

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



Issue 54

Term 4
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

Website:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool

Direct Line: 01865 328550

Email:

virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Training Programme 2025/26

* [BOOK HERE](#) *

Upcoming training:

[Tuesday 17th March](#)

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

[Wednesday 18th March](#)

Designated Teacher (DT) Induction

[Tuesday 28th April](#)

Best practice for schools on working with adoptive and special guardian children and families

[Tuesday 28th April](#)

Transitions Training

[Tuesday 12th May and Tuesday 2nd June](#)

PACE for School Staff

Updated Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) Policy

Oxfordshire Virtual School has reviewed and updated our Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) Policy in line with the most recent Department for Education (DfE) guidance. The updated policy is now available on our website and can be accessed here:

[2026-27 Pupil Premium Policy](#)

This policy provides clarity around how PPP is allocated, what PPP can and cannot be used for.

We ask all Designated Teachers and social workers to familiarise themselves with this policy so that we have a shared understanding of expectations, responsibilities and the appropriate use of PPP to support the educational progress and outcomes of the children we care for.

If you have any questions about the updated policy or how it applies to individual pupils, please contact the Virtual School team. We are happy to support you.

The numbers behind our work...

Oxfordshire Virtual School are a team of 20 specialists, but we cannot do our work alone.

Here is the scale of the Oxfordshire children and young people we support, directly or indirectly:

- Currently, we are case working ~1,358 CWCF and Care Leavers
- We support PEPs from 9 months old where a child is in an education setting
- Children must have at least two PEPs annually, with additional PEPs required for school moves or where appropriate
- We support Care Leavers up to age 25 if they remain in EET
- This year, we are supporting 100 Year 11 students (around a quarter of our statutory school-age cohort)
- We are supporting 57 unaccompanied children and young people, mostly males aged 15–17
- 47% of CWCF live outside Oxfordshire, bringing significant complexity
- 57% are male, 43% female
- 35% have an EHCP, and 27% are on SEN Support
- 31% are from Global Majority groups

And across our extended duties:

- Just under 1,000 children are subject to a CIN plan
- Just under 500 are subject to child protection planning
- Just over 1,000 are open to Early Help
- Just under 10,000 have been subject to CIN in the last six years
- Just over 4,000 have been subject to CP planning in the last six years
- Just under 400 children are subject to an Adoption Order
- A similar number are subject to SGOs
- Nearly 150 are subject to other Child Arrangement Orders
- Over 500 children are in kinship care arrangements

Altogether, that means Oxfordshire Virtual School is here to support just shy of 18,000 Oxfordshire children - around one-fifth of the child population.

How to Contact Us

To help you reach the right team for the right type of support:

For Children We Care For (CWCF) and Care Leavers

Please contact the child or young person's allocated Virtual School Caseworker. If you are unsure who that is, email:

virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

For children with a social worker and children in kinship care (Children currently or previously subject to CIN/CP planning within the last six years, or living in kinship arrangements)

Email: extendedduties@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please note: *We do not casework these children but can offer advice, guidance and signposting.*

For previously cared-for children (Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders)

Email: virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please note: *We do not casework these children but can offer advice, guidance and signposting.*

We are here to help you navigate the right support for the children and young people you work with.

Watch this space for more regarding our future service offer.

Designated Teachers: We Need Your Input

To make sure our support is genuinely meeting your needs, we're asking all Designated Teachers to complete this short survey as soon as you receive this newsletter:

[Designated Teacher Training and Support Preferences Survey – Fill in form](#)

Your feedback will help us understand the challenges you're facing and shape the training, guidance and relational support we provide going forwards.

Further information coming soon

As national policy updates continue to emerge through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the Schools White Paper, we will schedule an online briefing in late Spring/early Summer.

This session will summarise the latest national developments, outline what they mean for Oxfordshire and explain how we will work together to adapt and uphold our shared responsibilities for our most vulnerable children and young people.

In addition, we will circulate follow-up from our October conference to outline the actions we have taken in response to the group discussions.

Designated Teacher Induction - In-Person

Wednesday 18th March, 1–3.30pm
Unipart House, Garsington Rd, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2PG

To join us for this essential in-person induction designed for all Designated Teachers - new to the role – [click here](#).

The session covers everything a DT needs to know: statutory duties, corporate parenting responsibilities, running effective PEP meetings, writing high-quality ePEPs, and planning purposeful use of Pupil Premium funding.

Delivered by highly experienced Virtual School colleagues, this training will equip you with the confidence and practical tools to excel in your role.

UPDATED PEP Toolkit

We've updated our online PEP Toolkit, which now includes refreshed PEP templates and best-practice exemplars adapted for use on the eGOV platform.

Designated Teachers can access these resources to support high-quality, consistent PEPs across all settings.

Click here to view:

[Personal Education Plan \(PEP\) Toolkit | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

*** BOOK ON NOW – [Click Here!](#) ***

Our 2026 Annual Conference will be taking place on **Thursday 8th October at Unipart House.**

Don't miss this flagship event bringing together leading experts, practitioners and the voices of children and young people for a powerful day focused on improving educational stability for vulnerable learners.

Hear from **Louise Bombèr**, renowned specialist in attachment-aware and trauma-responsive education; gain essential updates from the Virtual School Head on **national policy changes**; and get clear guidance from Linda Culling, Senior HMI, on **what Ofsted expects for vulnerable learners**. With contributions from young people and key partners - and opportunities to visit partner stalls - you'll leave equipped with practical strategies rooted in relational practice to support children facing instability, disrupted learning and trauma.

- **Early Years / Primary settings** - 1 free Designated Teacher place (first come, first served)
- **Secondary and FE settings** - up to 2 free places (first come, first served)

Secure your place now and be part of shaping brighter, more stable futures for Oxfordshire's children!

Oxfordshire Virtual School presents:

2026 Annual Conference

Education as the Anchor: Building Stability and Futures for Every Child



Join Oxfordshire Virtual School and contributors for a day of connection, learning and shared best practice.

This conference is dedicated to exploring how education can serve as a powerful anchor for care-experienced children and children with a social worker - providing stability, belonging and hope for the future.

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, please get in touch. For those with EHCPs, you must ensure preferences for consultations have been given to their EHCP Casework Officer.

City of Oxford College – [Wednesday 6th May, 4.30-7pm](#)

The Leys College - [Wednesday 29th April 4:30 - 7pm](#)

Abingdon and Witney College

Abingdon College – [Wednesday 17th June 3:30 – 7pm](#)

Witney College – [Wednesday 17th June 3:30 - 7pm](#)

OUFC Advanced Football Programme Open Training Session, [Wednesday 8th April 12 - 3pm](#)

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

Common Leys Campus - [Wednesday 18th March 5 - 7pm](#)

Banbury College – [Wednesday 22nd April 4:30 – 7pm](#)

Reading College – [Wednesday 29th April 4:30 – 7pm](#)

Berkshire College of Agriculture – [Range of Subject specific Taster Days in March](#) and Open Event [Saturday 18th April 10am – 2pm](#)

Moreton Morrell College – [Tuesday 24th March 5:30 – 7:30pm](#)

Royal Leamington Spa College – [Tuesday 24th March 5:30 – 7:30pm](#)

Warwick Trident College – [Tuesday 24th March 5:30 – 7:30pm](#)

Northampton College – [Saturday 7th March 10am – 1pm](#)

Aylesbury College – [Saturday 21st March 10am – 1pm](#)

Wycombe College – [Tuesday 24th March 5 - 7pm](#)

New College Swindon – [Range of Subject specific Taster events](#)

Queens Drive Campus – [Wednesday 11th March 5 – 7pm](#)

North Star Campus – [Thursday 19th March 5 – 7pm](#)

A key time for Post-16 students

Please build in time to support applications to Sixth Forms, universities, colleges and apprenticeships. 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 ensure they put 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.

If you have specific questions or concerns about a young person, please contact their Virtual School Caseworker. For general queries about Year 11 to Post-16 transition, please contact Izzi Crowther at isabel.crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Sexual and Sexist Bullying

Sexual and sexist bullying includes a wide range of behaviours, often overlapping with sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour. These concerns can be missed when dismissed as “banter” or “part of growing up”. Sexist and misogynistic bullying can also be used to enforce gender norms, particularly towards girls and young women.

While girls are disproportionately affected, boys, LGBT children and those with SEND are also at increased risk. Care-experienced children and those open to Children’s Social Care may be especially vulnerable due to past trauma, instability or peer perceptions linked to professional involvement.

Sexual and sexist bullying can occur in any school. Responses must be clear, consistent and rooted in safeguarding, with coordinated support for care-experienced children and those working with Children’s Social Care. Schools must balance cultural awareness with a firm duty to keep all children safe.

You can read more about how sexual and sexist bullying is defined and addressed here:

<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-sexist-bullying>

New Strategy Based Films for parents/carers and Professionals New for 2026

What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance



Risk factors for Emotionally Based School Avoidance



Tips for Emotionally Based School Avoidance



Thriving with ADHD in school



ADHD and sleep



Reframing ADHD



Girls and ADHD



ADHD – order out of chaos



Growing older and changing ADHD symptoms



The importance of sleep



Tips to support sleep optimisation



To watch the videos, scan these QR codes

The Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

Children's Creative Writing Competition 2026

Find the magic in an object from our collection and let your imagination fly as you write your own story.

Submit your entry by 12 June 2026

Calling all 7-11 year olds - we're looking for exciting stories!

For an application form please email:
oxfordshire.museum@oxfordshire.gov.uk



The OM Open Art Competition 2026

This year our theme is Celebration!

Submit your entry application online by
Monday 10 August 2026
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/artcompetition

THE Oxfordshire
Museum

THE 70

