

Birmingham Virtual School. Newsletter

December 2025

BirminghamVirtualSchool@Birmingham.gov.uk



Birmingham
Virtual School



Merry Christmas from Birmingham Virtual School

As we reach the end of a busy and inspiring year, Birmingham Virtual School would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to every child and young person we support, every carer who provides love and stability, and every school, Social Worker and partner who works tirelessly to champion learning and wellbeing. Your dedication and collaboration have made a real difference, and together we have created opportunities that help young people thrive.

This festive season is a time to reflect on what we've achieved together. We've seen children discover new talents, build confidence and celebrate milestones that matter. These successes are only possible because of the commitment and care shown by those who work tirelessly behind the scenes - teachers, social workers, mentors and organisations.

Looking ahead to the New Year, we remain focused on our shared mission: ensuring every child has the tools and encouragement to thrive. There is so much to look forward to in 2026, with new programmes and partnerships that will continue to make education inclusive and inspiring.

From all of us at Birmingham Virtual School, we wish you a joyful Christmas and a bright, hopeful start to the year ahead. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Current & Upcoming Events

- The REP Partnership - discounted performance tickets
- February Half Term WMVS CiC Foundation - Wicked Workshop
- The Birmingham Virtual School Award Ceremony
- Care to Dance Programme
- Music Lessons for Children in Care
- Free Swimming lessons



**"Beyond Learning:
Create, Connect and
New Experiences!"**

Birmingham
Virtual School





Care to Dance – Bringing Joy, Confidence and Connection Through Movement

Discover the transformative power of dance for care-experienced young people!

[Home](#) | [Care to Dance](#)

Care to Dance is more than a dance programme - it's a safe, inclusive space where young people can express themselves, build confidence, and create lasting friendships. Every step, every beat, and every smile contributes to a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

What is Care to Dance?

Care to Dance is a trauma-informed initiative designed specifically for care-experienced children and young people. The mission is simple yet powerful:

Empower through movement - Dance becomes a tool for self-expression and emotional release.

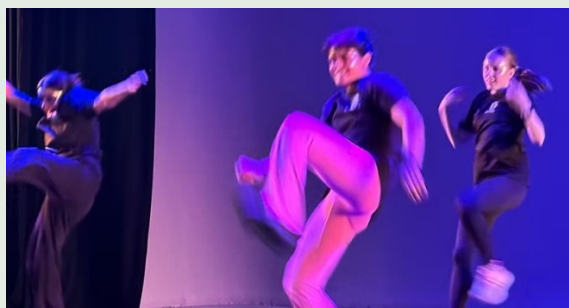
Build confidence and leadership - Participants aged 12+ can gain accredited Level 1 and Level 2 Dance Leadership Qualifications.

Create community - Weekly sessions, social events, and celebration performances foster connection and joy.

All sessions are led by trained dance teachers and supported by a social worker, ensuring a nurturing environment for every participant.

Why Join Care to Dance?

Dance isn't just fun - it's life-changing. Research shows that dance improves physical health, mental wellbeing, confidence, and social skills. It helps young people process emotions, develop resilience, and feel part of a supportive community.



Programme Highlights

Inclusive Dance Workshops: Explore different genres every week - from street to contemporary.
Leadership Opportunities: Older participants can take on ambassador roles and gain work experience.

Celebration Events: Showcase your achievements at our end-of-year performances.

Fully Funded Places: Thanks to Birmingham Virtual School and partners, there's no cost for Birmingham Children in Care.

When and Where?

Birmingham: Weekly dance workshops are held every Tuesday evening at the ACE Space, 54-57 Floodgate Street, Birmingham, B5 5SL.

Other Locations: Care to Dance also runs programmes in Dudley and Sandwell for young people who live closer to those areas.

Who Can Join? All Birmingham care-experienced young people aged 7-25 are welcome!

How to Get Involved

If you know a care-experienced young person aged 7-25 who would love to move, express themselves, or simply try something new:

Email: beth@caretodance.co.uk

Call/Text: 07868 897816



Make a Splash! Free Swimming Lessons for Children in Care

Eligibility applies.

Birmingham Virtual School, in partnership with Serco and Birmingham Community Leisure Trust, is delighted to offer an exciting opportunity: 10 free swimming lessons for Birmingham Children in Care (CiC) across the city. This initiative is designed to help children build water confidence, develop vital life skills, and have fun in a safe, supportive environment.



How to Apply

Referral by Social Worker:
The young person's social worker completes the referral form (including child and carer details, emergency contacts, and any relevant medical information).

Accessing the Referral Form:
If the social worker needs access to the referral form, please email:
BirminghamVirtualSchool@Birmingham.gov.uk

Submit the Referral:
Email the completed form to
Admin.bclt@serco.com

Booking:
Serco will issue a membership number to the carer, who can then book lessons at their nearest BCLT Leisure Centre.

Attendance:
The carer must remain on-site during lessons. Regular attendance is essential to complete the block. Each child can access the offer once.

What's on Offer?

10 Free Swimming Lessons: Each lesson is 30 minutes, delivered weekly over 10 consecutive weeks at Birmingham Community Leisure Trust (BCLT) centres operated by Serco.

Mainstream Swimming Programme: Children will join group sessions led by qualified instructors, focusing on water safety and swimming skills.

Recognition: Badges and certificates are awarded for achievements during the block.

Additional Benefits: After the free block, families can access a 20% discount on future lessons via Passport to Leisure, enjoy the first month free when signing up for a Direct Debit membership, and pay no admin fee for new memberships.

Who is Eligible?

Children in Care (CiC) supported by Birmingham Virtual School.
Main Cohort: Pre-Reception, Reception, and Year 1 (ages 1–6), with a focus on building water confidence before school swimming lessons.

Additional Cohort: Young people new to care, including Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) and newly arrived children who cannot swim.

Why Swimming?

Swimming is a vital life skill that builds confidence, improves physical and mental health, and opens the door to lifelong enjoyment of water activities. For children in care, it's also a chance to make friends, gain recognition, and experience success outside the classroom.

Spaces Are Limited - Apply Now!

With only a limited number of funded places available, we encourage social workers and carers to act quickly to secure a spot for eligible children. For more information, please contact Birmingham Virtual School

Where Do Lessons Take Place?

Lessons are held at various Birmingham Community Leisure Trust centres across the city [Birmingham Community Leisure Trust](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/birmingham-community-leisure-trust)





Anansi The Spider – Exclusive BVS Discount for a Magical Family Theatre Experience!

Birmingham Virtual School is thrilled to share an exclusive offer for our network: discounted tickets to the vibrant new production of Anansi The Spider at The Birmingham REP. This lively show is perfect for children aged 4-8 and their families, bringing to life the legendary trickster spider through colourful storytelling, music, and dance.



Exclusive BVS Discount

Thanks to our partnership with The REP, BVS families, social workers, carers, and professionals can access:

Special Price: £7.50 per ticket (standard tickets normally £12.50).

No Transaction Fee: The usual £3.50 booking fee is waived for BVS bookings.

Unlimited Redemptions: Book as many tickets as you need for your group, subject to availability.

Valid for Performances: Thursday 4 December - Sunday 24 December 2025.

How to get the discount code: Our discount code for access to this fabulous offer can be found on the ePEP noticeboard. Alternatively, to get the code, please email: BirminghamVirtualSchool@Birmingham.gov.uk

Important:

This offer is exclusive to the BVS network and must not be shared publicly or on social media. Please only circulate within BVS families, carers, and professionals.

About the Show

The Spider is a joyful retelling of classic West African and Caribbean folk tales. Audiences will be swept up in a magical world of music, singing, and dancing, as Anansi, the cleverest of all animals, spins his mischievous yarns. The show is a wonderful introduction to theatre for young children, promising plenty of laughter and delight.

Show Dates: Thursday 4 December 2025 - Sunday 11 January 2026 (Discounted dates: Thursday 4 December - Sunday 24 December 2025)

Venue: The Birmingham REP, Centenary Square, Birmingham B1 2EP

Running Time: Approx. 50 minutes

Recommended Age: 4-8 years and their families

Access Performances also available.

For full performance details, visit the [Anansi The Spider | Birmingham Rep](#)

How to Book

Online: [Anansi The Spider | Birmingham Rep](#)

Box Office: Call 0121 236 4455

You will need to use the exclusive BVS code at checkout or when booking by phone. Please contact Birmingham Virtual School if you need the code or have any questions.

Spread the Word (But Not the Code!)

We encourage all BVS families, carers, and professionals to take advantage of this fantastic offer. Please remember, the discount code is for our network only - do not share it publicly or on social media.





Birmingham Virtual School Awards Ceremony

Celebrating the Achievements of Young People in Care

Birmingham Virtual School is proud to announce its upcoming Awards Ceremony - a flagship event dedicated to recognising and celebrating the outstanding achievements of children and young people in care and care leavers aged 11-18 years. This special occasion, hosted in partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust, will take place on Saturday, 21st February 2026 at the iconic Alexander Stadium, Walsall Road, Birmingham, B42 2LR.

Why This Event Matters

The Awards Ceremony is more than just a celebration - it's a testament to the resilience, talent, and determination of Birmingham's young people in care. Every nominee will be recognised for their unique achievements, whether academic, creative, sporting, or personal. The event aims to foster a sense of pride and belonging, while also highlighting the vital support provided by schools, carers, social workers, and the wider community.

What to Expect on the Day

The ceremony promises to be a vibrant and memorable occasion, featuring:

- Live DJ to set a celebratory atmosphere
- Photo booth for capturing special moments
- Yummy treats and refreshments
- Lucky dip and other fun surprises
- Opportunities to connect with peers, staff, and supporters
- Much more to ensure an inclusive and joyful experience for all attendees.



Join Us in Celebrating Success

Let's come together as a community to recognise the remarkable achievements of Birmingham's young people in care. Your nominations and support will help make this a truly inclusive and inspiring event.

For more information, contact the Virtual School team at BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

Nomination Process



Nomination form: Children and Young people's Secondary Awards
- (21st February 2pm 2026)



There are no fixed categories - nominations are open for any achievement, big or small. Each nominator can put forward up to two young people in care.

Nominations are welcomed from: Teachers and school staff, Social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Parents and carers.

Deadline for nominations: 28th January 2026

Every nominee will receive a certificate and an invitation to the celebration event, ensuring that all achievements are acknowledged and celebrated.

How to nominate:

Complete the nomination form: [Nomination form: Secondary and Post 16 Awards - \(21st February 2pm 2026\)](#)

Or scan the QR code at the top.

Award Ceremony

21st February 2026

Alexander Stadium
Walsall RD,
Birmingham, B42 2LR

Scan the QR
code to
nominate now

On the day :
Live DJ
Lucky dip
Photo booth
Yummy treats
MUCH MORE...

Hosted by Birmingham Children's Trust & Birmingham Virtual School to
recognise the achievements of our Children in Care & Care Leavers 11-18 YRs.



WMVS CiC Foundation Events

Celebrating Success: The WMVS CiC Foundation Podcast Workshop

Welcome to WMVS Children In Care Foundation

The WMVS Children in Care Foundation recently hosted a highly successful Podcast Workshop on Tuesday, 28th October 2025, bringing together young people aged 11–18 from across Birmingham, Sandwell, Dudley, Wolverhampton, and Walsall Virtual Schools. Held at The Hollies Steps Centre in Smethwick, the workshop provided a unique and supportive environment for children in care to explore the world of podcasting.

Participants were guided through every stage of podcast creation, including:

- Brainstorming and developing ideas
- Writing scripts
- Recording and editing audio
- Publishing their own podcasts

No prior experience was necessary - just enthusiasm and a willingness to share stories. The workshop was inclusive, catering to a wide range of interests such as music, gaming, sports, and general conversation.

Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Young people enjoyed having their voices heard and learning new skills, while carers and staff praised the workshop's engaging and confidence-building atmosphere. One of the staff members shared "It was lovely to see all the young people getting involved in the podcast activities and creating their own podcasts, it really felt like an achievement for them. They were all really inspired". The success of this event has sparked interest in future podcast sessions and creative opportunities, with the WMVS CiC Foundation and BVS looking to offer ongoing support for budding young podcasters.



Looking Ahead: The Wicked Workshop – February 2026



Building on the momentum of recent successes, the WMVS CiC Foundation is excited to announce the upcoming "Wicked Workshop" in February 2026. This event is part of a series of activities taking place across several local authorities, with a dedicated day for Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, and Dudley. The Wicked Workshop promises to be an inspiring and interactive experience, designed to empower children in care through creative arts and performance.

Attendees can look forward to:

- Professional facilitators
- Hands-on creative activities
- Opportunities to express themselves and build confidence
- Connecting with peers from across the region



Workshop Dates: Thursday 19th February:
Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, and Dudley Virtual Schools.

Further details, including booking information and workshop content, will be shared soon. We encourage all eligible young people and carers, to get involved and make the most of this exciting opportunity.



Unlocking Musical Potential: Birmingham Virtual School's Music Offer with Services For Education



[SFE Music](#) | [Home Page](#) | [Birmingham](#)

Birmingham Virtual School, in partnership with Services For Education, has been providing high-quality 1:1 instrumental and vocal music lessons for children in care for several years. This offer is designed to support personal progression, achievement, and wellbeing through music, and is open to children in care from Year 4 to Year 11 attending Birmingham schools.

What's Included?

Fully funded lessons for Year 4 and Year 7, including instrument loan.

50% subsidised lessons for other years (schools can use Pupil Premium Plus for the remainder).

Wide choice of instruments: brass, strings, woodwind, percussion, and voice.

Qualified teachers following the national curriculum and safeguarding standards.

Young people can join at any point in the school year, whether they're beginners or experienced. Music Service Teachers aim to be as flexible as possible with lesson times and instrument choices, though not all requests can always be accommodated due to scheduling and resources. Please note: Referrals made before Christmas will be set up after January.

Get Involved

To arrange lessons, email

birminghamvirtualschool@birmingham.gov.uk with:

The young person's full name

School name

School staff contact email (usually the Designated Teacher)

Three preferred instruments - Explore videos of many of these instruments here: [Introducing the Instrument](#) | [SFE Music](#) | [Music Lessons](#)

The Virtual School team will coordinate with Services For Education to submit a referral. Let's continue to inspire, support, and celebrate the musical achievements of our young people!



Services For Education



Other Details

Regional Access: Thanks to reciprocal agreements, children in care from other local authorities attending Birmingham schools can also access the offer. For Birmingham children in care attending schools outside the city, lessons are arranged with the relevant Virtual School in that area.

Attendance and Progress: Schools are expected to monitor attendance and support regular participation. The aim is to increase confidence, resilience, and provide opportunities for awards, recognition, and group music-making.

Older students can also access performance opportunities through the Birmingham Youth Proms and city ensembles.

Winner Up! Celebrating Success

A highlight of the year is the "Winner Up!" annual music showcase held each Summer at the Midland Arts Centre (MAC) Birmingham. This event gives young musicians the chance to perform in a professional setting, work with experienced musicians, and share their achievements with family and friends.

Birmingham Virtual School and Services For Education are currently working to set up the next Winner Up! event, which will take place in summer next year.

An exciting update for the Winner Up! event is that we are introducing two days: one day dedicated to primary-aged young people and one day dedicated to secondary school young people. We plan to finalise the details shortly, so keep an eye out for further updates and information on how to sign up.

Last summer's Winner Up! event was a great success, with young people and families thoroughly enjoying the experience - especially the DJ workshop, which proved to be a real highlight.

