

Dear Designated Teachers,

As per our recent letter and briefings (see EPEP noticeboard for copies of documents previously sent out in relation to this) Birmingham Virtual School (BVS) have begun to vary contact with colleagues and young people so we can be more flexible and responsive to the needs of the school, staff, and Children in Care (CiC).

This letter sets out further detail around the **Corporate Parent Visit** that the Education Officer will arrange with you. It will also give some more information about any supplementary **Designated Teacher (DT) visits** that can be requested from our service. **Please note there is a separate letter outlining the pupil/child level support through your Education Support Advisor.**

The new Corporate Parent Visit is advisory and is designed to be supportive to you in your role as DT. During this visit, BVS will offer advice and guidance around how to raise standards, engagement and participation for the vulnerable learners on your roll. Schools may wish to use the visit notes as evidence of how it is meeting the needs of these vulnerable learners, with specific reference to CiC, as part of the annual report to Governors, or as part of self-evaluation and documentation for OFSTED.

To ensure we meet our statutory duties as a Virtual School and Local Authority, the schedule of our visits will be bespoke and based on the needs of your school. The content and activities undertaken in this visit will be agreed with the DT and School Senior Leadership Team. The focus of the visit is to:

- Review the school's evaluation of their progress in respect of the National Association for Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) School Evaluation Framework and undertake action planning as appropriate
- Discuss current school practice for all vulnerable children known to social care including those previously looked after. The discussion will be tightly focussed on raising attainment and meeting the needs of the CiC on its roll, which includes those on a reduced timetable/educated off-site/dual registered or educated in an Alternative Provision.
- Review EPEPs to ensure that education planning is high quality and is meeting the quality assurance guidance provided by BVS.
- Review and evaluate Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) spend to enable the Virtual School to meet one of its statutory duties which is to assess the use and impact of PP+ on raising attainment.
- Discuss how targets and actions within the EPEP are focussed on raising attainment, shared with staff and kept live through regular termly plan-do-review cycles.
- Support the DT with any queries they may have around their role and facilitate discussion around school self-evaluation and any formal reporting on CiC outcomes to key stakeholders such as school governors.

- Meet with the DT and discuss their role, as well as any training or future development needs for themselves or other members of staff. (For example: barriers faced by CiC, emotional regulation affecting cognitive and executive functioning etc.)
- Any other discussion, such as reviewing the school's approach to trauma informed and attachment aware practice and undertake action planning as appropriate.

In order to prepare for the meeting, your Area Education Officer will:

- Contact you to set a date for the Corporate Parent Visit and discuss the activities we will undertake during this visit.
- Quality assure EPEPs as part of our review cycle and be prepared to follow up with appropriate support and feedback.
- Ensure you have access to the NAVSH School Evaluation Framework for your consideration prior to the meeting.
- Provide you with more information about the ARC Attachment Aware Schools' Audit and TIASS programme.
- Consider data, using our own Virtual School national pupil data, the EPEP and the school's own pupil data in readiness to discuss progress, attainment, attendance and engagement of each child

Is there any preparation schools should undertake in advance of the Corporate Parent Visit?

1. Be prepared to discuss achievement, behaviour and safety, quality of teaching and leadership and management in relation to CiC.
In order to support this discussion, the NAVSH Schools Self-Evaluation for CiC will be sent to you by your Area Education Officer in advance of the meeting. This tool has been trialled by some schools already and has proved a useful resource to demonstrate evidence of actions and impact in a format that can be used with governors, Ofsted etc. Schools should consider using this template to record the progress and development of practice regarding CiC over time. Where schools have completed a self-evaluation prior to the visit, they should inform the Area Education Officer and plan to discuss this with them as part of the Corporate Parent visit. Any school self-evaluation should be used in part to inform the focus of subsequent corporate visits.
2. Be prepared to discuss the current use of PP+ at both an individual level, and across the school.
Any records of PP+ spend will need to be available during the visit and will feed into the report. To support this discussion, a School level PP+ monitoring document will be shared with you prior to the school visit.
3. Have school's CiC attainment data available to review.
It would be helpful to have both individual and whole school data available.

When will I receive a Corporate Visit? How will I be contacted?

The timing of our Corporate Parent Visit will vary term by term and year by year. This academic year, the Area Education Officer are initially prioritising school visits based on several factors, such as standard of PEPs, schools with high numbers of CiC and where

the Area Education Officer and DT have agreed that a prompt visit is required. We will liaise with schools well in advance of visiting to agree a mutually convenient date.

What happens if one of the CiC is dual rolled to an alternative provision?

If one of the CiC in your school is dual rolled (for example at an alternative provision), the Virtual School will ensure that an Area Education Officer is linked to this educational provision and they will conduct a separate Corporate Parent Visit for this setting.

As the corporate parent, we need to monitor the effectiveness of any alternative provision and review evidence to support this. The Virtual School would expect to see evidence of a clear and robust plan for the CiC that sets out an effective partnership between the school and the alternative provider for securing good educational outcomes and progress.

Schools may wish to refer to both [national guidance](#) and [Birmingham City Council's guidance](#) on the responsibilities and good practice of each education provider when a pupil attends an alternative provision. **Please note**: The home school remains responsible for the completion and sign off of the child's PEP.

Recording the Visit:

The Area Education Officer will make a record of the visit and aim to share this with you within 10 days of the visit. The record will refer to the good practice seen at the school, areas for development and actions agreed at the meeting.

DT Support

In between Corporate Parent Visits, schools can request further support in light of:

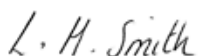
- new CiC, priority young people and transition support,
- national examination/assessments and results,
- new DT training needs,
- validation of school's CiC self-evaluation and action plan in relation to CiC.

We can also advise schools in:

- understanding the emotional needs of CiC and appropriate interventions,
- planning to become a Trauma Informed Attachment Aware School,
- developing self-evaluation tools and writing key reports such as a Governor Report,
- ensuring effective PP+ spend, monitoring and reporting,
- identifying relevant training for teachers and support staff.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school/young person's Area Education Officer regarding any of the above. We look forward to working with you and our children and families through this academic year. In preparation for our return to face to face working please see the **attached Appendix covering our Covid 19 Risk Assessment** for school visits.

Yours Sincerely



Lisa Marie Smith Headteacher Virtual School

Birmingham Virtual School

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Appendix 1: School/Setting Visit Risk Assessment during COVID-19, September 2021 onwards, for staff working in Virtual School

In response to Covid 19 the following actions and stapes have been approved by Birmingham City Council in agreement with trade unions to keep staff and families safe. These steps will be followed by Virtual School Staff arranging any face to face meetings work in an education setting.

N.B. All staff should read updated government guidance for schools, published July 19th 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

Staff are encouraged to exercise caution and consider the risks. Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to discuss their working arrangements with their line manager. While no situation is risk free, there are actions we can take to protect ourselves and others around us. Three visits per day to different schools/settings are now permitted. Employees have been instructed to follow latest Public Health England advice in relation to developing symptoms and Test and Trace. Staff are advised to follow Public Health guidance, which is to undertake twice weekly Lateral Flow Tests.

BEFORE THE VISIT
1. Following a request for involvement, or request to school/setting for a corporate parent/designated teacher visit (Virtual School), staff will confirm details and purpose of the visit via email or telephone call - including nature of visit and precautions in place with relevant staff member(s)/family or child/young person .
2. Gain permission from parent/carer (social worker for children in care) and setting/ school for visit to take place – ideally by email but if not by text and last resort verbal. Log consent on the contact form in the child/young person’s electronic file
3. If visiting an education setting, check school/ setting website for copy of its latest risk assessment, guidelines/policy/procedures for receiving visitors.
4. Agree protocol, as explained in school/setting Risk Assessment, for entering building, how to maintain integrity of social distancing (if required) particularly in relation to named child/young person/parent/carer/ school staff.
5. Agree arrangements for use of PPE if needed or requested by the school/setting, child/young person/family eg facemask, gloves and hand sanitiser. Service staff to have a stock of PPE provided.
6. Staff to ensure that setting/ school understand that they must inform the EYIS/ SEND Inclusion/ BVS/ Children and YP’s OT/EPS staff member if the visit cannot go ahead that day because CYP/ school/setting staff are displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.
7. Wipe down all assessment kit cases, materials and resources before the visit.
DURING THE VISIT
8. If, on arrival, the school/setting has not implemented its risk assessment and/or the environment does not feel Covid safe, the visit will be rearranged.
9. On entering setting/ school/, wash hands/use hand sanitiser in accordance with current guidelines. The government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas.
10. Check that tissues are available for sneezes and coughs. Where possible ensure good ventilation

by opening windows and doors. Wash hands with soap and water/ use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
<p>11. Individual assessment: Maintain an appropriate distance* away from child/young person and other adults in the room if possible. Do not sit face to face - sit side by side or at right angles</p> <p>Check child/young person has brought their own pen/pencil if appropriate to assessment. Wherever possible let the child/young person use resources/toys from their own environment. Services, where possible, use photocopied materials for reading/writing that can be disposed of after use.</p> <p>Equipment wiped down before and after use.</p> <p>Follow hand washing procedure before and after handling equipment handwashing procedure</p>
<p>12. Joint working with other visiting professionals: Maintain an appropriate distance* away from child/young person and other adults in the room if possible. Do not sit face to face - sit side by side or at right angles</p>
<p>13. Observation: Position self 2m/1m* away from children/young people or adults in the room, ideally staying on the edge of the room near a window/door and discouraging children from bringing items to show you if necessary. Ensure you use own resources for taking notes/observations and that you take them with you when you leave.</p>
<p>14. On leaving home/setting/ school wash hands or use hand sanitiser (as a precaution do not leave sanitiser in direct sunlight or near a heat source)</p>
AFTER THE VISITS
<p>15. Wash hands on arrival at home or base.</p>
<p>16. If needed contact line manager or a member of the team to debrief.</p>
<p>17. Resources and test equipment should be wiped down or washed as appropriate. Ideally resources/equipment should then be quarantined for a minimum of 72 hours as a further precaution.</p>
<p>18. If you develop Covid 19 symptoms, self -isolate immediately and get a PCR test, even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you wait for the test results. Please inform your line manager who will discuss next steps with you.</p> <p>From August 16th 2021, if you have been in close contact with a person with Covid and are fully vaccinated with no symptoms, you will not have to self-isolate.</p>

* In accordance with government guidance on social distancing

Name : Lisa Marie Smith – Birmingham Virtual School Headteacher

Signed:

Date: 30th August 2021