

Designated Safeguarding Lead Update

Issue 11
Term 3,
2025-26



The aim of this publication is to share information, useful strategies and ideas to support the work you do with children subject to CIN and CP planning, children who have at some point been open to Children's Social Care and children in kinship care. Please also take time to look at these webpages [Children with a social worker | Oxfordshire County Council](#) [Children in kinship care | Oxfordshire County Council](#) to support your work with these cohorts. If you have any questions/requests regarding content, contact virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

CONTACT US

Website:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool

Direct Line: 01865 328550

Email:

virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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

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

How do we ensure safe relationships when children are ever more digitally connecting?



Safer Internet Day is on Tuesday 10th February - this is highly relevant for care-experienced children.

The 2026 theme is: 'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI'.

There are lots of resources and ideas for activities on the website linked [here](#).

OSCP Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Ofsted's 2025 Shake-Up: 5 Questions Every School Leader Should Be Asking About Behaviour and SEMH from The Beacon School's School Behaviour Secrets Podcast

[Click here](#)

Free downloadable resources

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

Attendance is everybody's business

The attendance of children with a social worker is your business

Average attendance

Status
EHCP (all children)
EHCP (children with open cases)
LCSS
Early Help
Open C&FA
ChIN
CPP
CWCF

Year groups 0 - 6		
Last year	This year	Change
92%	93%	1%
88%	88%	0%
97%	97%	1%
93%	95%	2%
91%	96%	5%
91%	92%	1%
90%	92%	2%
96%	98%	2%

Year groups 7 - 11		
Last year	This year	Change
92%	93%	1%
88%	88%	0%
34%	72%	38%
34%	72%	38%
90%	87%	-3%
93%	95%	1%
74%	72%	-2%
93%	95%	1%

All year groups		
Last year	This year	Change
93%	94%	1%
90%	90%	0%
95%	96%	1%
95%	96%	1%
90%	92%	2%
90%	90%	0%
88%	89%	1%
95%	96%	1%

Attendance of children in Oxfordshire at the end of Term 2 2025/26

Don't wait until a child's attendance drops below 90% to act! As soon as you see signs of attendance slipping, take action!

Median average. "Last year" includes entirety of last academic year. "This year" includes current academic year to date. "Change" shows difference between the two. Changes of at least +/- 5% are highlighted

Reviewing the data circulated at the end of Term 2 (see above), it is clear that attendance across all vulnerable groups remains an area requiring sustained focus and intervention. While overall figures are broadly in line with, or show improvement on, last year's performance, there are significant concerns regarding secondary-aged learners who are currently open to LCSS, Early Help or Child Protection Planning. This cohort continues to present the greatest challenge and should be prioritised for targeted action.

You can see from the table above that:

- Primary-aged children subject to CIN and CP planning, and those with EHCPs, are on average absent from school the equivalent of 1 day a fortnight;
- Secondary-aged children with EHCPs are on average absent from school the equivalent of 1 day a fortnight; and
- **Secondary-aged children open to LCSS, Early Help and Child Protection Planning are on average absent from school for the equivalent of 3 days a fortnight – 12 school weeks / 3 months!**

If children are not in school, how can you be sure they are safe? What can you do to make school unmissable?

We urge DSLs to fulfil their duty to consider every young person with a social worker and work with the wider team to remove barriers and improve school attendance.

DfE guidance on restrictive interventions and reasonable force

The Department for Education has published updated guidance:
"Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools"

[Read the guidance here](#)

This guidance contains both **statutory and non-statutory elements** and **comes into effect from 1st April 2026**. Schools have three months to review and update policies and practice accordingly.

Restrictive interventions can be particularly distressing for pupils who have experienced trauma, neglect or adverse life events.

The guidance advises schools to:

- Consider a pupil's history and welfare before any intervention.
- Use **trauma-informed approaches** to minimise harm.
- Ensure dignity and avoid intimidating settings during interventions.

Our recommended approach

Oxfordshire Virtual School strongly encourage schools to embed **trauma-informed, relational practices** in behaviour policies and staff training. At the heart of this is **PACE** - *Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy* - which supports de-escalation and positive relationships.

Recommended actions:

- Read the guidance in full and review your policies and procedures.
- Brief your governors on their responsibilities under this guidance.
- Review behaviour support plans to ensure they include PACE and de-escalation strategies.
- Ensure systems are in place to record and report all uses of force and seclusion.
- Promote staff training in trauma-informed and relational approaches – refer to [our free training and support offer](#).

Primary School Applications for CWCF

If you have children with a social worker currently in Foundation 2 (F2), it's time for their parents/carers to apply for a primary school place. Parents/carers 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 parents/carers and social worker to ensure the best outcome.

Year 10s and 11s with EHCPs

If you are concerned about any Year 11s with EHCPs who do not have a clear destination named on their plan for Post-16 education, employment or training, liaise with your SENDCo to take timely action. Due to the lengthy consultation process, there is often a last-minute rush in March to name somewhere, which may end up not being the appropriate destination or may not provide the preferred course option which can lead to confusion, disappointment and/or a young person becoming NEET.

For children with a social worker in Year 10, especially those with EHCPs, it is a good idea to encourage them to attend Open Events this year to start getting an idea about their preferred destination. See p.4 for a list of provisions in or near to Oxfordshire. Those with EHCPs should have their Annual Review at the end of Year 10 or very early in Year 11 to enable those early consultations to take place.

Year 11 Open Event dates and links

This is a reminder that all Year 11s should be submitting applications to college and Sixth Form. Even if they are not 100% sure what they want to do, it is best to get some applications in and they can make a decision later.

If they need any support with this, get in touch with their parents/carers and social worker to make a plan. For those with EHCPs, you must ensure preferences for consultations have been given to their EHCP Casework Officer.

Open Events:

[City of Oxford College – Wednesday 25th February 4:30 – 7pm](#)

[Activate Rugby Academy Girls – Saturday 24th January 9:30am – 10am-1.15pm](#)

[Harcourt Hill Campus](#)

[Activate Rugby Academy Boys – Saturday 24th January 9am – 12.15pm Harcourt Hill Campus](#)

Abingdon & Witney College

[Abingdon College – Wednesday 11^h February 3:30 – 7pm](#)

[Witney College – Monday 16th February 3:30 – 7pm](#)

[OUFC Advanced Football Programme Open Training Session, Wednesday 18th February 12-3pm](#)

[Bicester Construction Skills Centre – Wednesday 4th March 4 – 7pm](#)

[Banbury College – Wednesday 4th February 4:30 – 7pm](#)

[Reading College – Wednesday 4th February 4:30 – 7pm](#)

[Berkshire College of Agriculture – Wednesday 25th March 9.30am – 4.30pm](#)

[Moreton Morrell College - Saturday 24th January, 10am to 1pm](#)

[Royal Leamington Spa College – Saturday 24th January, 10am – 2pm](#)

[Warwick Trident College – Saturday 24th January, 10am – 2pm](#)

[Northampton College – Tuesday 10th February, 5-7.30pm](#)

[Aylesbury College – Thursday 29th January, 5-8pm](#)

[Wycombe College – Tuesday 27th January, 5-8pm](#)

This term is key for Post-16 students

Please build in time to support applications to Sixth Forms, universities, colleges and apprenticeships. Parents/Carers and social workers are not always as informed about options as school staff so will need support. Try to take a copy of college applications that young people make and consider putting their social worker down as one of the key contacts. It makes following up applications much easier – i.e. Have they actually applied? Have they missed phone calls asking them to interview? etc.

BE THE DIFFERENCE.

As educators, you hold the incredible power to shape the futures of your students. The Virtual School want to emphasise the importance of having high aspirations for every child, especially children with a social worker.

Children who are supported by social workers often face unique challenges. These challenges can sometimes overshadow their potential, but it is crucial to remember that every child has the capacity to achieve greatness. Your belief in their abilities can be the catalyst that propels them towards success.

Believe in every child's potential - your high aspirations can transform their future!

