



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



Issue 52

Term 2
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

CONTACT US

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Training Programme 2025/26

* [BOOK HERE](#) *

Upcoming training:

[Tuesday 13th January](#)

An Introduction to: Making Sense of Behaviour & Brain Development and the Impact of Trauma

[Thursday 20th January](#)

Attachment Theory

[Wednesday 28th January](#)

Designated Teacher Practice Day

[Tuesday 10th and 24th February](#)

PACE for School Staff

[Tuesday 17th March](#)

Planning interventions for complex children: where to start and how to go on

[Wednesday 18th March](#)

Designated Teacher (DT) Induction

Funding for Previously Cared For Children

School funding is based on census data, so it's vital to ensure that information about your previously cared for children cohort is up-to-date.

Previously cared for children - referred to by the Department for Education (DfE) as previously looked after children or PLAC - are children no longer in local authority care because they are the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. Children who have gone back to live at home with no Child Arrangement Order are unfortunately not eligible for this funding. Since 1st April 2024, Pupil Premium Plus funding is also available for pupils who have been adopted from care or have left care from outside of England and Wales.

[Pupil Premium Plus funding](#) is overseen by the Department for Education. For the financial year 2025 to 2026, the Pupil Premium Grant equates to £2,630 per Previously Cared For Child per annum.

To secure the Pupil Premium Grant, it is the responsibility of the educational setting to prompt parents and guardians who need to inform the setting about their child's circumstances (along with evidence) in time for the setting to record the child's status on their census. We suggest that you include a question regarding previously in care status both on your admissions form and at regular intervals when requesting information regarding Ever 6 FSM eligibility. A letter can be sent out regarding previously cared for status – to preview an editable example letter (and for more information), go to the 'Pupil Premium Grant' section of this page:

[Previously cared for children | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Primary School Applications for CWCF

If you have CWCF currently in Foundation 2 (F2), it's time for their carers to apply for a primary school place. Corporate parents of children born between 1st September 2021 and 31st August 2022 need to apply for an infant or primary school place for September 2026.

The deadline for completed applications is 15th January 2026.

Applications received by this date will be processed for National Offer Day on 16th April 2026. Missing the deadline means the application will be processed later in the year, and the child is far less likely to secure a place at one of the preferred schools. Please discuss options with the child's Social Worker and Virtual School Caseworker to ensure the best outcome.

Post 16 Transition

Remember that some of your Year 11s may need additional support with the process of applying to colleges.

Ideas to support children we care for:

- DT call carer to explain the process (especially for carers who have not had a Year 11 before).
- Time in school researching courses, talking to ex-students and support with application form.
- Flag up open events and identify a member of staff to meet them at college to facilitate the visit.
- Ask college course leader to come in and talk to a group in school.

What is the SDQ for?

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire is an important tool to help professionals identify emotional and behaviour concerns and to flag up the need for further assessment. It supports discussion in PEP meetings and enables professionals to see specific areas which may need targeted intervention. Tracking SDQ data is important as unmet SEMH needs are one of the key reasons for educational underachievement in children we care for (CWCF) and previously cared for children. For more on strategies to support in meeting SEMH needs in your setting, view the [SEND Ordinarily available toolkit \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Preventing suspensions and exclusions is critical. The SDQ can be part of the identification of needs, as often this is missed. **Vulnerable and SEND pupils are more likely to be excluded** and there is an understanding that more compassionate schooling is needed. See this thought-provoking trailer '[Excluded](#)'.

All local authorities are required to provide information on the emotional and behavioural health of CWCF. This data is collected through the SDQ and a summary score for each child issued for tracking the emotional and behavioural difficulties of CWCF at a national level.

[Click here](#) to access a copy of the SDQ and for guidance on how to use it – go to 'Assessment' section.

PACE at Christmas

Christmas time can also be a difficult time with lots of feelings flying around.

[Click here](#) for a Beacon House resource which explores how to use **PACE at Christmas time**.

PEP Reminder

When a PEP has been held, remember to log back in and complete the relevant ePEP sections on [eGov](#) and submit for review by your Virtual School case worker.

Please check email addresses of the following key adults are correct:

- DT email
- Social Worker email
- Carer email
- Finance contact email

We use these emails to contact settings with information about Pupil Premium Plus payments and other important information.

Reminder that DTs are responsible for the PEP and liaising with different parties involved to ensure it is completed promptly for quality assurance by the Virtual School Caseworker.

Thank you.

Oxfordshire Virtual School Annual Conference 2025: Transforming Lives Through Human Connection

This year's conference brought together 147 delegates from across Oxfordshire to explore how human connection can empower care-experienced children to achieve their dreams. The day was designed to inspire and connect, beginning with a powerful keynote from broadcaster and author Ashley John-Baptiste, whose story of navigating the care system resonated deeply with attendees. Interactive sessions - including Appreciative Inquiry, body mapping, Conversation Café, and open space discussions - encouraged participants to reflect on their roles as corporate parents and share strategies for supporting care-experienced children.

Delegates reflected on the importance of building connections, the value of professional roles and the hopes and challenges faced by care-experienced young people. Feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive. 100% agreed that the conference inspired them to empower care-experienced children to pursue their dreams. Many cited the opportunity to connect with other professionals, hear diverse voices and reflect on their practice as key takeaways. The interactive format and engaging activities were particularly appreciated, with several noting that the conference was a welcome change from traditional setups.

Attendees shared practical examples of how the conference would change their practice, such as ensuring pupil voice is central to discussions, advocating for more support for adopted and SGO children, and providing practical toolkits for students approaching adulthood.

Many left feeling inspired, better connected and equipped to bring about positive change for care-experienced children in Oxfordshire. We look forward to picking up on some of the themes in our upcoming Designated Teacher Practice Day on Wednesday 28th January. For more information on this, go to p.4.



Book Your Place for the Designated Teacher Practice Day!

Join the Virtual School Team and Dr Hester Riviere on Wednesday 28th January, 9:30am-3:30pm in the Westgate Collaboration Space (top floor of the library), Oxford for a day of shared learning and reflection.

This is a valuable opportunity to:

- Explore the implications of the NEW Ofsted framework, the expanding duties of the Virtual School and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools' Bill on our shared work.
- Consider how we work best together to secure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.
- Reflect on themes raised at our October conference and ensure your key questions are answered.
- Share ideas, discuss what's happening and plan our next steps.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided, but please bring your own lunch.

Please make sure you book your place - we look forward to seeing you there!

[Click here](#) to book your place.

Protocol on leave of absence requests

In exceptional circumstances, requests may need to be made for a leave of absence during term-time for children we care for (CWCF).

If this is the case, approval must be sought from both the Head of Service for CWCF and the Virtual School Head.

Schools / educational settings should not be approached directly by carers or social workers with such a request.

Carers and social workers must not apply for holiday in term time.

To view the policy, click here: [Protocol for term-time leave of absence applications](#)

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 your SENDCo, copying in their Virtual School case holder.



Oxfordshire's commitment to children we care for and care experienced young people

A corporate parent is the name given to an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to children we care for and care experienced young people.

A corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a parent should. While you or your organisation may not be able to provide everything a parent can, you should still be able to provide the children and young people you're responsible for with the best possible support and care.

Corporate parent responsibilities are intended to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can towards improving the lives of children we care for and care experienced young people, so they feel in control of their lives and are able to overcome the barriers they may face.

As corporate parents in Oxfordshire we are ambitious for our children we care for and care experienced young people. We are committed to

working together to help children, young people, and families to thrive.

We want Oxfordshire to be a great place to grow up and for any Oxfordshire child or young person to have the opportunity to become everything they want to be.

To achieve this vision for children and young people we have a focus on all children and young people being successful, safe, healthy, and supported.

Some of our children we care for and care experienced young people have told us what they need from their corporate parents and how we can best support them to help them thrive.



YOUTH VOICES

OXFORDSHIRE

CARE FOR THE FUTURE

Youth Voices is the forum for children we care for (CWCF) and care leavers. Youth Voices help the council achieve our commitment to care-experienced young people in Oxfordshire. Youth Voices have regular meetings, run surveys and access a range of enrichment activities that support us in working alongside them to better understand their needs and aspirations. Youth Voices hold their corporate parents to account against their responsibilities.

Should you know a child or young person who might like to join Youth Voices, please contact Jay Leach via youth.voice@oxfordshire.gov.uk or visit [Children in Care Council](#) | [OXME.INFO](#)

What your school needs to offer Children We Care For

