

# Designated Safeguarding Lead Update

Issue 12  
Term 5,  
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](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## CONTACT US

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## Training Programme 2025/26

\* [BOOK HERE](#) \*

### Upcoming training:

[Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April](#)

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

[Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April](#)

Transitions Training

[Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May and Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June](#)

PACE for School Staff

[Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October](#)

2026 Virtual School Conference

We will share our updated 2026-27 training and support offer with you in an email bulletin very soon and in next term's newsletter.

## Ofsted: Children Known to Social Care at the Heart of Inspections

Ofsted has recently reiterated that children known to social care will be central to education inspections, with inspectors focusing closely on how well schools understand and meet the needs of:

- Children We Care For
- Previously Cared For Children
- Children known to Children's Social Care

Their latest update highlights the importance of personalised support, strong communication, emotionally safe environments and high-quality PEP processes.

Read the update: [How Ofsted is putting children known to social care at the heart of education inspections – Ofsted: education](#)

Designated Teachers and DSLs will have the opportunity to explore this more, alongside implications of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, at an upcoming briefing. Further details and joining information are provided overleaf.

## OSCP Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

**SEND Reform Is Coming: What It Means For Behaviour And SEMH In Schools** 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.

## Invitation: Virtual School Online Briefing for Designated Teachers / DSLs

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 3.30–4.30pm [Microsoft Teams]**

Facilitated by the Virtual School Head, Clare Pike

This online session will cover:

- What the statutory extension of Virtual School duties from September 2026 will mean for schools
- DfE and Ofsted expectations of schools, settings and Virtual Schools
- Practical support and guidance available from Oxfordshire Virtual School
- Upcoming training, resources and events

There will also be time for questions.

A recording will be available for anyone unable to attend.

Join the session:

Meeting ID: 383 002 216 501 10

Passcode: b25YN7hZ

Click to join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/38300221650110?p=xW3wR2STulxcZMNoAC>

# Attendance is everybody's business

## The attendance of children with a social worker is your business

### Average attendance

Status	Year groups 0 - 6			Year groups 7 - 11			All year groups		
	Last year	This year	Change	Last year	This year	Change	Last year	This year	Change
EHCP (all children)	92%	93%	1%	92%	93%	1%	93%	93%	0%
EHCP (children with open cases)	89%	87%	-2%	89%	87%	-2%	90%	90%	0%
LCSS	99%	99%	0%	70%	70%	1%	96%	99%	3%
Early Help	93%	93%	0%	70%	70%	1%	96%	99%	3%
Open C&FA	91%	90%	-1%	89%	87%	-3%	90%	89%	-1%
ChIN	91%	93%	2%	93%	94%	1%	89%	89%	0%
CPP	91%	91%	1%	73%	74%	1%	88%	88%	0%
CWCF	96%	97%	1%	93%	94%	1%	95%	96%	1%

Attendance of children in Oxfordshire at the end of Term 4 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 4 (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 open to Early Help and Children's Social Care (exc. CWCF), alongside those with EHCPs/subject to EHCNA, are on average absent from school the equivalent of 1 day a fortnight;
- Secondary-aged children subject to EHCNA and open to C&FA 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 2.5-3 days a fortnight – upto 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 all vulnerable children / young people and work with the wider team to remove barriers to school attendance.**

# COMPETITION

"You help me feel safe when..."

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU  
For chance to tell adults:

WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS YOU FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL/SETTING? AND WHAT REALLY DOESN'T?

Win  
HEADPHONES,  
Book VOUCHERS,  
AND MORE!



Share your truth... your way.

ENTER WITH: POEMS VOICE NOTES SHORT VIDEOS (30-60 secs) POSTERS  
DRAWINGS COMIC STRIPS SHORT WRITTEN PIECES DIGITAL DESIGNS

Every entry gets celebrated. Every voice matters.



THINGS ADULTS DO THAT HELP ME:

"If you want me to learn, do more of this..."

"School/setting feels way better when adults..."

"What makes me feel calm, seen and ready for the day..."

"Stuff adults do that actually helps me feel safe at school/setting..."

THINGS ADULTS DO THAT DO NOT HELP ME:

"Stuff adults do that makes school/setting harder..."

"School/setting feels worse when adults..."

"What adults do that makes me want to disappear..."

"This is the stuff that makes me feel unsafe or shut down..."

## How To ENTER

**Deadline:** Tuesday 30 June, 5pm

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

**Please include:** name, age, school/setting and an adult contact. (Names will not be shared publicly.)

## CELEBRATION EVENT

Your work will be showcased at our **Annual Virtual School Conference** in Oxford on Thursday 8 October 2026 and also via our website. If an entry includes any identifying information, we will contact you to request permission before it is shared.

## What Children Need Us to Hear

Please promote this competition to all children and young people with Children's Social Care experience in your school.

It's a safe, creative way for pupils to share what helps them feel safe in school, and every entry will be valued and celebrated.

**Are you a child,  
young person,  
family member,  
or carer?**



If you have had support from any of our  
**Children's Social Care teams**  
at Oxfordshire County Council,  
we want to know what you think.

It will help us improve how we support people going forward.

**Have your say online**

It will only take a couple of minutes and  
your feedback will be totally anonymous.

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

or email [childrenservices.engagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:childrenservices.engagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
and we'll send you a paper form.

Scan me



Please promote this feedback survey to all children and young people with current or previous Children's Social Care involvement in your school.

Participation is optional and anonymous, and helps improve future CSC support.

Reassure pupils and signpost sensitively.

## Transition Planning for Terms 5 and 6

Summer term is a key time for planning for new beginnings and endings. Change is unsettling, and for many children a move up a year or to another setting is tricky. The DSL plays an important role in helping our children prepare for their next steps. DSLs should know the story of each child open to Children's Social Care and be able to support key colleagues in noticing changes in behaviour or motivation and recognising 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 of these may be masking feelings a child may not be able to articulate. Year 6 and Year 11 pupils, in particular, will be realising that they are leaving. This is a good time to hold a planning meeting with parents and carers of children with a social worker and make sure there is strong communication and effective planning between year groups and settings.

Don't leave things to chance - invite the DSL 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 that someone is keeping the child in mind. Talk to the child's social worker and parents/carers for ideas about how best to support a smooth transition.

- Create a Transition Pupil Profile – see Virtual School [PEP Toolkit](#) for an example template.
- Keep carers or parents up-to-date and listen to their worries and hopes.
- Liaise with the SENDCo 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.

## Children in Kinship Care

Children in kinship care include those placed with family or friends as part of care arrangements, as well as children living in kinship settings outside the care system. While these children may benefit from familiar relationships, their needs are often less visible in school.

Many will have experienced adversity such as family breakdown, neglect, domestic abuse or bereavement. This can affect wellbeing, behaviour, attendance and learning, whether or not the child is formally cared for. Kinship carers may also find it harder to access support or navigate systems, increasing the risk that needs go unrecognised.

DSLs, alongside Designated Teachers, play a crucial role in ensuring children in kinship care are seen as a potentially vulnerable group, with strong communication, curiosity about underlying need, and trauma-informed responses. This is particularly important for children open to Children's Social Care but not cared for.

Support and guidance for schools and carers is available via the Virtual School:

[Children in kinship care | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

## Supporting next steps after Year 11

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 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.

### 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 6<sup>th</sup> May, 4.30-7pm](#)  
The Leys College - [Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 4:30 - 7pm](#)

Abingdon and Witney College  
Abingdon College – [Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 3:30 – 7pm](#)  
Witney College – [Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 3:30 - 7pm](#)  
Bicester Construction Skills Centre – [Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 4 – 7pm](#)  
Common Leys Campus – [Click here for more information](#)

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

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

Berkshire College of Agriculture – Open Event [Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 10am – 2pm](#)

Moreton Morrell College – [Click here for more information](#)  
Royal Leamington Spa College – [Click here for more information](#)  
Warwick Trident College – [Click here for more information](#)

Northampton College – [Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June, 5-7.30pm](#)

Aylesbury College – [Click here for more information](#)  
Wycombe College – [Click here for more information](#)

New College Swindon – [Range of Subject specific Taster events](#)  
Queens Drive Campus – [Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 7-9pm](#)  
North Star Campus – [Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 5 – 7pm](#)

# 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!

