

# Designated Safeguarding Lead Update



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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## 2026-27 Training and Support Offer - [Now Live!](#)

Our early Autumn Term training for schools and settings is now available to view and book.

### [Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September](#)

- Designated Teacher (DT) Induction Training

### [Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October](#)

- Early Years DT Induction Training

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

- 2026 Virtual School Conference

### [Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November](#)

- PACE for School Staff

We look forward to working with you over the year ahead.

## Statutory Extension of Virtual School Duties - Key Update

From September 2026, the Virtual School's statutory role will extend to include children with a social worker and children in kinship care.

An online briefing took place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April to explain what this means for schools and settings. Slides, a recording and key messages from the session are now available on our [website](#) – within the 'Newsletters and other resources' section.

- [Video recording of Briefing for Schools and Settings on Expansion of Statutory Duties from Sept 2026](#)
- [Slides from Virtual School Online Briefing for Schools and Settings - 23-04-2026](#)
- [One page Briefing for Schools and Settings on Expansion of Statutory Duties from Sept 2026](#)

Engaging with the materials now will support your setting to strengthen practice and ensure the right support is in place early for vulnerable learners.

The Virtual School have also developed a new Ofsted-aligned evaluation framework to support schools and settings to evidence impact and strengthen inclusive practice - [click here](#) to access.



## Virtual School Service Offer – What You Can Expect

The Oxfordshire Virtual School offers different levels of support depending on the cohort of children and young people.

For Children We Care For (CWCF) and Care Leavers, we have a statutory role with a named caseworker, PEPs and direct involvement to champion education, support attendance, stability, and help prevent suspension and exclusion.

For previously cared-for children, children with a social worker (CIN/CP) and children in kinship care, our role is to provide advice, guidance and strategic support to schools/education settings, carers and professionals - helping you understand needs, address barriers to education, and strengthen inclusive, relational practice. We do not hold direct casework for these groups.

Our role is therefore twofold: direct support and oversight for children we care for and care leavers, alongside advice and system leadership to improve outcomes for wider vulnerable cohorts.

You can view the full, up-to-date service offer (including what support looks like and how to access it) here:

[Current service offer for Oxfordshire Virtual School | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

# 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%	92%	0%	92%	92%	0%	93%	93%	0%
EHCP (children with open cases)	89%	86%	-3%	89%	86%	-3%	90%	89%	-1%
LCSS	97%	96%	-2%	80%	70%	-10%	95%	92%	-3%
Early Help	93%	93%	0%	80%	70%	-10%	95%	92%	-3%
Open C&FA	94%	94%	0%	86%	88%	2%	94%	92%	-2%
ChIN	91%	93%	2%	93%	93%	0%	90%	90%	0%
CPP	90%	92%	2%	78%	71%	-7%	88%	90%	2%
CWCF	95%	97%	2%	93%	93%	0%	94%	95%	1%

Attendance of children in Oxfordshire at the end of Term 5 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!

Reviewing the data circulated at the end of Term 5 (see above), it is clear that attendance across all vulnerable groups remains an area requiring sustained focus and intervention. Overall figures against last year's performance suggest this is a particularly challenging time of year that requires close attention. We all need to be significantly concerned regarding secondary-aged learners who are currently open to LCSS, Early Help and Child Protection Planning. These cohorts continue 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 with SEND, open to C&FA, subject to CIN planning and CWCF 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 – upto 12 school weeks / 3 months!**

***If children are not in school, how can you be sure they are safe - and what are you doing to make school feel worth attending?***

**This level of absence demands urgent, collective action. We expect DSLs to take a leading role in identifying those most at risk, working proactively with the wider team and partners to challenge barriers, strengthen engagement and ensure that every vulnerable child is both seen and supported to attend school regularly.**

## Endings / New Beginnings

**SATs** – We are sure primary colleagues breathed a huge sigh of relief when all the Year 6 tests were completed and in the right envelopes. Thank you for all that you do to support children with a social worker - we hope everything went as well as it could have done.

**Transition Visits/Planning for Year 6s** – June and July are hugely important months for our Year 6s. We hope that primary and secondary schools will hopefully already have made arrangements to jointly plan a smooth transition. Children who've experienced adversity do benefit from extra visits to their new school, photos of key staff and information about routines, what to bring, timetables and what to expect.

**Level 1, 2 and 3 exams** – The exam season is fully underway. Exams are stressful for everyone, but especially for young people experiencing instability and uncertainty in their lives. Consistent, trusted relationships and a calm, flexible approach from school can make a significant difference for young people with a social worker at this time.

**Y6 and Y11 Transition Profiles** – You will likely already have your own transition information and processes in place to support pupils moving on this September. Where this is not the case, or where additional support would be helpful, the Virtual School transition profile ([click here](#) and scroll down to the 'Transition' section of this webpage) can be used to capture key information and support a smooth transition for young people moving to new settings.

### Children with parents in prison



If you are supporting any children with a parent in prison, [click here](#) for more information about support available from an award-winning local charity.

### OSCP Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

**Why Pupils Say "I Don't Care" - And What To Do Next** 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.

## Year 11s

Good luck to all Year 11s as exam season continues. Please continue to encourage them to attend additional revision sessions, support with revision timetables and exam technique, where necessary. See p.6 for upcoming open days/events.

**Post 16 Plans:** Hopefully, your Year 11s will now have a conditional offer from a college or Sixth Form, but if not, please encourage and support them to apply or follow up with applications **as soon as possible**. If they are open to Children's Social Care, please do let the social worker know the details when an application has been made.

**Any Year 11s with EHCPs:** The deadline for the Post-16 destination to be named on the EHCP has now passed. If there are still concerns about your Year 11 not having a clear plan for next year, if funding has not yet been approved, or you are concerned that things have changed significantly, please flag this up with the EHCP Caseworker, copying in the social worker (where applicable). For mainstream colleges, young people will still need to apply to their chosen course, ensuring they mention having an EHCP on the application.

**Thinking ahead to Results' Day:** It's really important that young people plan how they are going to collect their results on **Thursday 20th August**. Some young people open to Children's Social Care may need additional planning, reassurance and support to manage this process successfully. If they are not able or willing to go in person, please help them arrange in advance how their results will be collected or sent to them. Ideally, they should receive them on the day so they can submit their results to college and enrol on their chosen course. Young people have sometimes missed out or been placed on waiting lists when they have not enrolled on Results' Day or shortly after. Where possible, they should plan to enrol in person at the college, as online enrolment can sometimes be unreliable.

**Transition Meetings:** Where needed, please arrange a transition meeting towards the end of the year, after exams have finished. The DSL at the college or Post-16 destination should be invited. If helpful, you may wish to use this [Transition Profile](#) to support the process - particularly if you do not already have your own transition documentation in place.

There are more **College Open Events** coming up. The more visits your children in Year 10 and 11 can make to the different Post-16 destinations, the easier their transition will be, so please do encourage them to go along with support.

### **CITY OF OXFORD COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:**

**City Centre Campus, Oxpens Road, Oxford OX1 1SA**

[City of Oxford College - Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit.](#)

**Blackbird Leys Technology Campus, Cuddesdon Way, Oxford OX4 6HN**

[Blackbird Leys Campus – Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit.](#)

### **BANBURY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:**

**Banbury College, Broughton Road, Banbury OX16 9QA**

[Banbury and Bicester College – Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit.](#)

### **ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:**

**Abingdon College, Wootton Road, Abingdon OX14 1GG**

[Abingdon College – Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit](#)

**Witney College, 6, Holloway Road, Witney OX28 6NE**

[Witney College - Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit](#)

**Bicester Construction Skills Centre, 126 Churchill Road, Bicester OX26 4XD**

[Bicester Construction Skills Centre – Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit](#)

**OUFC Advanced Football Programme Open Training Sessions 2026**

[OUFC Advanced Football Programme Trials – Click here for dates and/or contact for more information](#)

### **THE HENLEY COLLEGE OPEN EVENTS:**

**The Henley College, 1 Deanfield Avenue, Henley-On-Thames RG9 1UH**

[The Henley College - Click here for dates and/or contact to arrange a visit.](#)

Please get in touch via [extendedduties@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:extendedduties@oxfordshire.gov.uk) if you have any questions or concerns about supporting your young person with their plans for next year.

# 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?

OXFORDSHIRE  
VIRTUAL SCHOOL  
Looking After Learning

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.

Ideas  
TO GET YOU  
STARTED

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.

OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL

## 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.

# 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!

