

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



Issue 56

Term 6
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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www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool

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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 24th September

- Designated Teacher (DT) Induction Training

Thursday 1st October

- Early Years DT Induction Training

Thursday 8th October

- 2026 Virtual School Conference

Thursday 3rd and 11th 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 23rd 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.

We 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.

URGENT: Complete All PEPs Before Summer

Designated Teachers must complete and submit all outstanding ePEPs on eGOV ePEP **before the summer break**.

Virtual School caseworkers are required to quality assure them by end of July.

If ePEPs are not signed off by the caseworker by the end of July, they risk not being saved on the system and this may affect the release of any agreed Pupil Premium Plus funding.

Action Required:

- Check the status of all your PEPs
- Respond promptly to caseworker requests
- Prioritise completion to meet statutory duties and support our children's outcomes

Let's make sure no child is left behind.

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 supporting our care-experienced Year 6 pupils - we hope everything went as well as it could have done.

Transition Visits/PEPs for Year 6s – June and July are hugely important months for our Year 6s. DTs in primary and secondary schools will hopefully already have made arrangements to attend Term 6 PEPs to plan a smooth transition. Our Year 6s 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 with instability and uncertainty in their lives. Please contact caseworkers if you want to discuss any individual young people who are struggling – we will do all that we can to advise and support. Can we also insist that the most up-to-date exam officer contact details are recorded on ePEPs as we will have to contact them if exam results are not all successfully pulled through to our system. It is critical we know our students' results as soon as possible so that, should things not going to plan. We will pro-actively support them regarding best possible next steps.

Y6 and Y11 Transition Profiles - Transition profiles for Year 6s and Year 11s need to be written for all our young people moving on this September. The templates can be found [here](#). Once completed, the profiles needs to be uploaded into the documents section of the ePEP. Please contact your Virtual School caseworker for support (if needed) and feel free to share the profile by email with them. We need profiles in place by the end of this term

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.

[BOOK NOW](#) – Don't Miss Our 2026 Conference!

Join us on **Thursday 8th October** at **Unipart House** for our Annual Virtual School Conference - a key event focused on improving educational stability for vulnerable learners.

Why attend?

- **Louise Bombèr** - leading expert in attachment-aware and trauma-responsive practice
- **Linda Culling (Senior HMI)** - what Ofsted expects for vulnerable learners
- **Virtual School Head update** - key national policy changes
- **Voices of children and young people** alongside local partners
- **Practical strategies** you can take straight back to your setting

- ✓ Focus on relational practice, inclusion and stability
- ✓ Opportunities to connect with partners and explore specialist stalls

Free places available (First come, first served):

Early Years / Primary: 1 free DT place

Secondary / FE: up to 2 free places

Secure your place today and be part of shaping brighter, more stable futures for Oxfordshire's vulnerable children.

 [Click here](#) to book now!

Free Dance Programme for Care-Experienced Young People – Now Open to More Groups

We're excited to launch the expanded Care to Dance programme for 2026-27 - a free, inclusive opportunity supporting care-experienced young people aged 7–25 across Oxfordshire. Building on our extended Virtual School duties from September 2026, the programme is now open to children we care for, care leavers, previously cared-for children, those in kinship care and adopted young people - ensuring even more young people can benefit from this award-recognised community.

Why join Care to Dance?

- Held every Monday evening at Rose Hill Community Centre (OX4 4HF), sessions offer:
- Weekly inclusive dance workshops across a range of styles
- Opportunities to gain dance leadership qualifications
- Performance and social experiences that build confidence and belonging
- Access to a national network of programmes for those living closer to other areas



The programme is fully funded by the Virtual School - with transport the only cost to families or carers.

To find out more and sign up, [click here](#) and/or email: beth@caretodance.co.uk or call 07868 897816

We'd really value your support in sharing this with parents and carers of eligible young people, encouraging them to get in touch directly to find out more or sign up.

This is a fantastic opportunity for young people to connect, express themselves and thrive.

Transition Planning

Summer Term is a key time for planning new beginnings and endings. Change is unsettling and for many children a move up a year or to another setting is tricky. The Designated Teacher plays an important role in helping our children prepare for their next steps.

Designated Teachers will know the story of each child and will be able to notice changes in behaviour or motivation and recognise 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 these may be masking feelings a child may not be able to articulate. **Year 6s and Year 11s particularly will be realising that they are leaving.** It is a good time to hold a PEP and make sure there is good communication and planning between year groups and settings.

Don't leave things to chance - invite the DT 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 there is someone holding the case and keeping that pupil in mind. Talk to your Virtual School case workers for ideas about how best to support a smooth transition.

- Create a Transition Pupil Profile – see Virtual School [PEP Toolkit](#) for more guidance and templates.
- 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.

Updated DfE Guidance on Suspensions and Exclusions (May 2026)

On 26th May, the DfE updated its statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions, reinforcing that exclusion must be lawful, fair and a last resort, with a continued focus on safeguarding, early intervention and support for vulnerable pupils.

The revised guidance comes into force **from July 2026**.

[Click here](#) to view the full guidance.

Policies and End of Year Reporting Expectations

Have senior leaders and governors reviewed all school policies considering the needs of children we care for, previously cared for children, children with a social worker and children in kinship care? If not, please refer to:

- [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#)
- [Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)

What we know is that the above guidance is being reviewed by the Department for Education to consider changes outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which is due to come into force later this year.

Do you have a DSL report template to support your annual report to governors? If not, [click here](#) and scroll down to the 'For Governors' section for examples you can use.

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.7 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**. Please do let the social worker and Virtual School caseworker 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 Virtual School caseworker. For mainstream colleges, your 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 your young people plans how they are going to collect their results on **Thursday 20th August**. 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, especially if they are moving over the summer. Ideally, they need to receive them on the day, so that they can submit their results to college to enrol in their chosen course. Young people have sometimes missed out or gone on waiting lists when they have not enrolled on Results' Day or the day after. They should plan to enrol **in-person** at the college, as sometimes the online enrolment can be unreliable. **It's important that we also receive a copy of their results on Results' Day so that we can support those who need it.** An email will be sent out nearer the time with instructions and a link to our Results' Form which we ask you or your Exams Officer to complete on Results' Day.

Mock Results: If these have not been included on a recent PEP, please send these to the Virtual School caseholder, including a full list of qualifications they are expected to achieve. Please use these results to measure whether they are on-track to meet the entry requirements for their Post-16 course and put in additional support where needed.

PEPs and Transition Meetings: Please arrange a third PEP or transition meeting to take place towards the end of the year, after exams have finished. The DT at the college or Post-16 destination should be invited. If a full PEP is not needed (e.g. if no further PP+ funding is required), this [Year 11 Transition Planning Form](#) can be used to record the meeting instead of the ePEP. Please also use the [Transition Profile](#) in place of the Pupil Voice sheet.

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 if you have any questions or concerns about supporting your young person with their plans for next year.

Youth Voices – Making Young People’s Voices Count



Youth Voices is a forum for Children We Care For (CWCF) and Care Leavers in Oxfordshire. It gives young people a real say in how they’re cared for - what’s working, what’s not, and what could be better.

Through regular meetings, surveys and enrichment activities, Youth Voices helps the council understand young people’s needs and aspirations. It also holds us, as Corporate Parents, to account.

If you know a young person who might like to join, please contact Jo Hoskin and Callie Lees, our Participation & Engagement Officers, via youth.voice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

For more information, [click here](#).

What is Lifelong Links?

Lifelong Links helps children we care for and care leavers reconnect with family and trusted adults - whether known, lost or new. Through a structured process and a family group conference, young people build lasting support networks that offer stability during care and beyond. Do you know someone who could benefit? [Click here to learn more](#).

Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Cared For Children

From April 2026, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation for children adopted from care, children who left care under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and children who left care under a Child Arrangement Order (CAO) will be £2,690.

For more information on how to access and utilise this funding, visit our [Previously cared for children | Oxfordshire County Council](#) webpage.

OSCP Training Courses

[Training - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Free downloadable resources

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

Have you any children with a parent in prison?

If so, you must [click here](#)



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

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

or email 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.