



Staffordshire
Virtual School

Staffordshire Virtual School Guidance

Version 1, 2023

Guidance to Readers

While this Handbook is intended for all professionals, carers and parents, and children and young people, the different groups may want to focus their initial attention on the following.

Everyone should look at the Introduction on Pages 3 – 5, but:

Social Workers should consider reading prioritising Pages 11 – 16 and 5 – 7.

Designated Teachers should consider prioritising Pages 5 - 18.

Foster Carers and **Residential Carers** should consider prioritising Pages 5 – 16.

Parents of Previously Looked After Children should consider prioritising Pages 4 and 18.

Children and Young People in Care should consider prioritising pages 11 – 16.

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Introduction to the Virtual School

The Virtual School advocates for any child or young person in the care of Staffordshire and aims to ensure that all our children or young people access excellent education and achieve their potential. This responsibility extends to every child or young person in the care of Staffordshire, whether they are placed within the county boundaries or outside them. We support our children in the early years and through Post 16 education. Please do not hesitate to get in touch regarding any educational query relating to these groups of children and young people.

As a team, we model relational and restorative practices and will refer to children in care in this document as 'our children'.

The Virtual School team offer advice and guidance for previously looked after children whether they are adopted, living with a special guardian or are subject to a care arrangement order.

The responsibilities of the Virtual School team have recently been extended to encompass strategic advice and guidance relating to 'children with a social worker'.

virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk

Contacting the Virtual School

For your key contacts visit our webpage:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool>

For generic queries: virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk

Visit the e-PEP page for support and links:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool/epep>

For E-PEP related queries please email: virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk

Service offer to our children in care

a) Each child will have a **named Virtual School Co-ordinator and Advisor** linked to them.

The VS work is divided into 3 key areas:

- Early years
- Statutory school age
- Post-16

Within these teams, each Virtual School Advisor is allocated a range of schools for whom they will be the first point of contact. This applies equally to schools in Staffordshire and those outside the county's boundary with a child in the care of Staffordshire on their roll.

The Co-ordinators oversee all the children in the care of Staffordshire who are on the roll of 'their' schools.

The Relational and Restorative Practice team (RRP) will work where children are on a Child Protection or Child In Need plan (see appendix 1)

The Co-ordinator for previously looked after children will offer advice and guidance across the cohorts.

Schools outside Staffordshire have been allocated to Co-ordinators and Advisors on a Local Authority district basis, depending on where the child or young person has come into care.

- Each school will be **allocated Pupil Premium +** as described in the Virtual School's Pupil Premium + Policy.
- Each school will have access to the **RADY (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) principles and resources** commissioned from Challenging Education by Staffordshire County Council.
- Each school will receive **training and development opportunities** to support our children.
- Each child will benefit from a **bespoke offer of support**, dependent on their level of need.
- Each child will benefit from **arts and sports opportunities**, provided by the Virtual school as extra-curricular activities and events.
- Each child in year 4-6 will benefit from **FREE Entrust music lessons** funded by the Virtual school.

The needs of children and young people in the care of Staffordshire are assessed from the most recent Personal Education Plan (PEP), modified by information received by the Virtual School.

Service offer to Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

Advice & Guidance

Since September 2018, Virtual Schools have had a responsibility to support the improvement of the educational outcomes of previously looked after children by providing advice, guidance, and information to schools, parents and a range of professionals.

This includes any child who has left the care system via a Residence Order, Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or Placement Order leading to an Adoption Order. This is the case regardless of whether the child left the care of Staffordshire or another local authority.

The role of the Designated Teacher was extended to encompass this group of children at the same time.

[Roles and Responsibilities for Looked After and Previously Looked After children in school](#)

Schools can receive **Pupil Premium** for previously looked after children (see below)

As Virtual Schools are not Corporate Parents for this group of children, the Pupil Premium for Children Previously Looked After is paid directly to schools, without any involvement

from the Virtual School. Once received, it is schools' responsibility to ensure it is spent in line with the DfE conditions of grant.

[One Minute Guide Pupil Premium PLAC](#)

The Virtual School does not have records of all its previously looked after children in Staffordshire so the best advice to schools is to sensitively encourage parents and guardians of eligible children to self-declare their child's status to the school where their child is on roll. Schools will also need to ensure that parents/carers/guardians give their permission to have the child's status recorded on the school systems used to generate the annual census return. Schools should be prepared to offer parents/carers/guardians reassurance about the confidentiality with which their self-declaration will be treated.

[Template - Previously looked after children](#)

Questions and queries about previously looked after children should be addressed to virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk

Service offer to Children with a Social Worker (CiN/CPP)

In June 2021, the DfE published guidance on how local authorities should extend the role of the Virtual School Head to promote the education of **children with a social worker**. This cohort has been identified as a group of children who face significant barriers to education as a result of experiences of adversity and trauma, most commonly abuse and neglect.

Within the guidance, children with a social worker are defined as children who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection Plan. This includes children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings...

The three key aspects of this extension of the role of the Virtual School Head are to:

- enhance partnerships with education settings
- identify the needs and barriers to learning for this cohort
- provide advice to key professionals.

The Virtual School has produced an Education Planning Tool to support children with a social worker where there are concerns about education (Appendix 2).

It is not yet clear if the role extension will continue beyond July 2023 in the longer term so this section of the Handbook will be subject to regular updates.

Expected Practice

Admission to School

The [statutory School Admissions Code](#) gives **priority for school admissions to children in care, and to previously looked after children.**

Normal Round Admissions comprise:

- Entry into Primary School Reception
- Progression from Primary School (Year 6) to Secondary School (Year 7)
- Progression from Secondary School (Year 11) to post-16 provision (Year 12)

Admission of children seeking a **mainstream school place within Staffordshire** at these transition points will be managed by **Staffordshire School Admissions**.

Admission of children seeking a **mainstream school place outside Staffordshire** at these transition points, will be managed by the Admissions Team of the Local Authority where the child goes to school.

Admission of children with an **EHCP**, will be managed by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND) of the Local Authority in which the child resides. This includes children transferring to a **special school**.

Our children should ONLY be placed in schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding or 'Good'. Carers and social workers must take account of this when considering school preferences and seek advice from the Virtual School where a local school does not meet this criterion.

Our child, their **carer**, their **social worker** (in conjunction with those with Parental Responsibility) and the **Designated Teacher** at our child's current school, **must** discuss plans around the school our child will move to at the end of year 6, and their plans at the end of Year 11, during the first PEP meeting of the academic year prior to the September when transition will take place.

This discussion must be recorded in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and reviewed at each PEP meeting until transition takes place, to ensure appropriate support is being offered by both the current and destination school.

It is good practice to invite the Designated Teacher from the destination school to attend PEP meetings in the run up to transition once the school is confirmed as the destination for our child, so they can make plans to support the transition both before and after it takes place.

Change of Care Placement

If there is a risk that a care placement will change, then our child's social worker must contact the Virtual School as soon as they become aware of that risk. This is to ensure that plans for a parallel change in educational placement can be put in place if that proves to be necessary.

Once a social worker has informed the Virtual School, they must follow the advice below to ensure any change to our child's educational placement is as orderly as possible.

Where the change in care placement is due to a significant emergency, the social worker must put every practical measure in place to enable our child to continue to attend their current school until an orderly transition to a new school can be planned through an emergency PEP to include the Virtual School.

In-Year Change to Educational Placement

Wherever possible, **in-year school moves should be avoided**, however when this is unavoidable e.g., because a care placement has changed, the social worker **must speak to the Virtual School in advance of planning a change of school**. A PEP should be convened in advance of the move to record the rationale for the move and plan transition.

Moving our children who need a **complex education package without first planning for appropriate education, contravenes care planning statutory guidance, puts our children at risk and may result in a delay in accessing education and put additional pressure on the placement**. Confirming a new school can take weeks not days, and the more complex our child's needs are the longer it can take.

If the change has already happened because of an emergency, the social worker should talk to the Virtual School as soon as the care placement has changed, even though it **does not manage school admissions either within or outside of the county or make applications for school places**. Its role is to offer advice and support.

It is the social worker's responsibility (in conjunction with those with Parental Responsibility), to make an application for a new school after getting advice from the Virtual School.

Our children should ONLY be placed in schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Carers and social workers must take account of this when considering school preferences and seek advice from the Virtual School where a local school does not meet this criterion.

In-year admissions are dealt with by individual schools to which the application should be submitted. Our children and previously looked after children should be admitted without delay. The Admissions team can support our children seeking a school place at a Staffordshire school, whether it is a Normal Round or an In-Year application.

The statutory **School Admissions Code** is clear (Sections 3.10 – 3.13) that, though a school may not wish to admit a child because it has good reason to believe that the child may display challenging behaviour, **it may NOT:**

- **'refuse admission to looked after children, previously looked after children ...', or**
- **refer them to the Fair Access Protocol, or**
- **require 'that the child is first to be assessed for special educational needs'.**

School Attendance

School attendance is not only an educational priority it is a safeguarding priority. The safest place for our children to be during the school day is in school.

We expect all of our children to have 100% attendance unless there is a very good reason for it to be less. Research shows that school days lost are directly linked to low attainment.

The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, November 2015. Key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England. The analysis reveals that, controlling for all factors, the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:

Time in care	Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (i) do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and (ii) better than those who have only been in short term care. So, it appears that care may protect them educationally.
Placement Changes	Each additional change in care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE.
Placement Type	Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over 6 grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.
Feeling secure and cared for	Young people can engage with learning better when they feel secure and cared for in a placement.
School Changes	Young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less than those who did not.
School Absence	For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored 2 grades less at GCSE.
School Exclusions	For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusion, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE.
School Type	Young people in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared with those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in PRUs with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.

This research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford. Educational progress of looked after children, Rees Centre, November 2015.

a) **Holidays in term time** should not take place.

Carers and social workers should not request time off for our children during school term time. The Virtual School will not approve absence for a holiday in term time.

If the social worker believes there is an exceptional reason for time off during a school term, they must complete the Unavoidable Term Time Holiday form (Appendix 3), and send it to our child's school, the Virtual School and District Lead for comment.

b) **Monitoring attendance.**

The Virtual School monitors attendance weekly and, where there are concerns, will contact the Designated Teacher and the social worker to discuss the school's response. The Virtual School expect half termly PEPs where there are attendance concerns.

Part-time Timetables

Our children should not be placed on a part-time timetable.

If the school believes there are exceptional circumstances that make a part-time timetable appropriate, advice and support must be sought from the Virtual School and the social worker before that timetable is put in place and it must be time limited. A PEP meeting should be convened which clearly outlines the rationale with an agreed review date.

Given the educational disadvantage our children in care already face, a part-time timetable can:

- Expose them to additional safeguarding risks
- Leave them with further gaps in their learning
- Add to any sense of rejection they already feel
- Intensify existing emotional health and well-being issues

The Virtual School will therefore want assurances that the school has:

- Considered other approaches to meet the child's educational needs
- Put in place a time-limited plan for the re-integration of the child into full-time education before any part-time timetable is put in place

Alternative Provision

All our children should access full time, mainstream, education unless they have an EHCP that recommends special school provision. Research shows that children in care accessing mainstream provision have higher attainment and make greater progress than those that do not.

If a school believes our child might benefit from an alternative provision, they should consult the Virtual School. They should also call an early review of the PEP and invite a representative of the alternative provision to attend. They must be central to setting the PEP targets in consultation with our child's school.

The school's Designated Teacher retains responsibility for the child and their PEPs so long as our child remains on the school roll.

Exclusion/Suspension from School

The [DfE's Exclusions Guidance](#) states that: *There are **certain groups of pupils** with additional needs who **are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion**. This includes pupils with EHC Plans and **looked after children**. The head teacher should, as far as possible, **avoid permanently excluding** any pupil with an EHC Plan or a looked after children.*

Exclusion means a child is not only missing out on their opportunity to make educational progress, but it also increases their risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Exclusion therefore presents a safeguarding risk. The safest place for a child to be during the school day is in school.

Exclusion often reinforces a sense of rejection some of our children already feel, causing further damage to their emotional health and well-being.

School Behaviour and Discipline Policies should recognise the safeguarding and emotional health risks presented by exclusion by making reasonable adjustments for children who face barriers to engaging with learning due to their early life experiences.

Schools should seek the advice of the Virtual School to ensure a relational and restorative focus; including being more attachment and trauma informed and to help make their policies more attachment and trauma aware.

If an exclusion (either suspension or permanent exclusion) is deemed appropriate in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy, all exclusions must be: Lawful, Rational, Reasonable, Proportionate, Fair, and must be in accordance with the **school's published behaviour policy** and the DfE's Statutory Exclusions Guidance. There is also an expectation that schools make reasonable adjustments in the application of their policy based on the child's needs.

The school should also be able to evidence:

- A **graduated response** to support a child's educational and emotional needs.
 - Proactive contact with the Virtual School to consider what **additional support** may be required and whether an early PEP review is appropriate.
 - **Proactive engagement** with carers and social workers (and those with Parental Responsibility)
- a) If a period of **suspension** is unavoidable, the headteacher must:
- Without delay, **notify** the carer, the social worker (and the person holding Parental Responsibility) and the Virtual School, using the email address virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk of the period of the exclusion and the reason(s) for it. Ideally, notification should be in person or by telephone in the first instance. Details of the exclusion should be followed up in writing.
 - Ensure **work** for the pupil to complete at home is provided during the first 5 days of the exclusion.
 - Fulfils the school's statutory duty to **arrange suitable full-time education** for any excluded pupil of compulsory school age that begins no later than the 6th day of the exclusion.
 - Consider DfE guidance stating that 'the school and the local authority should work together to arrange **alternative provision** from the first day following exclusion' for Looked after Children.
 - The social worker and Virtual School should be **notified of any governor meeting and should be given opportunity to arrange attendance**. Social workers should be given the opportunity to **share information** regarding the child's circumstances which might have an impact on their presentation in school.
- b) If a pattern of **suspension** emerges:

The Virtual School will ask the social worker to call an urgent PEP meeting and invite the Local Authority Inclusion Officer. The purpose of the meeting will be to consider what additional support could be provided to avoid any further suspensions.

c) If a child is subject to more than 15 days of **suspension** in any term:

The exclusions must be reviewed by the school's governing board. The school should circulate the pack used for the meeting to carer, social worker (and those with Parent Responsibility), and the Virtual School at least 5 school days prior to the meeting.

d) If a child is nearing 45 days of **suspension**:

The Virtual School will ask the school to assess whether suspension is providing an effective sanction and explore what alternative strategies could be implemented in preference to suspension.

If a Permanent Exclusion is being considered

Paragraph 11 of the statutory guidance states that school can **only** permanently exclude a pupil:

- In response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- Where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

All Exclusions, Fixed Term and Permanent are governed by **statutory guidance which should be followed by all schools in England**. ['Exclusions from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units', September 2017.](#)

In Staffordshire, the Inclusion Team can offer advice, guidance and clarification regarding exclusions. They are contactable at inclusion@staffordshire.gov.uk. The relevant Education Inclusion Officer (EIO) will then be notified for your district.

Transition to Post 16 Education, Employment or Training

In September 2015, government 'raised the age of participation (RPA)'. Since then, all local authorities have been required to ensure that all young people are in education, employment or training (EET) until they are aged 18.

The local authority duty to promote the educational achievement of a looked-after child extends to looked-after young people aged 16 or 17 preparing to leave care. These are referred to in the Children Act 1989 as 'eligible children'.

The Virtual School is reviewing its service offer to post-16 young people in care and care leavers but all young people in Year 12 and 13 above (age 16-19) must have a termly PEP.

Personal Education Planning

Personal Education Planning comprises a termly cycle that sees Personal Education Plans (PEP) produced or updated and then reviewed at a Personal Education Plan meeting (PEP meeting).

Personal Education Planning is a process NOT just a series of termly events.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP):

- Summarises the story of a child in care's journey through education.
- Identifies all the good things that happen during a child's educational journey, as well as any barriers they encounter on the way.
- Details the strategies that support the child to maximise their attainment through accelerated progress, allowing them to reach their potential.

Taken together, the child's Personal Education Plan provides an invaluable resource for those adults working with the child during the next stage of their educational journey. However, they will also help the child/young person in their adult future as they get to know how to best support themselves and thrive in society when there is less support available to them.

The Personal Education Plan is a statutory component of the child's wider Care Plan and a PEP must be initiated as part of the Care Plan and reviewed 3 times per year.

All young people in care, from pre-school until age 18 (even if they are not in a formal education provision) must have a PEP.

In Staffordshire, we have PEPs for children from early years (aged 2-3) until the end of Year 13 (aged 18-19) a Pathway Plan (EPP) for those aged 18 - 21 years.

The first Personal Education Plan meeting

If this is the child's first Personal Education Plan (or your first PEP, as a social worker, Designated Teacher or carer) the Virtual School will help!

If you are not registered on our ePEP system, please contact our team on:

07812 515084

Virtualschoole-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk



The PEP is a statutory document for each of our children. In Staffordshire, we use ePEP to record PEP documents. The PEP should promote aspirational educational achievement with our child's needs at the centre. All those involved in promoting the educational success of our child should attend the PEP meeting, including the child themselves.

The PEP document will play a role in tracking and monitoring the child's progress as they move through education. Each term, aspirational targets will be set with the aim of supporting our children to achieve in education. PEPs should be completed at least termly but may need to be completed more frequently.

For our children who have recently come into the care of the local authority, a PEP meeting should be initiated within 10 days and completed within 20 days.

Responsibility for initiating the first PEP meeting sits with the child's social worker. Both the social worker and Designated Teacher are responsible for ensuring that the first electronic PEP document is accurate and complete prior to the first meeting taking place.

- When a child comes into care, the **Virtual School will contact the social worker** to advise that a PEP meeting needs to take place.
- Our child's **social worker** must contact the school's Designated Teacher and arrange a date and time for the first PEP meeting which must be within **10 school days** of the child coming into care. It is the social worker's responsibility to send out invitations for the PEP meetings.
 - If the education provision does not know that the child is in care, they will be unable to update their safeguarding records or respond to the needs of the child that arise from leaving their birth family and/or moving into foster or residential care.
- Please ensure that the Virtual School is invited to the first PEP meeting. If they are not, they will be unable to gain an accurate understanding of the child or provide the most appropriate advice or support.
- Our child's **social worker** must contact the child's carer (and/or parent if the child is placed with them or the parent retains Parental Responsibility) as soon as possible to ensure they are able to attend the PEP meeting. The child's carers are essential members of the team around the child and must be involved at every stage.

Please see our ePEP guidance document (Appendix 4) for more information on ePEP completion.

- Our child's **social worker, carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate) and **Designated Teacher** should agree who is best placed to support the child to complete our child's views in PEP Section 1 'About Me' in advance of the first PEP Meeting. A PEP cannot be quality assured as 'good' if the child has not contributed to it.
 - This is the child's Personal Education Plan and they should be supported to express their views about their education and the support they feel they need.

- Our child's **social worker** must ensure that 'My Care Information' section of 'My Meeting Agenda' in Section 2 of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the first PEP Meeting.
 - This is an essential part of the PEP as it provides the essential background context for the child.

- Our child's **Designated Teacher** must ensure that Section 3 of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the first PEP Meeting, even if the child is new to their school, in which case they should liaise with the child's previous school. When a child has special educational needs, Designated Teachers should liaise with the school's SENCo and upload IEPs/EHCP documents.
 - This is an essential part of the PEP as it provides the essential educational context for the child.

- Our child's **social worker** and **Designated Teacher** must work together to encourage our child to attend this first PEP meeting and subsequent PEP meetings.
 - As well as the Plan being theirs, so is the Personal Education Plan meeting.
 - Children who are not invited and supported to attend and whose views are not valued early in their time in care can become disillusioned with the process and, indeed, with education in general. Every adult involved should be encouraged to listen and respond as positively as possible to the child's views.

- We would advise that the Designated Teacher leads the meeting following the meeting agenda template in Section 2 of the ePEP (unless the child is in full time Alternative Provision in which case the AP will lead the meeting, BUT the school's Designated Teacher must still attend). This will allow the social worker to complete the meeting agenda within the meeting. All sections should be fully completed on the meeting agenda page to ensure the ePEP can be judged 'good or better' when quality assured by the Virtual School.
 - This is an education meeting, so the Designated Teacher is best placed to ensure that the others attending understand the educational issues being discussed.

- The social worker's role during the first PEP Meeting is to support the child to express their opinion, to advocate on their behalf if necessary, and to behave like a good parent and support the carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) to do that, too, by:

- Asking for the educational data to be explained if they are not certain what it means.
 - Asking what the support offered will look like and when it will be definitely in place.
 - Asking what the potential consequences of decisions about the nature of provision might mean for the child's future educational options.
 - Asking how it will be clear whether the support being suggested has made a difference or not by the time of the next PEP meeting
 - Asking for time to get advice from the Virtual School before agreeing to sign off a plan they are not certain is right for the child.
- Our child's social worker should use the ePEP system to record the outcomes of discussion, ensuring all sections are complete. Once this has been done, Section 2 can be signed off as complete on the ePEP sign off page.
 - The Virtual School wants to avoid creating separate 'leading the meeting' and 'writing up the outcome' tasks for the social worker by encouraging them to update the ePEP during the meeting.
 - The sooner that Section 2 is signed off, the sooner the Virtual School can quality assure the ePEP and release Pupil Premium + funding to the school to support the child.
- Our child's social worker, Designated Teacher, carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) and child (and Virtual School representative if attending) should agree the date of the next PEP Meeting and add it to the ePEP before the meeting ends. The date must be before the end of the next school term.
 - The ePEP cannot be signed-off until the date is agreed and added to the ePEP.
- Our child's **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** will receive a prompt from the ePEP system when the PEP has been completed, if they are attached on ePEP. If they have any queries or concerns about the ePEP they should raise them with the Virtual School.
 - The IRO cannot ensure that our child is receiving the support they need, and are entitled to, if they do not have a complete and accurate PEP to inform their views on the quality of the education provision our child is receiving.

Subsequent PEP Meetings.

PEPs are held at least termly and more frequently when needed. If a school is in an Ofsted Requires Improvement or Inadequate category, half-termly meeting as a minimum, should be held.

A PEP meeting must take place and an updated ePEP signed-off and submitted before the end of each school term.

Responsibilities for initiating, issuing invitations and leading the PEP meeting and completing Section 2 of the PEP, are those of the social worker.

- Our child's **social worker** must contact the child's Designated Teacher, carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) and other relevant invited professionals and **confirm the date, time and location of the PEP review meeting.**
- **At least one meeting a year should be held face to face in our child's education setting.**
- Our child's **social worker, carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate) and **Designated Teacher** should agree which of them is best placed to support the child to gather our child's views in the About Me section of the ePEP in advance of the PEP meeting.
- Our child's **social worker** must ensure that 'My Care Information' section of 'My Meeting Agenda' in **Section 2** of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is complete and accurate before they attend the PEP meeting.
- Our child's **Designated Teacher** must ensure that **Section 3** of the electronic PEP document (ePEP) is up to date and accurate before they attend the PEP review meeting, even if the child is new to their school, in which case they should liaise with the child's previous school.
- Our child's **social worker** and **Designated Teacher** should work together to encourage the child to attend every PEP review meeting.
- Our child's **Designated Teacher** leads the meeting using the meeting agenda in **Section 2** as with a **particular focus** on:
 - Reviewing the impact of the previous plan on the SMART targets that were set.
 - Reviewing the relevance and appropriateness of the support that the previous plan had put in place.
 - Agreeing, where any of the targets were not achieved, whether those targets need to be adjusted or whether the support offered to the child to achieve them needs to be intensified or otherwise changed.
 - Liaising with the school's SENCO, when a child has special educational needs, and uploading IEPs/EHCP documents to the ePEP.
- The **social worker's role** during the PEP Review Meeting is to support the child to express their opinion, to advocate on their behalf if necessary and to continue to

behave like a good parent and support the carer (and/or parent, if appropriate) to do that, too by:

- Asking for clarification if it's not clear how the Designated Teacher knows that the SMART targets from the previous ePEP have been met (or not).
 - Ensuring that the support described in the previous ePEP was delivered as expected.
 - Ensuring they understand the Designated Teacher's rationale for either changing the SMART target(s) or support previously.
 - Ensuring that any recommendation by the Designated Teacher to change the nature or extent of the child's education provision makes sense as part of the child's Care Plan.
- Our child's **social worker** should use the ePEP system to record the outcomes of discussion.
 - Our child's **social worker, Designated Teacher, carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate), **child** (and **Virtual School** representative if attending) should agree the date of the next PEP review meeting and add it to the ePEP before the meeting ends. **The date must be before the end of the next school term.**
 - The **child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** will receive a prompt from the ePEP system when it has been completed. If they have any queries or concerns about the ePEP they should raise them with the Virtual School as soon as possible.

Between PEP meetings

No one should take a significant decision about a child in care's education without reviewing the PEP in consultation with the child, our child's school, carer, Virtual School, IRO and, where appropriate, their parents.

Our child's **Designated Teacher** must, though:

- Ensure that the support agreed at the PEP meeting/review meeting is implemented **in the timescales agreed at the meeting.**
- Monitor the impact of the support offered regularly and, if they have concerns that the support is not making the expected impact, **ask our child's social worker to initiate an early PEP Review Meeting** to agree how the support will be adjusted to better support the child.

Our child's **social worker** must, though, use their **statutory visits**, and **other contact** with our child to:

- **Update their understanding** of our child's experience of education.
- **Check** that our child is receiving the support agreed at the PEP meeting.
- **Ask** our child if that support is making a difference, and if so, what the difference is.
- **Contact** the Designated Teacher if they believe the support is either not being provided as agreed at the last meeting or that our child does not see any impact and ask the Virtual School for advice about next steps.

Our child's **carer** (and/or **parent**, if appropriate) must see their everyday contact with the child as an opportunity to discuss their experience of education and the support agreed at the PEP meeting. Where they have concerns, they should contact our child's social worker.

Our child's **IRO must** contact the Virtual School as soon as they have **any concerns about the PEP or the child's experience of education**.

Quality Assurance of PEPs

The submitted ePEP will be quality assured and signed off by Virtual School. Each PEP will be RAG rated and social workers, Designated Teachers, and IROs will be able to see this rating on our child's ePEP front page. The current Quality Assurance criteria can be found in Appendix 5.

Pupil Premium for our children in care

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is additional grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for Children who are looked after by the Local Authority. This additional funding is provided by the DfE to secure improvements in the progress and attainment of our Looked After Children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. PP+ is different to other kinds of Pupil Premium in that it is the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH), not schools, who is responsible for allocating and managing PP+ for Children in the care of Staffordshire. To ensure effective use of the PP+ Grant, the Virtual School Headteacher can decide to retain and/or administer some/all of the PP+ Grant funds they receive. Staffordshire Virtual School administers the PP+ for Staffordshire Looked After Children irrespective of where they live or attend school as described in the [DfE Guidance](#).

Our children, educated in Staffordshire, but in the care of another Local Authority (LA) receive their PP+ from their 'home' Authority. To this effect, each Local Authority's Virtual School sets its policy concerning this management. Looked After Children of statutory school age (Reception-Year 11) become eligible as soon as they come into care.

Delegation of PP+ to schools and education settings

Statutory school age Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

In Staffordshire, £1500 is available to schools per child in care. To receive the available funds, schools and education settings need to complete our child's PEP each term and set SMART targets that are designed to close the gap in attainment and progress (see below for guidance). The PP+ funding request needs to be documented in the PEP and show how the money will be used. The £1500 is available in three termly payments of £500 (Autumn, Spring, and Summer). If no PEP is in place, or the quality of the PEP is judged too low, then no PP+ funding will be delegated.

If a child/young person is temporarily without a school place during any one term, then the termly payment may be retained by the Virtual School Head to provide tutoring or any other, additional, interventions to maintain educational progress and engagement during this time.

Support on how it can be used: [Pupil-Premium-Plus-Use.pdf \(staffordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Pupil-Premium-Plus-Use.pdf)

Early Years PEP and PP+

Our children are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium the term after their 3rd birthday.

Early Years Pupil Premium is additional funding used to improve our children's learning and development. The funding is paid directly to the childcare provider as part of their normal funding claim with the local authority. This is approximately £300 per academic year.

For our looked after children, the use of pupil premium is discussed in their termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting with the childcare provider, social worker and parent/carer.

Some children may be eligible for 30 hours provision where they meet the published criteria.

All looked after children aged 2 years+ should have an Early Years PEP in place until they reach statutory school age. In Staffordshire, it is the Virtual School's responsibility to ensure that each child has an up-to-date PEP that is reviewed termly. Social workers and childcare providers have a responsibility to work in partnership to ensure this plan is meaningful and ensures access to high quality Early Years education.

Post 16 PEP and PP+

PEPs are completed via our online 'ePEP' system and must be reviewed termly in the school or setting with the Designated Teacher, carer, social worker and our child until the end of year 13. For training and support with the ePEP system please contact Virtualschool-epep@staffordshire.gov.uk.

PP+ and children not in education, employment or training

It is essential for PEPs to be held and PP+ allocated to children currently not in education, employment or training.

Centrally Managed Pupil Premium Plus

Because of their vulnerability and high degree of mobility, our children need an 'insurance policy': a central service that supports in relation to these risks and provides services that a school could not have on permanent standby. The Virtual School therefore retains some funding per child to fund a range of services and interventions.

The funds will not be accrued and PP+ cannot be carried forward beyond any one financial year. Any unspent PP+ funding is taken back by the Department for Education at the end of each financial year.

Please see Appendix 8 for our Staffordshire Virtual School Pupil Premium + Policy

Pupil Premium for previously looked after children (PLAC)

Who are our previously looked after children on a school's roll?

A previously looked after child is a child who has left care in England and Wales because they became the subject of:

- an adoption order
- a special guardianship order (SGO); or,
- a child arrangements order (CAO).

Adopted children who have never been in care are **not** previously looked after and are **not** eligible for PP.

The Virtual School is unlikely to have accurate lists of previously looked after children as the child may not have been in the care of Staffordshire though they now attend a school in Staffordshire. Schools should, therefore, put in place arrangements to encourage the parents/carers of these children to self-declare.

It is important that schools are sensitive in seeking this information as some parents/carers/guardians will be concerned about sharing it. Schools can reduce this concern by stressing the confidentiality with which they will treat such declarations and by offering to meet parent/carers/guardians of previously looked after children face-to-face, in an effort to develop a relationship of mutual trust.

Schools should put in place arrangements to satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the parent/carer/guardian for documentary evidence of their previously looked-after status or a copy of the relevant order (above).

Pupil Premium for previously looked-after children

The DT and school finance manager should familiarise themselves with the relevant sections of the current DfE Guidance, which also details the timing of payments, but in summary:

Schools receive PP for previously looked after children, direct. The Virtual School Head is not informed of these payments and does not receive, manage, or allocate this funding; they have no role in defining school policy on how it is spent.

It is the school census which is used by the DfE to determine how many previously looked after children are on roll at a school and hence how much PP is allocated. This is why schools should ensure their management information systems are up to date with respect to this status.

Schools should ensure their Pupil Premium Strategy includes details of how they deploy PP for previously looked after children.

Children who are educated at home or attend private schools are not currently eligible.

Early Years Pupil Premium - the grant is payable at £300 per academic year. The child is eligible for the funding the term after their 3rd birthday. For nurseries/settings/childminders

to access the funding, parents/guardians/carers must declare their child's status directly to the provider.

[One Minute Guide Pupil Premium PLAC](#)

Education Planning Previously looked after children

Rationale and Purpose:

- For those in education to be fully aware of the needs and issues faced by our previously looked after children and their parents/carers/guardians.
- To encourage further positive collaboration across home and school/early years provision.

Staffordshire has introduced an Education Plan for Previously Looked after Children (EPPLAC). The EPPLAC's main function is as an awareness raising document that ensures that relevant information is available to those who need to know and that effective communication routes are established. It draws on the pro-active nature of our Children in Care Personal Education Plan (PEP). The intention of the PEP process is to ensure collaborative planning and support across home, school/early years provision and other agencies. The EPPLAC is not intended to replace other (more reactive) education-based plans such as IEPs (Individual Education Plans) or PSPs (Pastoral Support Programmes).

EPPLACs can be initiated by either school/early years provision or parents/carers/guardians. The process will establish ongoing reviews.

It is intended that the EPPLAC process is initiated when:

- A school/early years provision aged child becomes adopted, i.e., at the last Children in Care Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting before an Adoption Order/SGO is in place.
- The child starts at a new school/early years provision.

However, the process can be initiated at any point should the above not have taken place.

[Education plan for PLAC Secondary Age Child](#)

[Education plan for PLAC Primary Age Child](#)

[Education Plan for PLAC Early Years Age Child](#)

[PLAC Secondary Child Voice](#)

[PLAC Primary Child Voice](#)

[PLAC Early Years Child Voice](#)

[NEW EP-PLAC Guidance](#)

SEND Support

SEND and Inclusion Hub and SEND local offer

Where schools have concerns that a child may have additional needs, or would benefit from further support, they should refer the child to the District SEND and Inclusion Hubs. Information about the [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Local Offer | Staffordshire Connects](#)

can be found on the Virtual School website, and Virtual School staff should be invited to the PEP to discuss any concerns, so that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner.

Links between Personal Education Planning and SEND planning

Personal Education Plans (PEP) for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) should, as much as is possible, be written so that PEP targets present termly steppingstones towards the longer-term objectives of the EHCP. The Virtual School understands that the incremental progress of children with the most significant needs may be small, but target setting should seek to recognise and credit those steps no matter how small they may be.

One PEP meeting a year should take place at the same time as the EHCP Annual Review.

Schools should attach Individual Learning Plans and/or EHCPs to the PEP document and these should be regularly reviewed to reflect the current needs and support in place.

Education Psychology Support for our children

Educational settings in Staffordshire, including maintained schools and academies, have the opportunity to purchase Educational Psychology time to support children and young people.

The Local Authority also commission Educational Psychologists to fulfil statutory duties relating to special educational needs and disability. Full details of the service can be found [here](#).

Relational and Restorative Team support for children who have or have had a social work involvement

Staffordshire Virtual School has developed a team to support new duties of children who have, or have had, a social work involvement. The team comprises:

- Relational and Restorative Practice Co-ordinator
- Relational and Restorative Practice Advisors x 4, working across a double-district with statutory education age provision
- Relational and Restorative Practice Advisor x 0.5 FTE, working countywide with post-16 provision

The Virtual School Relational and Restorative Practice team may be able to provide training for schools, foster carers, social care and other agencies on Relational, Restorative (RRP) and Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed (AATI) approaches. This is central to the aspiration for every school in the county to become a relational school. The training is intended to prepare schools to be more inclusive by better meeting the needs of children, whether looked after or not, who have experienced difficulties in their lives. Continuing Professional

Development (CPD) and training on topics with an RRP/AATI basis may also be offered to meet the needs of the child/young person.

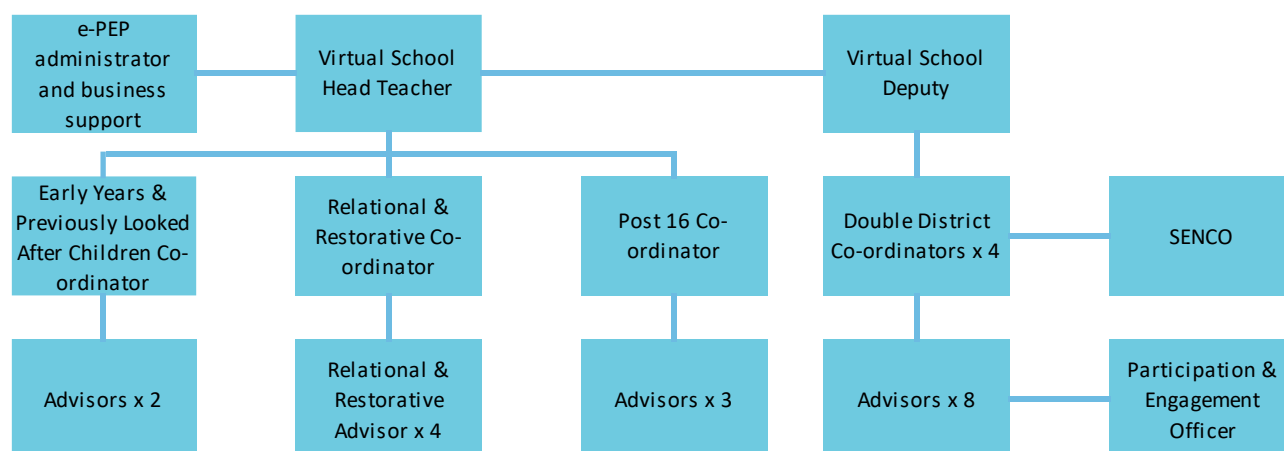
Staffordshire is keen to ensure that Staffordshire schools have the opportunity to work towards an accredited Staffordshire Relational Schools Pathway (SRSP). We recognise that ARC accreditation offers schools a meaningful, nationally recognised award that acknowledges the endeavours of schools to ensure TIAA approaches are integral to their systems, processes and daily practice. Over the course of the academic year 2022-23, the new Relational and Restorative Practice Team (RRP) will develop a Staffordshire accreditation offer. This will be underpinned by the ARC accreditation but will incorporate a local accreditation based on the developed offer. Any training offered through Staffordshire's Relational Schools Pathway will also include further CPD opportunities for staff. All of the RRP training offer will be free to schools who have committed to progress through the SRSP.

Further to the training with school staff, Staffordshire is developing a Student Ambassador programme for schools. This will be offered to schools on the Relational Schools Pathway and where initial training has been delivered. The sessions will be offered to a group of pupils in Staffordshire schools, with a mix of children with a social work involvement and children who do not.

The RRP team can offer solution circles and/or restorative conferencing where these are deemed appropriate approaches. They will be facilitated by the RRP advisor for your district and will be available for children with a social work involvement, currently on Child Protection or Child In Need plan. Any support will be limited to a maximum of 3 interventions, including the initial solution circle or conference and 2 further review meetings. An action plan will be produced and shared. An appropriate professional will be identified to take over the chairing of review meetings should more than 2 be necessary.

Where education settings require further support for our children, please discuss this with the Virtual School Headteacher or your district Co-ordinator.

Appendix 1: The Virtual School Team



The Virtual School Head Teacher

The VHT reports to the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Skills and works collaboratively as part of the leadership of the Children’s System to create a culture of inclusion, innovation to drive improvement and improve education outcomes for children with a social care involvement.

Responsibilities include:

- Work with partners nationally, regionally and locally to drive the improved attainment and progress of care experienced children and children with a social care involvement
- To inform policy and planning across the children’s system with the aim of improving education attainment and progress of care experienced and children with a social care involvement.
- Ensure the best use of resources including financial and team to improve education outcomes

The Virtual School Deputy

The Virtual School Deputy Head will support the VHT in implementing statutory and non-statutory duties promoting the education of previously looked after children and children who have, or have had, a social work involvement.

Responsibilities will include:

- Providing the highest level of professional and operational leadership to the co-ordinator team.
- Supporting service improvements through audits, quality assurance, identifying training, benchmarking and the interpretation and dissemination of legislation
- To deliver advice, guidance and training on evidence-based approaches and best practice in relation to educational stability, raised attainment, attendance and

effective use of resources such as Pupil Premium for care experienced and children with a social care involvement.

- Ensure that effective professional practice and supervision is delivered throughout the team to endure oversight of quality and consistency of practice including advice and guidance for children at high risk of poor outcomes.

The Co-ordinators

Each co-ordinator has an overview of a locality or specific cohort of our children, e.g. early years, and tracks and monitors attainment and progress of our children.

Activities include:

- Reviewing the attainment and progress of each of our children termly through the PEP process and supporting commissioning and targeting of initiatives using their detailed knowledge of the children in their cohort.
- Review and sign off PEPs for all our children with a focus moving from compliance using the system, to quality assurance and coaching to improve PEP quality.
- Intervention to overcome barriers for individual children at risk of poor outcomes.
- Offering advice, guidance, and training to key external and internal partners to promote understanding of the education needs of our children in care, previously looked after children and social care experienced children.
- Leadership of identified priority area.

SENCo

The SENCo is a part time position to support our children with EHCPs and those needing additional support or assessment. She also offers advice and guidance to staff, schools, carers and social workers around the graduated response and strategies to aid our young people.

Activities include:

- Working with schools and VS staff to make individual and personalised EHCNAs
- Advising and updating internal and external professionals with SEND related information
- Looking at interventions and strategies that can improve academic attainment to support children who are below age related expectations

The Advisors (previously 'Mentors')

The advisors undertake an element of direct work supporting our children to engage in wider learning opportunities projects and initiatives.

Activities include:

- Support planning for our children new to care ensuring PEPs are in place
- Tracking and support for individual children
- Support for projects and initiatives e.g. A2U, RADY and arts and sports events
- Attendance at PEPs at the direction of the co-ordinator.

The Relational and Restorative Co-ordinator

The relational and restorative co-ordinator will lead on the co-ordination and implementation of restorative and relational practice across education settings in Staffordshire.

This will include:

- Promote the development of relational and restorative approaches with education partners and key children system teams including EIOs, social workers etc
- Development and delivery of a comprehensive training programme for education settings
- Co-ordination of the Relational and Restorative Advisor team
- Oversight of performance and quality
- Work with other Local Authorities to develop Staffordshire's RRP offer

The Relational and Restorative Advisors

Support the Relational and Restorative Advisor on the implementation of Relational and Restorative Practice in education settings in Staffordshire

Activities include:

- Co-ordinate restorative responses for individual children with a social care involvement e.g., where there is danger of exclusion, emotional wellbeing, SEND Needs, attendance issues, challenges in securing appropriate education, children not achieving their potential
- Offer support and advice to education settings developing their practice
- Support co-ordination and delivery of training, including delivery of Student Ambassador training

Consultant and Engagement Worker

This post is to promote arts and sports activities and engage care experienced young people. It is a fixed term post to deliver a range of consultation activities for children with a social work involvement and to improve access and engagement to services

Activities include:

- Specific aim to increase engagement in arts and sport for our children in care
- Support our children to influence future arts and sports programme planning
- Support the Virtual School in responding to views of our children and ensuring our actions are fed back to them

Business support

The Virtual school are supported by SCC Business Support team who help to maintain the e-pep system and functionality for the team.

Activities include:

- Supporting the VS team with admin tasks
- Supporting schools, social workers, carers and staff with e-pep queries
- Processing pupil premium payments and providing financial guidance/support
- Collating and providing data for analysis
- Processing tuition referrals and commissioned contracts

Contacting the Virtual School

For your key contacts visit our webpage:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool>

For generic queries: virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk

Visit the e-PEP page for support and links:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool/epep>

For E-PEP related queries please email to: virtualschoole-pep@staffordshire.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – Education Plan for Children and Young People with a Social Worker



Education Plan for Children and Young People with a Social Worker

Child/Young Person's Name	
Date of Birth	
Education Setting	
Designated Safeguarding Lead	
SENCO	
Date of Meeting	
Date of Review	
Attendees	

Child/Young Person's View

What is going well?	
What subjects are you interested in or want to get better at?	
What Sports or Arts activities are you interested in?	
What do you find more difficult and what would help?	

Attainment and Progress

Does the child/young person have an EHCP or are they on the SEN Register? Date of next review:	
Is attainment at age related expectations?	
What are the barriers to learning?	
What academic interventions are in place to support accelerated progress?	
What pastoral interventions are in place to support accelerated progress?	
How do we know interventions are effective?	

Attendance and Inclusion

Attendance %	
Is there a full-time offer? If not, please provide details *	
If attendance is below 95% what are the reasons for absence	
Provide details of the Support Plan to improve attendance	

Is the SENCO involved and the child on the SEN register with SEMH as the barrier to learning?	
---	--

Wider Considerations

What are the reasons for social care involvement and how is this likely to impact on learning?	
How can we encourage participation in the wider life of the school?	
Consider how social, emotional and mental health are impacting on learning	
Is transition planning aspirational?	

Actions

Action	By Who?	By When?

Appendix 3 – Unavoidable holiday in term time form

Staffordshire Looked After Children – Unavoidable holidays in school term-time

Staffordshire is a committed corporate parent, working collectively to raise the educational attainment of our children in care. Good school attendance and positive educational outcomes are inextricably linked.

The Department for Education (DfE) published research in 2016 which found that:

- The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4
- Pupils with **no absence** are 1.3 times more likely to achieve level 4 or above, and 3.1 times more likely to achieve level 5 or above, than pupils that missed 10-15% of all sessions
- Pupils with **no absence** are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*- C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils that missed 15-20% of KS4 lessons

From an education perspective, Staffordshire Virtual School would never advocate for a child taking a holiday in term time. There are 13 weeks in the year that our children can have holidays outside of school term times.

We do, however, appreciate that there may be very rare occasions where a holiday in term time may be considered. This will need to be agreed as a social care decision as there would never be an educational rationale for such holidays. In such cases, we would ask that all alternatives have been explored prior to requesting such holiday.

Carers

- Will need to discuss the reasons for a term time holiday with the child's social worker and their own supervising social worker. The needs of the child must be evidenced as rational for request.

Social workers

- Will need to discuss with carers and supervising social worker and explore all other alternatives (such as respite care) to a term time holiday. If it is decided that it is unavoidable, then a decision will need to be obtained from the District Lead. Within this decision, information is needed on how the loss in learning will be mitigated. It will also need to be evidenced how carers are being supported in order to avoid taking further term time holidays. If this is agreed, then the holiday should be requested from the school. The relevant district Virtual School Co-ordinator needs to then be contacted to discuss the information completed in the form below.

Child's Name	
Year Group	
Name of school	
Dates requested	
Current attendance %	
Reason for the requested holiday being unavoidable in term time (addressing the needs & voice of the child)	
Details of how the carers have been supported not to take future term time holidays (in line with SCC policy)	
Details of how the lost learning will be addressed	
District Lead decision and comment	
Headteacher decision and comment	
Virtual School Coordinator decision and comment	

Appendix 4 - ePEP Guidance for Designated Teachers

When you have been added to the ePEP system by Virtual School you will receive an email from ePEP Online with a link to the log on page <https://secure.epeponline.co.uk/login>

If you have never used the system before, please click **First Time Registration** and complete your details. You will be asked to set up a password and memorable word and will be sent a link to verify your email address. You will then be able to log in.

Please click **First Time Registration** on the homepage using this link <https://secure.epeponline.co.uk/login> (or in the separate email you will receive from ePEP Online). If you already have your account set up you will now see this young person as one of your learners. There has been a national single sign-on system since April 2020. If you have used the old ePEP system before this date (with a User ID) but have never used single sign-on you will need to register first.

The screenshot shows the ePEP Single Sign-On login page. At the top left, there is a logo for 'ePEP eGOV.UK.COM Official ePEP Online' and a larger 'ePEP Single Sign-on' logo. On the right, the title 'ePEP Single Sign-On' is displayed. Below the title are two input fields: 'Registered e-mail' and 'Password'. A blue 'Login' button is positioned below the password field. To the right of the input fields, there is a checkbox for 'I agree that by logging into the system I accept that:' followed by a list of terms: '- I am a authorised user of this system.', '- I have been granted permission to access the SSO ePEP Service.', '- I agree to abide by the acceptable use policy.', '- I agree terms and conditions of the service.', and '- I agree and accept the use of cookies on this site.' Below the terms is a grey button for 'Request Password/ Password Reset' and a green button for 'First time registration (verification required)'. On the left side, there is a note: 'If you having problems logging in or accessing this page. Please, contact our ePEP Support Desk on 033 377 20944'. At the bottom left, the HM Government G-CLOUD Supplier logo is shown, along with a recommendation: 'For optimal performance and security measures, we recommend using Google Chrome browser when accessing this site.' At the bottom right, there is a 'CYBER ESSENTIALS' logo with a checkmark.

If you forget your password, it can be reset by clicking Request password/password reset

Appendix 5 - PEP Quality Assurance Criteria

Outstanding	<p>All of the statements for 'good' plus:</p> <p>PEP shows clear evidence of strong and aspirational care and education collaboration with child's views at the centre to achieve short term and longer-term plans for education.</p> <p>Clear evidence of impact.</p> <p>Highly individualised, creative and inspirational planning.</p>
Good	<p>All sections complete and targets reviewed.</p> <p>If you read it without knowing the child you can have a good sense of the child and their current education and emotional needs, future plans and actions to address gaps.</p>
Requires Improvement	<p>Key sections are completed but with limited information.</p> <p>Attainment</p> <p>Child's voice</p> <p>SMART Targets</p> <p>The Pep Meeting Agenda page</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>SEND information not attached and/or updated (IEP or EHCP)</p>
Inadequate	<p>Meeting agenda page blank</p> <p>No current attainment and progress data. As a minimum last term's attainment data should be recorded</p> <p>Where eligible, Pupil Premium Plus has not been claimed (unless there is a clear and evidenced rationale about why this is not needed)</p> <p>Section 1 not completed</p> <p>No new targets have been set.</p> <p>Last term's targets not reviewed</p> <p>Part-time timetable, where appropriate, has not been completed/reviewed</p>

Appendix 6 – Special Educational Needs and the Graduated Response

Supporting our children with Special Educational Needs -

SEND local offer

Most pupils with special educational needs and disabilities will be educated in mainstream settings.

We expect the vast majority of pupils will be educated in their home community and have their special educational needs and disabilities met by early years settings, schools or colleges, through a graduated response.

What extra support can be provided?

Settings can provide special educational needs (SEN) support for a child if their educational needs mean that they require additional or different support than is generally given to most children or young people of the same age. This is referred to as the [graduated response](#).

SEN support has a clear cycle of assessment of progress, planning and putting in place the appropriate support, and reviewing a child or young person's progress. This is known as 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review'.

EHCNA/ EHCP

In a small number of cases, a child or young person may require a higher level of specialist resourcing which is different from and additional to that which is usually provided in school and it may be necessary for the local authority to complete an [Education and Health Care Needs Assessment](#) in order to determine whether it is necessary for provision to be made through an Education and Health Care Plan.

You will need to speak to us if the child or young person you are working with has an EHCP or is undergoing assessment for an EHCP and they have a change in circumstances. Further information can be found [here](#).

For example; if they move to a new address in or out of Staffordshire, they need to change school, they are struggling to attend school, they have a new health/ social care problem which may not be recorded within their EHCP or their EHCP needs updating.

If a child or young person moves to a different address within Staffordshire

If a child or young person moves to a different address within the boundaries of the county, then please contact us to let us know. In most cases, the child will be able to retain their current education placement, but we may need to look at any necessary transport arrangements. The sooner we know about this, the quicker we can respond. A change in transport can sometimes take up to 4 weeks to complete and we really do not want our children to be unable to access education for any length of time.

If a child or young person moves out of the county

If a child or young person with an EHCP moves out of Staffordshire, then we may need to review their education placement. If they are residing in Staffordshire, then the school placement may be able to be retained by re-organising transport arrangements. If a child or young person moves further afield, we have a different process to follow and must be contacted as soon as a move is considered. Any new school being considered, has a 15-day statutory consultation period to outline whether they can meet the child or young person's needs followed by admission to school- **this can lead to a delay in accessing education-** please contact us asap.

Click [here](#) for an easy-read guide to the EHCP process.

SEND Keyworkers: Each child with an EHCP will have a SEND keyworker who monitors and supports their individual case.

Appendix 7 – One Minute Guide

Virtual School for children in care and those previously in care.

Legislative background and guidance frameworks

Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014, Children and Social Work Act 2017

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance for Local Authorities. February 2018.](#)

[The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities. February 2018.](#)

[Pupil premium: conditions of grant 2021 to 2022 for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Recovery premium: conditions of grant for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[School-led tutoring guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Using pupil premium | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

The statutory guidance requires schools to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after and previously looked-after children and to appoint a member of the teaching staff, known as the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (DT LAC), to ensure this duty is properly discharged.

Our children and those previously in care, start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and often have special educational needs. For these reasons this cohort of children are entitled to additional funding to help improve attainment by closing the gap between them and their peers. This funding is known as Pupil Premium Plus and is funded by the Department for Education.

As part of the local authority's corporate parent role, the Virtual School Head is the educational advocate ensuring that children in care have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential wherever they live, or are educated, in the country. The Virtual School is the collective of all the children currently in care. The performance of the Virtual School is compared to other Virtual Schools and outcomes for children in care nationally.

For those children previously in care the Virtual School is a source of information, advice and guidance.

Background in Staffordshire

Staffordshire has a Virtual School Head in line with the statutory duty.

Our children are entitled to Pupil Premium Plus support of £1,500 per child, per annum. The Virtual School Head is responsible for distributing this funding to settings and schools to support children in reaching their potential. Funding is allocated in completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP). Children *must* have an individual PEP each term and in Staffordshire this is completed face to face (minimum of once per year), or virtually, by key professionals involved with the child. This monitors the SMART targets set for the child and tracks their progress and attainment in school.

Who leads and who else is involved in Staffordshire Virtual School

Post
Virtual School Head
Virtual School Deputy Head
Statutory school age Coordinators x 4
SENCo (0.4)
Early Years/PLAC Coordinator
Post 16 Coordinator
Relational and Restorative Practice Coordinator
Virtual School Advisor x 8 (Statutory school age)
Virtual School Advisor x 2 (Early years)
Virtual School Advisor x 3 (Post 16)
Virtual School Advisor (0.5 FTE Post-16)
Virtual School Advisor x 4 (Relational & Restorative)
Consultant and engagement worker (FTE)
E-PEP administrator and business support

Please see our website for individual contact details <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool>

Contact for more information

Staffordshire Virtual School - virtual.school@staffordshire.gov.uk

Appendix 8



Staffordshire Pupil Premium Plus Policy

Revised January 2023

1 Introduction

The Staffordshire Pupil Premium Plus policy is informed by two key Department for Education (DfE) documents:

Pupil Premium DfE Conditions of Grant

[Pupil premium 2022 to 2023: conditions of grant for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-2022-to-2023-conditions-of-grant-for-local-authorities)

Pupil Premium Virtual School Head Responsibilities 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities>

Staffordshire Virtual School models relational and restorative practices and will refer to children in care in this document as 'our children'.

Throughout this policy, the Pupil Premium for our children will be referred to as **Pupil Premium Plus** to distinguish it from other forms of Pupil Premium allocation.

The changes are as follows:

- From 1 April 2022 Pupil Premium Plus funding to support children and young people in care at school will increase to £2410 per child.
- Children and young people will be eligible from the first day of the care episode, rather than the previous criteria requiring a child to be in care for six months.
- The Local Authority that looks after the child will continue to be responsible for distributing the Pupil Premium Plus payments to schools and academies.
- The Virtual School Head Teacher is responsible for making sure there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium Plus funding to benefit children looked after by their Authority.
- The funding must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve attainment 'outcomes' and 'narrow the gap' as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP), in consultation with the Designated Teacher.
- As a result, the PEP will need to be monitored even more closely by the Designated Teacher, the Virtual School team, the social worker and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- The overall grant allocated to each Local Authority will be calculated on a per capita basis. However, the allocation of the grant must take account of the differing level of need for our children at different stages of their journey through care, managed through high quality PEPs.

2. Pupil Premium Plus policy

2.1. Overall principles underpinning the allocation

- Our children have needs that can change rapidly during their time in care and will need differentiated funding accordingly.
- Our children are now eligible for funding from the first day of the care episode.
- Up to £500 per term will be allocated to the schools they attend both in and out of the local Authority. How the funding is used must be linked to clear targets outlined in the e-PEP.
- Y11 funding for the Summer Term will be retained to enable the recruitment of 2 advisors to support the transition of children to Post-16 education. Additional funding can be applied for any children in Y11 requiring additional support over the summer term.
- The Virtual School Governing Body will agree the outline annual budget priorities for the use of centrally retained funding.
- The Head Teacher of the Virtual School will be accountable for managing the efficient use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding for the purpose for which it has been provided. Schools remain accountable for the educational attainment and progress of all disadvantaged pupils.
- Schools can apply for additional funding according to the needs of the child. This needs to be done in consultation with their local Virtual School Education Co-ordinator and linked to clear targets outlined in the e-PEP
- The Local Authority is not permitted to carry forward funding held centrally into the following financial year. The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools to ensure that any underspend is used to pilot new approaches to promote positive educational outcomes for looked after children.

2.2. How and why will the amount of Pupil Premium Plus vary?

- Children may come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are below academically.
- Children may have to move into or out of county in an emergency.
- Children may be placed out of Staffordshire in other Local Authorities where the level of support from Virtual School teams may not be the same and who therefore will lose out without additional help.
- Children may have a significant, and often delayed, reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in episodes of challenging behaviour in school.
- In view of this, it is expected that there will be differentiation in the level of additional funding and it will be allocated on a 'needs-led' basis.

- Proposals to pool Pupil Premium Plus in a school or a school cluster to enhance services would be welcomed, providing the use is directly linked to the needs of our children as detailed in the PEP process.

2.3. Circumstances in which Pupil Premium Plus will not be provided

Pupil Premium Plus will not be used to double fund or replace funding which has already been allocated to the school to support the child for example:

- To fund services that should be provided via an EHC Plan or an exceptional needs funding request.
- Other statutory work e.g., speech and language or occupational therapy, statutory assessment or other support from health, CAMHS or education.
- For interventions put in place that do not require any funding.
- When the PEP target does not meet requirements (see section 3.1).

Decisions about the use of the funding must be based on a justifiable rationale discussed during the Personal Education Planning meeting and common sense must prevail.

Pupil Premium Plus funding must be used for interventions above and beyond what would normally be provided by the school for other pupils.

Whereas in the past some schools have used the Pupil Premium Plus to fund interventions for other learners, interventions which have no link to the needs of our children will no longer be possible.

2.4. Activities covered by fostering allowances

All children in care should be encouraged to participate in social and leisure activities to encourage them in their social and personal development as well as helping them build resilience within their own communities. Foster Carers receive a fostering allowance that should cover the expenses for caring for a child and it is expected that some leisure activities will be paid for from the allowance.

On occasions, there may be specific activities outlined in the e-PEP that improve self-esteem or social skills that would have a positive impact on educational attainment which foster carers will arrange beyond the school day. Where this has been agreed by all parties as an educational priority, Pupil Premium Plus funding may be used. The use of funding would need to be clearly linked to the child's targets in the e-PEP along with how it will contribute to improved educational attainment and outcomes.

Foster carers allowance and contracts with Independent Fostering Agencies and Children's Homes include funding for school trips and residentials. In addition, there are arrangements to support one off 'life-time trips' through Children' Social Care.

Where carers are experiencing financial hardship, there are provisions through Staffordshire Foster Service and through commissioners for IFAs and Children's Homes to explore support as it is in the interests of our children to be able to participate in school and essential curriculum focused trips.

3. Management and accountability

Local Authority level:

- The Virtual School Education Co-ordinators will approve expenditure for individual children up to £500 per term and up to £1000 additional funding in exceptional circumstances where it is clearly linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP.
- The Virtual School Head will consider any additional funding request over £1000 for an individual child.
- The Virtual School head is able to approve expenditure in line with Virtual School priorities up to the value of £30,000. Any spend above this amount the VHT will seek approval in line with SCC scheme of delegation.
- The Virtual School Head will be accountable to the Virtual School Governing Body who will provide scrutiny for the expenditure of the centrally retained budget on an annual basis.

School level:

- The Designated Teacher will submit any funding requests linked to appropriate and SMART targets agreed as part of the e-PEP to the Virtual School for approval.
- The Designated Teacher should report annually to their school's Governing Body on outcomes for our children including the use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus.

3.1. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Pupil Premium Plus should be used to meet the needs identified in the e-PEP. This should accelerate learning with clear SMART targets for improvement, underpinned by well-targeted and identified support.

The Pupil Premium Plus must be used to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:

- Academic achievement and progress.
- Wider achievement e.g., in an area in which the child is gifted and talented.
- Attendance.
- Inclusion (by reducing internal and external exclusion).
- Social skills where they are a barrier to learning.
- Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider.

Examples of the types of activities that Pupil Premium Plus might be used to support children include:

- Academic provision both lower and higher attaining young people to include 1:1 support, peer mentoring, collaborative learning, resources, and tuition
- Additional support in school aimed to build a child or young person's self-esteem, confidence or develop their learning skills e.g., Thrive and ELSA interventions, pyramid clubs, social skills intervention, nurture groups, peer mentoring.
- Promoting engagement.
- Aspiration raising activities that will benefit the child or young person's learning and development.
- Extra learning resources that may support the child.
- Additional support for vocational training e.g., equipment.
- Improving attendance
- Reintegration strategies/activities/plans.
- Prevention of internal exclusions, suspension, and permanent exclusion
- Alternative education packages.
- Revision courses.

4.0 Allocation of funding to Schools:

All Pupil Premium Plus funding for individual children should be applied for through the e-PEP system and be linked to appropriate and SMART targets agreed as part of the Personal Education Planning process.

4.1 Staffordshire Schools

- Maintained schools will receive up to £500 per term. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following a request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP approved by the Virtual School. Payments will be wired to the school's contingency line.
- Academies will receive up to £500 per term. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following a request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the

e-PEP approved by the Virtual School as part of the monthly payments routine. Details of the payment will be provided to the academy at the same time.

- Additional funding from the centrally held resource to meet exceptional need should be discussed with the Virtual School before any application is submitted through the e-PEP system. The request for additional funding from centrally held resources must be approved by the Virtual School Team.
- Our children who enter care will be able to apply for funding through the e-PEP system. They are eligible up to £500 for the current term from day one of their entry into care.
- If there is a need to clarify what funding a school is providing from its own resources, the school may need to provide evidence to the Virtual School.
- We will not recoup Pupil Premium Plus where a child moves during the term.
- We reserve the right to recoup the funding if there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the specific needs of the child looked after.
- Impact of the use of funding should be reviewed at subsequent Personal Education Planning meetings.

4.2. Allocation of funding to Out of Authority (non-residential) Schools

- The basic allocation of up to £500 per term will be paid to schools. Payments will be made on a monthly basis following request for funding linked to appropriate and SMART targets in the e-PEP approved by the Virtual School. Payments are made either to the Local Authority, where an agreement is in place for them to pass the funding onto their schools, or by a direct payment to the school either by BACS or cheque. Information on the payments will be emailed to either the LA or the school.
- Additional funding from the centrally held resource to meet exceptional needs should be discussed with the Virtual School before any application is submitted through the e-PEP system. The request for additional funding from centrally held resources will be approved by the Virtual School team.
- Our children who enter care will be able to apply for funding through the e-PEP system. They are eligible for up to £500 for the current term from day one of their entry into care.
- Where there is a need to clarify what funding a school is providing from its own resources, the school may need to provide evidence to the Virtual School.
- We will not recoup Pupil Premium Plus where a child moves during the term.
- We reserve the right to recoup the funding if there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the specific needs of the Child Looked After.
- Impact of the use of funding should be reviewed at subsequent Personal Education Planning meetings.

4.3. Allocation of funding Out of Authority independent residential providers who provide education

- We will provide Pupil Premium Plus and additional funding to independent providers only in exceptional circumstances because these placements are already funded at a high level by central budgets in order to deliver a tailored education provision to meet the individual's needs. Any requests need to be discussed in advance with a Virtual School representative.
- Any requests will be reviewed by the VHT and the commissioner of the placement.
- We reserve the right to recoup the funding if there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the specific needs of our child.

5. Requests for additional resource from centrally held funding

Children's needs vary greatly depending on their individual circumstances in their journey through the care system. In certain exceptional circumstances, schools may require additional funding from the Virtual School to overcome barriers to learning. Any applications for additional funding should be discussed with your Virtual School Education Co-ordinator

- An application for additional funding should be, wherever possible, discussed as part of a Personal Education Planning meeting and applied for through the e-PEP target setting section.
- The Personal Education Planning meeting is the opportunity to discuss and agree additional funding to meet the exceptional needs of the child. In an emergency, where a PEP planning meeting cannot be held quickly, please contact the Virtual School to discuss before completing the application.

6. Pupil Premium Plus for Children and Young People from other Local Authorities

- Different approaches to allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus funding will be adopted by other Local Authorities who have freedom to administer funds according to their own policy.
- Staffordshire schools that have Looked After Children and Young People from other Local Authorities on their roll must contact the Virtual School Head from that Local Authority to request their Pupil Premium Plus policy. The name and contact details of Virtual School Heads in English Local Authorities can be found on the individual Virtual School website.

7. Promoting the best use of Pupil Premium Plus

Wherever possible, we promote evidence informed practice and strategies to underpin the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding.

There is limited research available on strategies that promote the education of Looked After Children. There has been some research on the beneficial impact of 1 to 1 tuition by a qualified teacher and paired reading.

The Rees Centre, in partnership with Oxford University and the University of Bristol, published research in 2015 on 'The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data'

http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf

This outlined the importance of understanding the impact of care factors on education. The Virtual School will continue to deliver joint training opportunities for Designated Teachers, foster carers and social workers to support a greater shared understanding of the experiences of Looked After Children and how these impact on education. Good practice would show careful consideration of education and care perspectives to inform the use of Pupil Premium Plus to set targets for Looked After Children.

'What Works in Education for Children who have had Social Workers' is a re-analysis of data from 63 randomised controlled trials, funded by the EEF, to look at the impacts of educational interventions on the attainment of young people who have had a social worker. The documents highlight some promising interventions.

<https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/what-works-in-education-for-children-who-have-had-social-workers/>

Many children in care have mental health and wellbeing difficulties linked to their journey into care which can continue through their care experience. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) published guidance in November 2015 'Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care'. This highlights the importance of supporting children with attachment difficulties in education settings.

8. Innovative and individual approaches to Pupil Premium Plus

We understand that the best use of Pupil Premium Plus is based on a very individual approach, is flexible and aspirational. We would like to celebrate excellent practice where schools have shown outstanding and individually tailored approaches to the use of Pupil Premium Plus.

9. Voice of the Child

Audits across all aspects of Staffordshire Social Care services consistently identify that positive outcomes for children and targets are more likely to be met where the voice of the child is listened to and informs their plans. Virtual School audits of Personal Education Plans and the use of Pupil Premium Plus have had similar findings: where the voice of the child is listened to and acted upon educational outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

PEPs are graded Inadequate where the voice of the child is not included in shaping their education plans.

10. Central Pupil Premium Plus allocation.

The Governing Body has agreed the following principles for the use of the central allocation of Pupil Premium Plus.

- Additional support for individual pupils at particular risk of poor educational outcomes e.g. risk of exclusion, emergency school transition support.
- Central based whole or target population initiatives to promote attainment e.g., tuition for children not reaching age related expectations, Letterbox reading scheme, preparing for GCSEs.
- Out of school learning opportunities e.g., transition summer school for Year 6 and Year 11
- Training focused on improving educational outcomes for our children for social workers, carers, Independent Reviewing Officers, education partners including Designated Teachers, school leaders and governors.
- Partnership working with groups of schools to develop innovative ways to support our pupils.
- Developing attachment aware settings and services for our children
- Initiatives focused on minimising risk factors including children placed out of the Local Authority boundaries and reducing child sexual exploitation e.g. out of county support, positive activities for unaccompanied asylum seekers, Year 6 transition support.
- Developing school use of self-assessment approaches to improve educational outcomes for our children.
- Opportunities to promote wider learning and engagement in education.

Pupil Premium Plus guide for our children.

- Your school has up to £500 per term to support you to do your best at school.*
- The funding is there to help you overcome barriers to your learning. Having good skills in maths, reading and writing are a priority.
- Your social worker, carer and Designated Teacher will work closely together to plan how the funding will be used to support you at your Personal Education Planning meeting.
- It is really important that your views on school, learning and what you want to do in the future are heard so that they can be considered carefully and help to shape your plan.
- It is really important that everyone works with you to support you to be your very best at school.
- You might be doing very well at school. The funding is still available and could be used to help you do even better, to develop new skills and have new experiences that may support you in the future.
- Sometimes, you may need additional support if things are not going so well at school. We will work with you, your social worker and the school to see if some additional Pupil Premium Plus funding will help you to get back on track.

*If you attend an independent school, we will review whether the up to £500 per term is needed as you may already have in place a specialist education provision found for you to help you be your best. If Pupil Premium Plus funding is requested to help you, we will consider the request very carefully.

11. Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children

From September 2018, the Virtual School Head Teacher was given new statutory functions relating to Previously Looked After Children. The functions are primarily advice and sign posting.

Pupil Premium Plus of £2,410 is available for Post LAC pupils. This is paid directly to schools as part of the general pupil premium allocation. Schools need to be aware that a child has previously been looked after so they can be included as such in the census.

The Virtual School will promote good practice in the use of Pupil Premium for previously looked after children.

Principles for allocating Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children where the Local Authority is arranging education provision can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2022-to-2023>

12. Early Years Pupil Premium

There is an allocation of £342 per year for our children accessing Early Years provision for three and four year olds.

The use of the funding should be evidenced in the Early Years e-PEP and linked to SMART targets.

Payments will be paid to settings by the local authority that they are based in and is paid directly to the childcare provider as part of their normal funding claim. For Staffordshire settings, this is paid as a top up to the hourly rate.

For previously looked after children, the Early Years Pupil Premium is paid directly to the setting in accordance with their local authority arrangements.

The Virtual School will promote good practice in the use of Early Years Pupil Premium for previously looked after children.

