ahead!) coming up over the next couple of months. Click on the below links for more information/dates:

- [City of Oxford College](#)
- [Banbury and Bicester College](#)
- [Henley College](#)
- [Abingdon & Witney College](#)
- [Activate Learning](#)
- [New College, Swindon](#)
- [Warwickshire College Group](#)

Do contact our Year 11 Transition Worker, Izzi Crowther, if you need support with young people's Post-16 plans and applications – [isabel.crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:isabel.crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk) / 07747648494

## Suspensions / Exclusions

It is critical that you contact your Virtual School caseworker and your allocated Exclusion and Reintegration Officer as soon as possible if a Child We Care For or Previously Cared For Child is 'bubbling' and at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion.

We are here to support!

## Transition

Many pupils will be managing change this term: new school, change of cohort, new social worker or new home.

Schools must support pupils with building a sense of belonging in school.

### Key actions:

- Identify a key adult and schedule meet up times.
- Get a Pupil Profile circulated early in the first term.
- Introduce pupils to important adults in school such as: canteen staff, duty staff, SLT, pastoral staff. That way, adults can start to build positive relationships early.
- Catch up with carers by phone or chat at drop off to calm worries and pick up early wobbles.
- Make sure 'hidden' routines are explained, e.g. queues for lunch. Do not assume pupils will ask.
- Make sure pupils are well equipped and have everything they need and a safe place to go in school.

## Youth Voice – Ensuring Young People’s Voices Count



Youth Voice is a forum for children we care for (CWCF) and care leavers in Oxfordshire. It gives young people a real say in how they’re cared for - what’s working, what’s not, and what could be better. Through regular meetings, surveys and enrichment activities, Youth Voice helps the council understand young people’s needs and aspirations. It also holds us, as ‘corporate parents’, to account. If you know a young person who might like to join, please contact:

- James Collins, Participation Officer, [james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
- You can also contact Jay Leach, Participation Apprentice, [jay.leach@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jay.leach@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
- For more information, [click here](#).

## What Your School Should Offer Children We Care For



### OSCP Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire](#)  
[Safeguarding Children](#)  
[Partnership](#)

[Protocol on leave of absence requests](#)

### Free downloadable resources

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

### What is Lifelong Links?

**Lifelong Links** helps children we care for and care leavers reconnect with family and trusted adults - whether known, lost or new.

Do you know someone who could benefit?

[Click here to learn more](#)

**Have you any children with a parent in prison?**

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



## How It Works

Once you sign up, an age appropriate book will be delivered to your child every month until their fifth birthday. The books are free for families and yours to keep forever! All titles in the Imagination Library are published by Penguin Random House and carefully selected by a panel of experts in early childhood literacy and reading.

## Eligibility

This programme is for Oxfordshire Children in Care, and those previously in Care to Oxfordshire.



## Contact Us

If you have any questions or comments regarding this scheme please do not hesitate to contact:

[virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

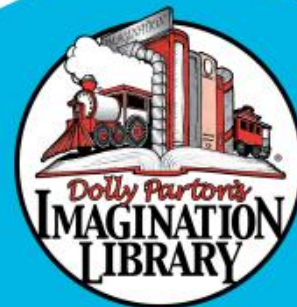
We hope the children in your care enjoy the books!



OXFORDSHIRE  
VIRTUAL SCHOOL  
Looking After Learning



OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL



England and Wales Registered Charity Number 1121917  
The Dollywood Foundation UK, 167 - 169 Great Portland Street,  
5th Floor, London W1W 5PF.  
General Enquiries: [info@imaginationlibrary.co.uk](mailto:info@imaginationlibrary.co.uk)



Inspire a Love  
of Reading