This first edition of the newsletter includes:



To all our colleagues in schools and educational settings across Birmingham and other Local Authorities across the UK welcome to Birmingham Virtual Schools first designated teacher newsletter; and I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Virtual School Headteacher having taken up the mantle from Andy Wright my predecessor on the 1st of Sept 2019.

My background prior to Birmingham is as a teacher and senior school leader in Oxfordshire, before moving into Local Authority as a national strategies’ consultant, school improvement advisor and deputy Headteacher of the Virtual School in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. I am truly passionate about my role and the privilege it affords me in working as an advocate and ‘corporate parent’ for our young people; and I am looking forward over the course of this academic year in getting to know you and your school, college or educational setting as we continue to work in partnership for our children who have experienced our care system.

As an adult we hold a great responsibility for shaping the experiences of any young person’s life we touch – we have all the power to make a difference. We hope the information shared within this newsletter inspires us all to continue to develop our professional skills, knowledge and understanding to that end.

As this is our first edition it is slightly longer than usual as we have included information and articles related to events nationally and locally from the summer. It is our intention going forward to use our newsletter to inform you of upcoming events or changes to policy and practice. We hope you find it a valuable resource and welcome your feedback. If you do have suggestions for future articles, or have success stories, resources or strategies you would like to share please email us at [birminghamvirtualschool@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:birminghamvirtualschool@birmingham.gov.uk). Our next edition will be published Easter 2020.



Lisa Marie Smith

**NEWSLETTER FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**JANUARY 2020 Issue 1**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**An update from Lisa Smith, Headteacher, Birmingham Virtual School**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

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The role of the Virtual School Headteacher became a statutory role for local authorities across England at the direction of Edward Timpson the Children’s Minister in 2013. The role was created to ‘champion the education of all children looked after within the local authority’; to address the considerably lower educational performance of children in care compared to their peers. Since that time the development of the Virtual School (the headteacher and related staff) has grown and the model has been adopted in other countries such as Australia. No one Virtual School is identical - the number of young people in care and the local authority context are variables that affect the number of staff employed and the roles they hold.

**Here in Birmingham we have four main roles:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Brief Summary of responsibilities** |
| Virtual School Headteacher  Lisa Smith | Lisa leads and managers to Virtual School Team. Together with the team managers she sets the strategic direction for the Virtual School on behalf of Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children’s Trust, this includes the management of the pupil premium plus grant is used to effectively promote educational outcomes for looked after children |
| Virtual School Team Manager:  Naomi Molesworth  Julie Bruton | Naomi and Julie provide ensure work undertaken by their teams is child focused, timely and leads to improved outcomes for our young people. They provide management oversight for the team and each have strategic oversight of key areas of work:  From Jan 2020 Naomi will provide strategic direction on planning, resourcing, team delivery and evaluation of impact for our young people within the areas of Attachment, Trauma, Emotional Health, Well Being & SEND.  Julie will provide strategic direction on the planning, resourcing, team delivery and evaluation of impact for our young people aged 14-19.  Our third team manager when in post will provide strategic direction on the planning, resourcing, team delivery and evaluation of impact for our children from early years to the end of Key Stage 3 |
| Virtual School Lead Advisors: Danielle Parkes, Emma Dodd, Fran Hicks, Claire Bagnall, Kathryn Holland, Graeme Scarbrough, Laura Towers | Our Lead Advisors all lead on a range of educational priorities for our children and young people based on our current cohort’s needs and our business needs as a Virtual School. This includes attainment and progress across key stages; PEP development; training for designated teachers, social workers, carers and parents; raising literacy & numeracy; securing effective post 16 transition and personalising pathways; SEND; support around effective routes to employment and training; and developing therapeutic offers for arts, sport and culture as curriculum links. They also work with a class list of young people getting to know the child/young person in order to enable effective personalised planning that will raise the aspiration and attainment each child in care. This includes maintain and re-engage children and young people in suitable education placements. |
| Virtual School Advisors:  Helen Bennett, Maggy Doyle, Shamelia Benjamin, Carla Osborne, Helen Staunton, Mandy Finnegan, Nitesh Solanki, David Erfani, Louise Clarke, Sharon Carby-McLean, Sharon Williams, Ava Bailey, Jade Terrett | Our advisors work with a class list of young people getting to know the child/young person in order to enable effective personalised planning that will raise the aspiration and attainment each child in care. This includes maintain and re-engage children and young people in suitable education placements; raising the aspiration and attainment of each LAC; prioritising their Educational needs and working in partnership with relevant agencies to prioritise education |

### **What is the role of the Birmingham Virtual School and who are we?**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**New Single Sign On for ePEP**

This will allow Designated Teachers with children in care from different authorities using ePEP to access the ePEP system through one single sign on rather than having to log on separately for each authority.

Please see the Quick Guide below on how to log on for the first time using the SSO:

**Quick Guide**



### **Updates on ePEP**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**ePEP Access and GDPR**

**Updates on ePEP - continued**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

As the administrators for the PEPs for Birmingham’s Children in Care; we have a duty to ensure that information is used and shared in line with GDPR; but also, to maintain the confidentiality rights of our young people. We have therefore reviewed our ePEP User Access.

The agreed gatekeepers for the PEP (bound by their Statutory Duties for the child) are the young person’s Social Worker, Virtual School Officer and the named school/college Designated Teacher. They all have a role in protecting this data whilst ensuring relevant information contained within the plan is shared with relevant parties employed to support that young person. Information can be shared via verbal communications and through the printing or exporting (via pdf) relevant sections of the plan. Similarly, professionals can contribute to the plan without needing access to its entirety, by preparing professional reports, sharing class teachers targets or writing impact reports from interventions using Pupil Premium, all of which can be pasted into the PEP Form or uploaded attachments by either the Social Worker, Designated Teacher, or Virtual School Advisor.

To this end we will provide the following user access to our PEPs:

* **1 Social Worker**: user account for all the young people on their case load. The **Social Worker is responsible for Signing off Section A** of the PEP to indicate that the information is accurate and up to date.
* **1 Social Worker Business Support**: user account (only on request) linked to the social worker attached to each young person. **The social worker must ensure that if requested and used this business support account user access is kept up to date and immediately deleted if the young person leaves care or the employee leaves or changes their employment within the trust**
* **1 Personal Advisor** (for care leavers): user account for all young people on their case load still accessing education Post 18 (until the end of academic Year 13 or beyond if the young person chooses).
* **1 Designated Teacher:** (School) user account for the Birmingham children attending their school/college.
* **1 Young Person’s PEP Coordinator**: (School)user account for school (where requested). **Please note**: Other PEP Co-ordinator accounts may be requested by colleges, alternative provisions and schools with multiple sites. **However, please note that only the named Designated Teacher can sign off Section B and C of the PEP as ‘complete**’, as they hold the Statutory Duty and responsibility for the quality of the PEP and the Personalised Education Planning recorded within it.
* **1 Independent Reviewing Officer**: account for the young people on their case load.
* **1 or 2 Foster Carer/Parent or named Residential Worker:**  access for their child or young person in their care.
* **1 Virtual School Advisor:** for the young people on their case load.

**No further PEP access permissions will be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances not encompassed in the above**.

**Updates on ePEP - continued**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**ePEP Developments to look out for over the next term**

**ePEP Guidance Documents**

Keep an eye out for our new Guidance Documents currently being developed. Once developed these will sit in the Noticeboard of the ePEP.

We are also expecting that each page of the ePEP will have its own guidance document to assist with completion of that specific page.

**ePEP SEND Page**

Keep an eye out for our new SEND page – currently being developed and to be in place in the Spring Term 2020

**NEET Support Plan**

We now have a drop-down menu on the NEET support plan page to indicate ‘Barriers to Engagement’

**New Quality Assurance Documents**

We are in the process of updating and developing our Quality Assurance Documents to give greater clarity with regards to expectations and assist with raising the standard of our PEPs.

### **Pupil Premium Plus – good practice & guidance**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fiction** | **Fact** |
| All CiC receive Premium | EY = £302.10 per year (issued in 3 unequal termly payments via EY team from the term after their 3rd birthday)  PP+ = £500 per term (Reception to Y11) |
| Entitled to laptop/ equipment/ trips via Pupil Premium Plus | There are no entitlements other than that of a right to education.  Pupil Premium Plus Conditions of Grant state that the funding is to be used to narrow the gap and raise attainment - if a laptop / equipment/ trip can be evidenced that it will raise attainment then this will be agreed within the PEP meeting |
| Additional Premium is paid against the targets automatically | Additional funding requests for amounts exceeding the term's payment can be discussed with the allocated BVS worker. The worker then completes a BVS internal document which is sent to a BVS manager for approval before the Additional amount is issued. |
| Birmingham Virtual School pay Post-LAC Premium | Post-LAC Pupil Premium is paid directly to schools by DfE following declaration via January School Census.  This money is not 'ring-fenced' for the child who generated it and is paid in September (following the Census in January. |

## **The Letterbox Club**

### **Letterbox subscription**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

## Birmingham Virtual School continue to work with Book Trust to deliver parcels to every child from year one to year 8 every month for six months from October to April. Each child becomes a member of ‘The Letterbox Club’ and receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high-quality materials. For many children, it's the first time they have had a letter or a parcel through the post and for some it's the first time they have had books of their own.

## Key benefits of Letterbox:

* Children feel 'remembered' and are excited about receiving their parcels
* Carers/families and their children spend more time together reading and playing games
* Children read to others and share books
* Children have increased confidence in reading and number
* Parcels are delivered despite placement moves and give continuity to the child

**Evaluation 2018-2019**

BookTrust worked with Birmingham virtual School to conduct a light touch outcome evaluation of the Letterbox Club 2018-19 for the 404 eligible children and their carers who were signed up to receive Orange (age 5-7), Blue (age 7-9) and Red (9-11) parcels.

# Methods

The evaluation focussed on gathering post programme quantitative data – measuring key programme outcomes related to reading for pleasure and maths (from the child and carer perspective), but also included open response questions for the respondents to give more detail about their perceptions of the Letterbox Club and any differences they felt it had made to them.

# Responses

The surveys returned 37 child surveys and 35 carers surveys – approximately 11% of LBC beneficiaries in Birmingham. Unfortunately, no child surveys were returned through the Designated Teacher route, and no Designated Teacher surveys were completed.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Letterbox pack | Child responses | Carer responses |
| Orange (age 5-7) | 12 | 12 |
| Blue (age 7-9) | 9 | 7 |
| Red (9-11) parcels | 16 | 16 |

# **Key findings**

## Children’s initial responses to the pack

Carers were positive about their children’s reactions to receiving the Letterbox Club parcels. Most carers (n=17) reported that children were excited when the parcel arrived, and that they enjoyed receiving and opening them (n=11). A few carers (n=6) commented on the postal element of the programme, mentioning that their children particularly liked receiving their own mail addressed to them. For example: *“she was very excited when each parcel arrived. She said it was like a Christmas present coming just for her”*

## **Outcomes**

**Letterbox subscription**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

## Child outcomes overall

Almost all carers reported that Letterbox had had a positive impact for children across all the measured outcomes for the programme. Small numbers noted ‘no impact’ or that they didn’t know, but no carers felt that the packs had had a negative impact on any of the outcomes.

Carers reported a positive impact on:

* their child’s enjoyment of reading (33/35)
* their child’s confidence with reading (33/35)
* their child’s interest in different types of books (32/34)
* on the amount of time their child spends reading (30/35)
* their child’s enjoyment of maths (28/32)
* their child’s confidence with maths (27/33)

## Time spent reading in more detail

As noted above, almost all carers (30/35) reported a positive impact on the amount of time their child spends reading. Carers were also asked how long their child spent reading on average each week, although not all responded to this question. The overall median across all age groups was 2 hours. Most of the children (n=23) reported that they are doing more reading since receiving their Letterbox club parcels, with 11 stating they are doing the same amount as before, and 2 stating they are reading less.

## Child’s feelings towards reading and maths

Most children (n=28) and carers (n=27) reported that the Letterbox Club has made them (or their child) feel differently about reading or maths. Children mentioned feeling generally happier (n=8), excited (n=2) or more positive (these children said they felt ‘better’) (n=4), as well enjoying reading more (n=4) and feeling more capable (n=3):

*“It made me feel happy”*

*“I find reading more exciting and look forward to my new parcels”*

Carers were asked for more detail, and many used this as an opportunity to speculate on the reasons for this improvement; with access to a variety of books and resources cited by carers as one of the main reasons for this (n=8). Carers reported that children enjoyed the variety the parcels offered, and that the programme had engaged them with different types of books. For example: *“It's opened his eyes to a variety of different books and topics”*

### **Story Time subscription**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**There is no greater joy than getting lost in a good story.**

When kids read for the sheer pleasure of it, it improves their reading, writing, spelling and vocabulary, but best of all it’s just fantastic fun!

Each month, Storytime magazine is packed with [brilliant tales for boys and girls of all ages](http://www.storytimemagazine.com/issues/). Storytime gives you a quality children’s magazine that actually helps to improve literacy with great content you can keep forever. And, unlike most magazines for kids, Storytime has no adverts and no throwaway plastic toys.

* Wonderful stories for kids every month, including fairy tales, myths, fables, stories from different cultures and tales from new authors.
* Specially commissioned, full-colour illustrations.
* Puzzles, activities, games and colouring.
* Printed on quality paper so you can read it again and again.
* Kids’ competitions every month, [win books and much more](http://www.storytimemagazine.com/win/).
* [Beautiful tidy files](http://www.storytimemagazine.com/shop/) to store them in.

Storytime runs as a [social enterprise](http://www.storytimemagazine.com/social-enterprise/). Profit is reinvested to support parents in spending more time reading with their children, and to work with schools, councils and other organisations to improve the literacy of families across the UK.

[Reading for pleasure is so important it’s now part of the national curriculum](http://www.storytimemagazine.com/reading-for-pleasure/), and magazines for kids play an important role in that, as well as books. With Storytime magazine, kids can enjoy an engaging and magical world of stories every month.

**Who gets it?**

The Birmingham Virtual School has subscribed this year to Storytime magazine for all young people in Reception – year 4 and they all receive a Storytime Magazine each month. This is a beautifully illustrated magazine that has lots of short stories, poems, word games in etc. Carers should be encouraged to read this with children as some of it can be quite difficult due to the spread of ages it caters for.

### **Summer & October RAP Programme – Raising Aspirations Programme**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

During the first week of the summer holiday 2019 The Birmingham Virtual School worked with several partner agencies to deliver exciting courses for our young people. Due to the success of the courses this was continued during the October half term (with further courses planned for February)

**Blue Whale:** Once again we worked with Blue Whale who delivered a week’s long course involving the creation of digital images. Seven of the young people were successful in achieving the Entry Level Award in Exploring Occupational Studies for the Workplace. Two students who had previously achieved this award went on to bank additional credits towards the Entry Level Award in Occupational Studies for the Workplace.

Young person feedback was positive with 100% of those involved loving or liking the week. It was also pleasing to hear that all of the young people felt that they had: learnt new skills that they could use in the future; improved their confidence to take part in new activities; were proud of their determination needed to complete the work to achieve a qualification.

Young people identified ‘meeting new people’, ‘photoshop’, ‘going to the studio’, ‘producing a trailer’ and ‘recording my own voice’ as their highlights of the week.

Despite the small numbers, both participants on the Music Makers course had completed their qualification by the end of the week and were trying out new skills like photo editing and 3D design

Blue Whale’s hair and beauty course was particularly successful and the girls had great fun sharing their stories, learning new skills and practising Halloween themed hair and makeup. The tutors were fantastic and had taught the girls quite a bit of embedded science in the course; they could name the different components of hair strands and had learned about the different types and colours of hair, as well as how to style it. I chatted to a few of the girls who said they’d loved the week. The tutors said they had come in on Monday unsure and shy but had become ‘louder and louder’ as time went on!

RIGHT TRAX: This is the second time we have worked with RIGHT TRAX whose mission is to promote motorcycle safety awareness and to teach respect in a supervised and structured environment. Six of our young people and one from a neighbouring authority spent five days working towards and achieving the National Open College Network Level 1 Award in Vocational Studies. Due to the positive feedback from this group and its desire to attend a further course plans were made for the Level 1 Certificate to be delivered during October half term.

In October half term The Right Trax motorcycle course saw some good relationships formed and strengthened between the boys, and they all completed their qualifications. Some were progressing to further qualifications after attending last summer, and apparently one was already working in the motorcycle industry. As well as the qualification element, they had the opportunity to ride bikes under the watchful eye of the tutors. They were clearly enjoying themselves and the older boys helped the younger ones with their riding.

**XLR8 Transition Programme:** For those young people who were in Year 6 last year we worked with Evolve to deliver their XLR8 programme to support this group to transition successfully to secondary school in September.

The programme was aimed to encourage them to:

• learn new skills and ways of thinking,

• develop their confidence and self-esteem,

• enhance their team building skills and communication skills and

• make new friends with others who may be transferring to the same secondary school.

The programme consisted ofthree consecutive events:

* Easter Transition – Superhero Event! (8YP attended)
* Whitsun Transition – My Tribe! My Land! (11 YP attended)
* Summer Transition – My Big Idea! (10YP attended)

Overall the programme went well and feedback from young people and carers was really positive. 100% of these YP loved the event; 100% felt that the experience had improved their confidence in taking part in new activities; 90% felt that the event had helped prepare them to move to secondary school; 100% were proud of their determination to take part in activities.

Seven of the children involved attended all three events with feedback at PEPs from three of them that the programme had particularly developed their confidence in terms of meeting new people.

The ten young people who attended the summer event also achieved the Discovery Arts Award

**Ackers Adventure:** 23 young people attended a week at Ackers and had a thoroughly enjoyable week being involved in skiing, rowing and climbing. Feedback from all young people was really positive with activities helping build their self esteem and confidence.

**Events to be held during February half term**

During February half term 2020, the Birmingham Virtual School will, once again, be working with Blue Whale to offer our young people two exciting courses focusing on Hair and Beauty and You-Tubing skills. Both opportunities are open to young people who have previously attended these courses as there is the opportunity for them to progress to the next qualification.  These courses are also available to new students who have a keen interest in these areas. The focus of the Hair & Beauty course is yet to be confirmed and is open to all Year 9-11 students.  The course for budding You-Tube designers will result in, or build upon, an Entry Level Award in Creating images digitally.

Please follow the attached links to reserve places for February half term events:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/youtube-designers-course-for-beginners-tickets-89054188475>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nail-art-application-registration-90927987057>

******Music Mark**

Did you know that Birmingham Virtual School have been nominated as a 2019/20 Music Mark School Member as a recognition of the value Birmingham Virtual School have placed on the importance of accessing music for children in care. Since 2018 we have funded music lessons for 44 young people from year 4, 20 of which have continued in year 5. This year we have 34 year 4 students participating.

Music Mark works to enable members to deliver high-quality musical and social outcomes for all children and young people. For more information: [www.musicmark.org.uk](http://www.musicmark.org.uk/)

Thanks to everyone for your continued support with 1:1 lessons for year 4 and 5 pupils in schools which ensures that pupils are able to access and engage with high-quality music education.

If you have any children in care currently having lessons who wish to continue and for all new participants joining in 2020 please get in touch with either your BVS worker or myself (Kelly Truscott) for more details after the Easter break.

This will be followed by our second ‘*Winner Up*!’ event in July 2020 where the young people will come together for a day of workshops followed by a performance, showcasing their progress and passion on the instrument of their choice. More details to follow….

Testimonial from last year’s event:

*I am just sending you a quick e-mail to mention how fantastic we thought the Winner Up! event was that you organised last school year. One of our families benefited from this event, with it being a wonderful shared experience for mother and daughter. They both enjoyed experiencing the musical workshops and performing at the event. One of our members of staff were lucky enough to attend the performance and said that they thoroughly enjoyed it and found it to be very inspiring. Thanks for organising this for Birmingham's most vulnerable pupils, it was very much appreciated!*

*I was wondering whether you have any similar events planned for this year, and if so, please could I be included on your mailing list to be informed of such events so that we don't miss out on any possible opportunities. We're really trying to promote music and performing arts in school and would very much like to get involved in anything you have to offer.*

*Kind regards,*

*Jessica Jones  
SENDCo  
Rednal Hill Junior School*

**

### **Birmingham Virtual School & Thrive**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

You may not be aware that a number of our Virtual School team are Thrive trained and could as part of a child in care’s personal education planning, support your school and setting in undertaking a Thrive assessment and; support you in tailoring age related personalised interventions. **Please speak to your Virtual School adviser about this area of work to find out more.**



**Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools & Settings (****TIASS) Certification**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

All schools who have completed Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools Training with Birmingham Educational Psychology service are now able to apply for either a bronze, silver or gold certificate in recognition of their journey to becoming a Trauma Informed and Attachment aware school. In addition to celebrating practice within the school, the certification process involves data collection from staff and pupils which enables a school to track their development and provides helpful feedback for the whole school community which identifies good practice and future areas for development.

**If you are interested in pursuing certification then please contact your visiting Educational Psychologist or email** [**alexandra.trevis@birmingham.gov.uk**](mailto:alexandra.trevis@birmingham.gov.uk)

**For more information about how your school or setting can participate in the Trauma Informed Attachment Aware programme contact your Virtual School advisor to register your interest or your school Educational Psychologist.**

Once again, BVS have offered training during the autumn term to all professionals involved in ensuring our looked after children have the best support in education and achieve their full potential in all aspects.

### **Training and Events**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

27 new Designated Teachers joined us in September to find out about their new role and share good practice already in their schools.  Two groups of foster carers came together to discuss the education system, support that schools offer, SWs, BVS and they can give young people whilst in education and social work colleagues have had training round PEPs and PP+ and the support they can ensure is in place for students.

Next term’s designated teacher training will be taking place in January and already this is full however booking for our 9th May training is available via Eventbrite.  Please follow the link (also available on ePEP) if you are a new designated teacher or support looked after children in an educational provision.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bvs-designated-teacher-training-spring-and-summer-2020-registration-67467098909>

We are also happy to discuss your training needs within your provision around supporting looked after children in education.   Please email Birmingham Virtual School

[BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk) or phone 0121 464 6599.

**Free training from the Harmful Sexual Behaviour team;**

This training for Primary and Secondary school staff supporting children and young people living in Birmingham aims to:

•          Increase understanding of the differences between healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people.

•          Provide guidance on how to respond to sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people.

•          Provide information which can be incorporated within RSE for children and young people.

•          Provide information about the HSB Team and the referral criteria.

•          Increase the overall confidence of attendees to identify, support and signpost children and young people with problematic and harmful sexualised behaviours.

The training will be held at the Kingsmere Centre, Erdington in January and February 2020; it can be booked via the BESS website

This Easter holidays Winchmore Tutors have GCSE Maths, English and Science revision camps running at University College Birmingham, Solihull College and across the South East of England. Please see their website for more information and dates <https://winchmorecamps.com/venues/>. They will also develop bespoke camps for schools to run on their own site (see the brochure attached). The revision sessions are open to any young person but any young people **who are or have been in care** receive two free days. Costs are: 1 - 10 days – booked - £50/day; 10 - 25days booked - £45/day ; 26+ days booked - £40/day Please note: 10 days could be 1 pupil doing 10 days over Easter & Feb HT OR 10 pupils doing 1 day – you can choose how you wish to use the days.

**Revisions Camps – discount for children in care**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

***Join our Children in Care Post-16 Network Group***

**Post 16 Network Group**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

* This relatively new group has been set up to:
* support Post-16 providers, within the West Midlands, in understanding social work and the needs of looked after children
* to encourage Designated Persons to exchange their best practice
* challenge practice and services to ensure the needs of the young people are taken into account
* improve the transition process for young people in care moving from school to college
* identify any gaps and develop effective partnership work to ensure our young people receive the support they require to be successful

The group will meet on 11 February 2020 at 9:30am, at Halesowen College. Please see attached link for booking <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/birmingham-virtual-school-post-16-professionals-network-tickets-89055438213> The focus of this meeting will be English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) – Barriers to thriving in education.

**The next Careers Event is on the 13th February 2020, from 6:00 to 8:30 PM. It will be held at Birmingham Study Centre, Arden University, Centre City, Birmingham, B5 4UA.** The program for the event will be accessible on the ePEP Notice Board early in the New Year. All young people in Years 8 to 13 will also receive a personal invitation by post, asking them to indicate which workshops (two from six) they wish to attend on the evening. There will also be a Briefing for Carers on a relevant topic as part of the evening, and there will also be some activities for younger siblings.

**Careers Events**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

***Details for forthcoming training and events will be emailed in the new term***

**NAVSH – National Association of Virtual School Headteachers**

### **National Updates**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

You may or may not be aware that in the UK the Virtual School Headteacher’s have their own association. The website offers some useful information for school’s, carers and social care colleagues <https://navsh.org.uk/information-for/>

**Pupil Premium Plus Post 16**

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson announced in October a range of programmes totalling £19 million to improve support for care leavers. £3 million of which is set aside to extend the Pupil Premium Plus to all 16-18 year old care leavers. This news is key for transition planning in the summer term for our secondary school designated teachers and Heads of Year 11. The final PEP should set out key actions that will facilitate a successful transition from the end of key stage 4 into their post 16 destination. This funding may be used to maintain participation and engagement over after final exams in June, promoting individual pupil ambitions in their choice of qualifications, and to increase the chance that they will complete their chosen course. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vital-new-support-for-young-people-leaving-care>

**The DfE have also just updated their pupil premium guidance documents** **on how school leaders can write a pupil premium strategy statement. The website also provides suggested templates and resources** [**https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-effective-use-and-accountability**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-effective-use-and-accountability)

**Help, protection, education: concluding the Children in Need review**

In June 2019 the Government reported their findings on the review of Children in Need (CIN). The review aimed to find out across the education sector can make a difference for these young peoples and the government will address issues raised within this review and that of Timpson Review of Exclusions to tackle systemic barriers. Pages 36 -38 sets out the actions to be taken.

As part of two pages of recommendations for actions Page 37 specifically sets out the following actions to keep children in education the government will:

• commission new research on persistent absence, which will cover children who have needed a social worker

• improve the clarity, timeliness and transparency of the in-year admissions process, and strengthen the Fair Access Protocols, ensuring this can be used to admit children who currently need a social worker

• consider whether additional safeguards are needed for these children, as part of the planned consultation on arrangements around exclusions and alternative provision (following the Timpson Review of School Exclusions)

• through our new alternative provision workforce programme, determine whether more is needed to ensure expertise



**National Updates (cont)**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**Timpson Review of School Exclusions** reported its findings in May 2019. Followed by a government response to the 30 recommendations made by the Exclusion report. Page 14- 25 of the report set out the government’s intentions through a select committee in the House of Commons.



Fixed term exclusions do not work as an effective way of changing the behaviours of many children in care. They only cause further disruption to what is often an already interrupted learning journey, whilst also removing them from the protective factor their school serves as – exposing them to further rejection; and increasing the likelihood of risky behaviours through exposure to gangs, sexual or criminal exploitation. The DfE tells us that LAC pupils are more than five times more likely to have a fixed term exclusion than other children. On results day in the summer of 2018 a group of south London students used the London Underground to make a powerful and subversive statement about exclusions. They made a mocked-up Tube map showing how life can lead from school to prison



The satirical poster showed a direct line from “sent out of class”, stopping at “permanent exclusion” and with “prison” as its final destination. The line also included the stops “empathy”, “support” and “success” – all of which are “closed indefinitely”.

<https://www.tes.com/news/students-ad-hackexclusions-protest-tube>

In 2018 a Home Office-commissioned report  into School exclusions concluded that exclusions from school "highly significant" in driving gang violence as criminals target vulnerable youngsters, found that many children groomed by drug gangs were recruited after they were excluded from school and sent to pupil referral units (PRUs). The Attachment Research Community are running a conference for schools and professionals  in Birmingham on 10th March 2020 around Gangs, Violence and the Attachment solution see the flyer for detail to book your place.



**EU Settlement Scheme**

**National Updates (cont)**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

You may be aware that as a result of the vote to leave the EU all EU citizens and their family members in the UK now need to apply to secure their rights through a simple digital system to get settled status or pre-settled status. The EU Settlement Scheme fully launched 30 March 2019 and the deadline for applying will be 30 June 2021 in a deal scenario, or 31st December 2020 in a No Deal scenario, in line with the draft Withdrawal Agreement. EU citizens may be able to apply after this date if they are joining a family member with settled or pre-settled status in the UK.

For some of our children in care this means their social worker will need to support them to gain settlement status. The Home Office are running a series of teleconferences aimed at front line staff engaged in supporting Looked After Children and care leavers with the EU Settlement Scheme on the following dates:

• 21 January 2020 1200-1300

• 18 February 2020 1200-1300

• 24 March 2020 1200-1300

Please email feedback-EUSSsupportmodel@homeoffice.gov.uk to book a place.

**Consultation on Early Years Reforms:**

The DfE are seeking views on proposed changes to the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. The aim of the consultation is to seek views from interested parties on :

•Proposed revisions to the educational programmes;

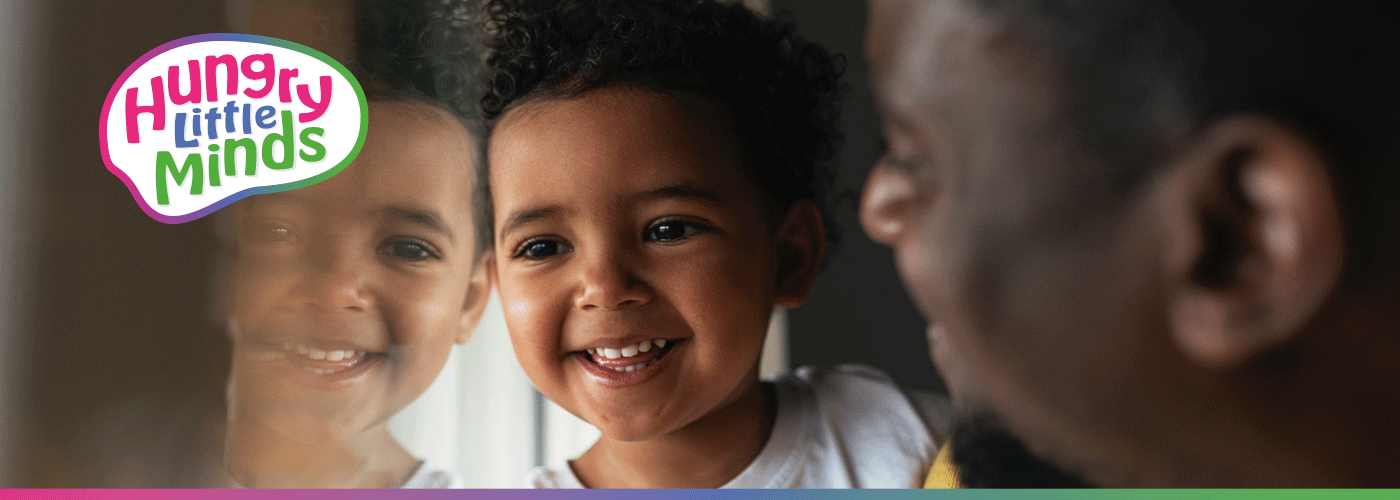
•Proposed revisions to the early learning goals;

•Proposed changes to the assessment and moderation process for the early years foundation stage profile;

•A proposed change to the safeguarding and welfare requirements to promote good oral health.

The online survey is open until the 31st of January 2020 <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-quality-outcomes/early-years-foundation-stage-reforms/>

Please share your views.



**National Updates (cont)**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**Hungry Minds campaign**

School’s and social workers may want to sign post the governments Hungry Minds website with parents and foster carers. It sets out simple, fun activities for kids, from newborn to five that set the foundation for positive relationships and learning. <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>

**Adoption Funding continues:**

The education secretary Gavin Williamson announced in Oct the government would extend the adoption support fund through to 2021 so that families can continue to access funding for therapy for a whole year. He confirmed that regional adoption agencies were now in place in 70% of the country, with the aim to have all local authorities within the system by 2020. The regional hubs aim to speed up matching children with adopter families and making sure that these are right for each other. The department will also commission new research on applying behavioural insight approaches to recruiting foster carers and adopters.

**New support for foster families to overcome trauma -Practical and emotional support from communities of foster carers to boost their resilience**

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson announced on the 3rd October the launch of 10 new fostering projects in Sheffield, East Cheshire, Wakefield, Warrington, South Tyneside, Barnsley, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent. The projects offer short breaks, mentoring, emergency sleepovers and social activities with other families to help create stability within foster carers homes as the family adjust to their new lives together.

The ‘Mockingbird Family Model’, delivered by The Fostering Network, brings foster families together in groups, centred around one experienced foster carer who lives nearby to act as a mentor. This builds a network on which they can rely in difficult moments, in the same way that families who are together from birth often rely on the support of extended family, friends or neighbours, and helping them cope with challenging behaviour or problems caused by trauma before they escalate. We will look to learn. This extra funding will enable further impact evidence as to the benefits of Mockingbird’s extended family model with a view to expansion of possible roll out to many more foster families across England in the future.

**National Updates (cont)**

**Birmingham Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care**

**Updated Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.**

In Oct the government updated their guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding and safer recruitment. Please find also enclosed Birmingham’s guide to behaviours that may indicate vulnerability and access to further support documents such as the peer on peer schools safety planning document

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2882/kcsie_key_themes_resources_other_peer_on_peer>

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/50045/education_early_help_and_safeguarding>