

Virtual School Newsletter

Autumn 2024



Dear colleagues,

Welcome back! We hope you all managed to have a break over the summer and that the new academic year has started well. A big thank you to all the designated teachers, both in and out of borough, for working so hard in supporting all our children and young people. Designated teachers play a vital role in championing the educational needs of children in care by promoting the importance of listening, observing, being non-judgmental and flexible. We look forward to working with you in supporting the needs of vulnerable learners and achieving improved outcomes for them. Please get in touch if we can help and keep us up to date with the successes of our young people as well as letting us know when things are not going so well.

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Dates for your diary:

Friday 6th Dec 24 - Autumn PEP deadline

Friday 28th Feb 25 - Spring PEP deadline

Friday 9th May 25 - Year 11 PEP deadline

Friday 4th July 25 Summer PEP deadline

Virtual School general enquires:
virtualschool@enfield.gov.uk



Transitions

Many children struggle with transitions and change. We tend to think of the big changes, such as starting school or transitioning to secondary school, and prepare them well for these. However, children who have experienced many changes, trauma, and uncertainty, will often find even minor transitions difficult. This may mean that they struggle with leaving their parent / carer in the mornings, changing lessons, going to assembly or P.E, as well as struggling with unstructured times such as break or lunchtimes.



Useful strategies

- Use a visual timetable. Depending on age / ability the child can make their own individual timetable based on the class one when they come in in the morning.
- Have a trusted adult 'meet & greet' the child in the mornings, spending time helping them to regulate and settle. They could possibly go through the visual timetable with them. Some children prefer to come into the school 5 minutes early in order to avoid the stress of the rush.
- Use a 'Now / Next' card so that they know what is coming up next.
- If necessary, use a verbal countdown in order to help them understand that one task or activity is ending.
- Consider whether it is possible to offer some indoor activities for at least part of the lunchtime.
- Consider allowing a 'transitional object' to travel between home and school and help the child settle.
- Use postcards during summer holidays to maintain contact and let the child know they are being kept in mind.

Suspensions

For many looked after children, September signals a welcome return to the routine, security and reassurance of school life. Many of you will have seen a number of recent news reports highlighting the unacceptably high incidences of suspensions and exclusions of young people from school nationally.

Whilst all children are at risk of poorer outcomes and life chances when access to education is withdrawn or interrupted, these risks are greatly magnified for children in care. In partnership with all the professionals around our children, we are committed to working closely with all schools to support the uninterrupted attendance of looked after young people, and to reduce risks of suspensions. This is a key aim for the coming academic year.

We would strongly request that schools communicate promptly with the Virtual School and professional network should the behaviours of our children present particular difficulties that put them at risk of suspension. We will discuss over the phone and/or attend meetings even at short notice to discuss support available to children and schools in this endeavour.

Should any Looked After Child present as at risk of suspension, please contact the Virtual School and Social worker to discuss prior to making a decision to suspend.

After discussions have been had with the Virtual School and a suspension as an appropriate sanction has been agreed, please send relevant paperwork as soon as possible to: virtualschool@enfield.gov.uk cc'ing in the child's social worker.

Suspension Data 23-24

- During the academic year 23-24, 33 (19%) of our Looked After Children were suspended; in total there were 70 suspensions.
- The most prominent reasons recorded amongst the suspensions were assault against a pupil (20%) and persistent disruptive behaviour (19%)
- Secondary schools suspend more than primary schools. The year group with the highest number of suspensions is Year 11 (30%), followed by Year 8 (21%).

Below are outlined the key points of expectations and also support available for schools. These are also included in the Virtual School Suspensions Policy, shared with all schools.

Whilst we support schools in applying suspensions in cases involving serious breaches of behavioural policy such as assaults on staff or peers and significant damage to property, and recognise unequivocally a school's duty of care to staff and pupils, we would like all schools to collaborate with us to aim to reduce suspensions overall and to consider carefully the alternatives, particularly when responding to low level disruption and defiance.

What the Virtual School require from schools and professionals working with LAC

- Working knowledge of the statutory guidance governing [suspensions and permanent exclusions](#).
- Timely information sharing about LACs at risk of suspension / permanent exclusion
- Prompt (same day) notification of the intention to suspend or exclude.
- Copies of relevant documentation, including the pastoral support plan.
- Inclusion of VS colleagues in re-integration meetings.
- Accurate record of suspensions entered onto the online PEP document.
- Reasonable adjustments to be made to accommodate LAC with SEN needs.
- Practise a 'trauma informed' approach to managing the behaviour of LAC (training availability will be shared).
- Make use of the speech and language tool provided by the VS to screen all LAC

What schools and professionals working with LAC can expect from the Virtual School

- Face-to-face tuition, VS funded, through our tuition partners for LAC during periods of absence due to suspension.
- Attendance at re-integration meetings to support school strategies and responses.
- Access to therapeutic mentoring provision (Precious Moments) for LAC who are suspended or at risk of suspension / permanent exclusion (see details below).
- School staff training on child-on-child abuse and Brooks Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool.
- Access to 'trauma informed practice training for school staff (speak to your Virtual School colleagues)
- Informed guidance on the range of multi-agency support on offer to support schools.
- Additional funding to support suspension / exclusion prevention strategies. This can be discussed with the VSH and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Here are some points to reflect on:

- When poor behaviour becomes more evident or increases in frequency, contact the professional network to discuss what pre-emptive support is available. There may be external factors in the young person's life triggering certain behaviours.

- If the behaviour is of a low level, disruptive or defiant nature, could other sanctions be considered that keep the young person in school whilst reinforcing boundaries and expectations?
- There is no better place for a child to be than in school and no temporary provision matches the academic and interpersonal support offered by the school community.
- It is likely that challenging behaviours of looked after children reflect past trauma. The professionals' response should also reflect our understanding of that trauma. Rigid application of school-wide behaviour policies may not be the most appropriate or constructive sanction.
- Sending looked after children home as a sanction is likely to achieve little in terms of addressing behaviours. It may also put added pressure on those foster placements which are already under strain.

We very much look forward to working with schools over the coming year and appreciate the care and support you offer to our looked after children. Virtual School colleagues are always on hand to offer any guidance or support you require.

Below are links to some interesting and illuminating articles on this topic that you and your staff may find thought-provoking, and which may generate discussion.

- [BBC news: Suspensions in England set for highest number in a school year](#)
- [The Guardian: the school that is working to reduce suspensions](#)
- [The Guardian: Is the tide turning against zero tolerance in schools](#)
- [How a schoolboy's heartache rewired a head teacher's view of challenging behaviour](#)

Key reminders:

“Where a looked-after child (LAC) is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher (DT) should contact the local authority’s VSH as soon as possible. The VSH, working with the DT and others, should consider what additional assessment and support need to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the child’s behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion. Where relevant, the school should also engage with a child’s social worker, foster carers, or children’s home workers.” DfE ‘Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance’, August 2024

“An informal or unofficial exclusion, such as sending a pupil home ‘to cool off’, is unlawful when it does not follow the formal school exclusion process and regardless of whether it occurs with the agreement of parents.” DfE ‘Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance’, August 2024

“During a reintegration meeting, the school should communicate to the pupil that they are valued, and their previous behaviour should not be seen as an obstacle to future success. Where possible this meeting should include the pupil’s parents. It is important to note that a pupil should not be prevented from returning to a mainstream classroom if parents are unable or unwilling to attend a reintegration meeting.” DfE ‘Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance’, August 2024

Attendance

'Working together to improve school attendance': Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

The DfE have updated their 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance.

Letterbox Club



All Primary aged LAC, are enrolled into the Letterbox Club, which is paid for by Enfield Virtual School.

Children are sent envelopes containing books, games, magazines and activities. The parcels are sent to school – addressed to the Designated Teacher for LAC / PLAC. There will be six parcels for each child which are sent in one delivery to the school (usually in June)– it is then up to you how frequently you give the children each parcel. At Christmas a festive gift is also sent.

We have received lots of positive feedback regarding the Letterbox Club. Some D.T's enjoy sharing the parcels with the children and spending time sharing the books and materials. Others send them home for carers to share, but overwhelmingly, the children are positive about them.

The books are colour coded according to difficulty. If any of your children are working at significantly different ability to their age, please let us know so we send an appropriate level of difficulty.

PEPs

Setting a PEP date:

Most of you are already in the habit of setting the next PEP meeting date during a PEP meeting using tab 10. 'Next PEP meeting'.

Next PEP Meeting

Save page
Save page and go to next page

1 Date of next PEP review meeting
[SW/DT]

2 Next PEP meeting
[SW/DT]

Time	Venue	Person responsible for co-ordinating meeting

Welfare Call used to generate a random date if this was left blank. We have removed this feature now as it was causing confusion for colleagues involved. If this is not filled in each term, the following term Welfare Call will indicate to the Virtual School that no PEP has been arranged. Without a date being added, it also prevents the 'sign off' buttons being released at the top of the PEP document.

Below is the screen you would see if a PEP meeting date wasn't agreed at the previous PEP. To allow the sign off buttons to come up, either the Designated teacher or Social Worker can click 'Set PEP Date' and fill in the relevant details.



Support helpline: 01226 716333
 EPEPs generated TODAY: 87

LOGOUT
Home
VS2
Attendance
Mail (5)
EPEP (245)

Personal Education Plan for [REDACTED] [goto MyChild](#)

SET PEP DATE

There is NO PEP date set.

Last PEP: 19-02-2024

Last Doc Gen: 03-04-2024

Person ID: [REDACTED]


UPN: [REDACTED]

NHS: [REDACTED]

DT: [REDACTED]

SW: [REDACTED]

DOB: [REDACTED]



Last VS Rating
On: 03-04-2024
Rating: Green

Attendance monitored by Welfare Call

[Child menu options](#)

[Download options](#)

Head of the Virtual School for Looked After Children: Suzanne Rowson

1. General and Personal

2. Health/CAMHS

3. Education

4. SEND

5. Attainment

6. Attendance, Behaviour and Suspensions

7. Child's Input

8. School Transfer/IAG

9. Outcomes

10. Next PEP Meeting

General and Personal

Child Input

We will be taking part in Coram Voice Bright Spots Programme during the Autumn Term. This means the normal 'Child Input Section' will change to 'Your Life, Your Care, Your Voice' for the Autumn term only.

Social workers cannot complete this survey with the children. The survey must be completed with a designated teacher or other appropriate professional. Due to this, please can you complete the 'Your Life, Your Care, Your Voice' outside of the PEP meeting. The questions are marked as mandatory and until completed will not allow you to sign the PEP off.

If you would like to read up more on Coram Voice / Bright Spots: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots-programme/>

The Spring and Summer PEPs will revert to the normal 'Child Input' section, which can be completed during the PEP meeting.

Secondary School applications

The closing date for Secondary School applications is Thursday 31st October 2024.

3rd March 2025 – Secondary National Offer Day.

Please detail the schools applied for on 8. School Transfer tab and update this area when a school place is accepted in March.



1. General and Personal	2. Health/CAMHS	3. Education	4. SEND	5. Attainment	6. Attendance, Behaviour and Suspensions	7. Your Life, Your Care, Your Voice -	8. School Transfer/AG	9. Outcomes	10. Next PEP Meeting
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School Transfer/AG

Save page

Save page and go to next page

TRANSITION TO A NEW SCHOOL / COLLEGE / EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

1 Is a school move required? If yes, please ensure that the appropriate questions are completed below

[SW/DT]

⚙️ 🔒 🔔

2 Please give details of any transition plans

[SW/DT]

⚙️ 🔒 🔔

3 Please describe any particular support this young person may need to make a successful transition

[SW/DT]

⚙️ 🔒 🔔

4 Full name and address of setting being applied for
If your child is not in year 6, year 11 or requiring a school move for other reasons then please write N/A

[SW/DT]

⚙️ 🔒 🔔

Year 11 Qualifications



Please be clear which qualifications the young person is taking. E.g., are they sitting GCSEs, Functional Skills, BTEC etc.

If they are not sitting these qualifications, is the young person working towards anything else, e.g. AQA certificates. Please provide details in the notes section.

	End of KS4 target	Grade Level Child Is working At	Progress Towards End Of KS Target	Grade Level Child Is working At	Progress Towards End Of KS Target	Grade Level Child Is working At	Progress Towards End Of KS Target
Mathematics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
English language	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
English literature	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biology/ Science 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chemistry/ Science 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Additional notes for Year 11

Term 1 Autumn Notes:

Term 2 Spring Notes:

Term 3 Summer Notes:

[Save Year 11 Assessments](#)

Don't forget to click save!

Year 11 College Applications

Please prioritise Looked After Children for careers guidance and college/sixth form application support. Please include the college/sixth forms the young person has applied to on their PEP on the 8. School transfer tab. Include this as early as possible, e.g. Autumn/Spring.

This helps us identify which children have not applied for a college/sixth form.

1. General and Personal	2. Health/CAMHS	3. Education	4. SEND	5. Attainment	6. Attendance, Behaviour and Suspensions	7. Your Life, Your Care, Your Voice -	8. School Transfer/IAG	9. Outcomes	10. Next PEP Meeting
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School Transfer/IAG

Save page Save page and go to next page

TRANSITION TO A NEW SCHOOL / COLLEGE / EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

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2 Please give details of any transition plans [SW/DT]

3 Please describe any particular support this young person may need to make a successful transition [SW/DT]

4 Full name and address of setting being applied for? If your child is not in year 6, year 11 or requiring a school move for other reasons then please write N/A [SW/DT]

Speech and Language

SLCN Screening

You will all be aware of the strong correlation between children who have suffered abuse or neglect and Speech, Language and Communication Needs. This is why the Virtual School strongly encourage you to screen all your LAC and PLAC children. There are now questions on the PEP regarding SLCN screening.

However, we need to receive the results of your screenings or we don't know that they have been completed (only for LAC)! Please can you ensure that you send any screening results to us as soon as possible. Most primary schools screen their whole Reception intakes, yet we have hardly any results of screenings for our youngest LAC!

Please send screening results to:

Jane.manning@enfield.gov.uk

There are now questions on the PEP regarding this, so if you haven't screened your LAC / PLAC children, please do so soon. The links for the progression tool which we recommend are below, but if your school uses its own screener, we would still like the results for the LAC children.

https://shop.speechandlanguage.org.uk/products/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set?_pos=3&_psq=pro&_ss=e&_v=1.0

https://shop.speechandlanguage.org.uk/products/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set?_pos=4&_psq=pr&_ss=e&_v=1.0

The progression tools are particularly good at assessing the subtle difficulties which often present with our children.

I look forward to hearing from you

Jane Manning

PLAC

Pupil Premium Plus Funding for PLAC

Please remember that any previously LAC, who were in care for at least 24 hours, will be entitled to Pupil Premium Plus. This applies to those who are adopted, living with Special Guardians under a Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangement Order or adopted from state care abroad. **This information needs to be entered onto your school's information system in time for the Autumn School Census – which is Thursday 3rd October 2024.** The PP+ amount has risen to £2570 for the 2024-25 academic year.

You will only know who these children are if their parents and carers tell you. As such, it's important that you capture this information when the child starts at your setting. We advise schools to have a form in their welcome pack for new admissions, and to also publicise in newsletters that there is additional funding available for children who have ever been in care. Parents and guardians should only need to show you proof of their status (adoption order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order) once – you do NOT need to take a copy.

The funding is paid direct to schools, and MUST be used to help address the needs of this cohort of children.

If you have any queries regarding this, or any other PLAC issue please contact Jane Manning at jane.manning@enfield.gov.uk (Mon – Wed)

KRATOS

Children in Care Council

Summer Adventures with Our Looked After Children!

We're delighted to share the exciting adventures our looked after children have been enjoying over the summer. It's been a season filled with learning, exploration, and fun—showcasing their creativity, curiosity, and resilience.

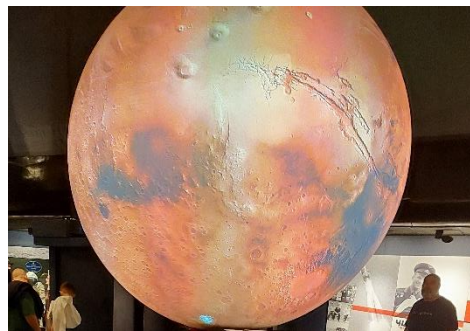
A Meeting with Ofsted

Our summer started with something quite special—our children had the opportunity to meet with Ofsted inspectors to discuss their care, schools, and placements. It was an empowering moment for them to have their voices heard and share their experiences. They spoke with pride about their care, their educational journeys, and the placements that have supported their growth and development.

Exploring the Wonders of Science



Next, we ventured into the fascinating world of science with a trip to the Science Museum. Our young explorers were captivated by the mysteries of space, the wonders of the modern world, and took part in hands-on learning at the interactive Wonder lab. From rockets to robots, and scientific marvels of every kind, this visit ignited their imaginations and curiosity for the universe around them.



Teddy Bear Picnic Fun

A summer wouldn't be complete without some classic fun, so we organised a delightful Teddy Bear Picnic. Our children were given a teddy bear each and enjoyed a day filled with laughter and games. They searched high and low in a Teddy Bear Hunt, played Pass the Teddy, and even parachuted their cuddly companions into the sky! There was excitement all around as they guessed the names of the teddies and shared snacks while listening to the enchanting tale of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.



Summer School & Learning

But it wasn't all just fun and games! Our children also took part in enriching summer school that offered a fantastic balance of learning and play. They participated in a workshop on first aid, where they learned essential life-saving skills. There were outdoor sports activities to keep them active and energised, along with indoor creative and academic sessions designed to stretch their imaginations and minds. For a whole week, they balanced learning with excitement and embraced every opportunity to grow in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Looking Ahead

As the summer winds down, we're incredibly proud of all the experiences our children have enjoyed and the confidence they've built along the way. From being able to express their views to Ofsted to immersing themselves in science, play, and learning, this summer has truly been one to remember.



Private Fostering

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child aged under 16 years old (or up to 18 years old if they have a disability) is looked after full time for more than 28 days.

Private fostering is an arrangement agreed between the child's parent/s (or persons who have parental responsibility) and the person or family who will be caring for the child.

A private foster carer is someone who is NOT the child's:

- Parent (or legal step parent (including civil partnerships) or someone else with parental responsibility)
- Grandparent
- Siblings (including half siblings)



Examples of Private Fostering

- Children sent from abroad to live with other families; or extended family members, in the UK.
- Children whose parents have paid someone to care for them whilst they are away working or studying.
- Unaccompanied minors who are living with friends or someone who was previously unknown to the family who is willing to privately foster their child.
- Teenagers living with the family of a friend.
- Children who are attending schools in the UK and who live with a local family.
- Children brought to the UK for adoption.
- Children and young people, who have to live away from their own family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home.

What a birth parent must do

The law requires that you must tell your Local Authority at least six weeks before the arrangement begins that you intend for somebody else to privately foster your child. However, if the arrangement is made in an emergency the notification must be made within 48 hours of the placement starting.

The information provided by birth parents to the private foster carer must include the child's full name, date of birth, ethnicity, religion/beliefs, special needs, medical needs, school and doctor details. There should also be details about the reason for, and the intended length of the private fostering arrangement.

It is a good idea for parents to have a written agreement with the carer so that everyone is clear about how the child should be cared for. This should include consent to medical treatment, educational issues and financial arrangements.

Responsibilities of Enfield Children's Social Care?

Enfield Council's Social Care has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their borough and to ensure that those in private fostering arrangements are safe and secure. To fulfil this duty we will:

- Assess the suitability of the arrangement by acting on any information provided by parents, carers and professionals.
- Check the suitability of the carer and their accommodation.
- Visit the carer and child every 6 weeks (the first visit will take place within 1 week), and after one year of the child living with their carer, the visits will then be every 12 weeks.
- Speak to the child alone.
- Offer advice and support to the carer, child and parents.
- Ensure statutory checks are completed on all adults living in the private foster carer's home.
- Ensure two references are completed on the private foster carers.
- Make contact with the birth parent(s) usually at the start and end of the fostering arrangement and during the placement too if required

PRIVATE FOSTERING

If you know of a private fostering arrangement you must contact Enfield Council's Children's Social Care.

You can do this through Enfield's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and you do not need to give your name when you get in touch.

Contact Enfield's MASH by telephone 020 8379 5555 or using Enfield's online children's service portal
www.enfield.gov.uk/childrensportal

For advice and general enquiries call **020 8379 2814**

The private foster carer should do everything that parents do for their children.

- Ensure they have regular meals
- Make sure that they have warm clean clothes and a bed of their own
- Make sure they go to school
- Ensure that they are registered with a GP
- Take them to the doctor or hospital if they are unwell
- Make sure that they have a chance to make friends and enjoy extracurricular activities
- Help them to stay in touch with their family and social worker (if they have one)
- Respect things that are important to them and their family such as religion/beliefs, culture and diet

What private foster carers cannot do

Parental responsibility remains with the child's parents. This means private foster carers will not be able to:

- Change their name
- Change their school
- Move them to another family
- Take them to another part of the country or another country without the parents' permission
- Agree urgent medical treatment without the parents' permission. If the parents cannot be contacted about this, the doctor will decide on the best thing to do.

16–18-Year-Olds

The Enfield Virtual School now receives some funding – Pupil Premium Grant - to support the education of young people after Year 11 of their education. We are, therefore, keen to ensure that PPG, bursaries, grants and any other pockets of funding that can be identified through multi-agency working is used effectively to support young people in their education, employment or training or to help them to re-engage. These discussions should form part of the PEP meetings held each term. Please invite our Post 16 advisory teacher – Rianna Dixon to any PEP meetings that you wish to discuss funding in.

Once a young person is 18, the Virtual School continues to encourage the holding of PEP meetings and maintain our role to the end of the academic year in which they become 18. In some cases, we will be able to offer advice and guidance to support the continued education and engagement of young people beyond year 13 or its equivalent.

Where a young person is not accessing education, employment or training and so is 'NEET', Rianna will act as the Designated Teacher. These meetings are extremely valuable as we are able to bring key professionals and other adults together with the young person to identify and overcome barriers to engagement.

To support our young people during their acquisition of the English language, we offer ESOL support during the Easter and Summer break. For those who have an interest in working once they turn 18, we have a range of enrichment resources to signpost them to so that they can make themselves more employable and further develop their social skills.

Additionally, to support those wanting to access further education, we have University visits planned for the Spring term with more information to follow. We also recommend referring young people to - 'SpringForward' which is a mentoring programme to help you choose, apply, and prepare for university. Young people can work with a mentor from an independent school. The mentor will support by talking through university courses and help young people decide which courses to apply for and where. Advice about how to improve your personal statement is also included.

Please feel free to get in touch with any queries you may have.

Contact details:

Rianna.dixon@enfield.gov.uk

02081483895