



Birmingham Virtual School PROSPECTUS

EVERY CHILD - EVERY CHANCE TO THRIVE

We champion the education and wellbeing of Birmingham's children in care and care-experienced learners, partnering with schools, colleges and other education settings, social workers and families to remove barriers and ensure every child can thrive.



Contact us: BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

This document is a guide and sign post of key information for parents/carers/guardians, schools, colleges and other education settings, social care and independent reviewing officers.

Detailed policies, guidance, training events, support materials and our local offer for children and young people are available on the Birmingham Virtual School pages of the Birmingham City Council's website.

If you have a direct query related to a young person known to social care or a member of Birmingham Virtual School you can email us at **BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk**



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WELCOME

As Headteacher of Birmingham Virtual School, it is my privilege to welcome you to our Prospectus designed to provide parents, carers, guardians, schools, colleges and other education settings, social care and independent reviewing officers with regarding our service. It sets out who we are, the services we provide, and how we collaborate to champion the learning, progress, and wellbeing of every young person we support. I trust that you will find this document a valuable resource and encourage you to retain it for future reference.

Being the Headteacher of the largest Virtual School in the country is a privilege. I am inspired daily by the strength, potential and individuality of the children and young people we serve. As a service everything we do begins with a simple belief: children known or ever known to social care deserve unwavering care, ambition and champions who walk alongside them. Our work is built on deep partnership - with schools, early years settings, college and other education providers, social workers, carers, families and our wider community - because together we can create the stability, encouragement and opportunities that help our young people flourish.

For supplementary and additional information please do visit the Virtual School pages on the Birmingham City Council website www.birmingham.gov.uk/bvs, where you will find our policies, guidance, resources, links to bookable training and our local offer for children in care, as well as relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). If you would like to contact us, you can reach the Birmingham Virtual School at BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk.



LISA SMITH

Virtual School Headteacher

CHAPTER 1: ABOUT BIRMINGHAM VIRTUAL SCHOOL

1. WHO WE ARE

Birmingham Virtual School is a statutory service within Birmingham City Council Children's and Family Directorate. It is a service dedicated to promoting the education and wellbeing of children known or ever known to social care. We work in partnership with schools, colleges and other education settings, parents, guardians, carers, social workers, and other professionals to ensure every child has the best possible opportunities to succeed.

The Virtual School does not replace an actual schools, colleges and other education settings or provision that our children attend.

Our role is:

- to monitor the progress of all of Birmingham's children in care as if they were in one school, and
- advocate and support children and young people ever known to social care, to make sure are supported at all stages of their education and have the best opportunities to be successful in their adult lives.

As a service we operate very similarly to an actual schools, colleges and other education settings. We operate a school roll on which all of Birmingham's children in care are known individually and are led by a Headteacher who is supported by a governing body. Just like a school we monitor attendance, behaviour, progress and attainment of children in care, children in need and those on child protection plans. We have three improvement plans - one for Early Years, one for 5-16 Statutory School Age and one for Post 16 that set out our actions and priorities for improving educational outcomes; and we work in partnership with many other services to best support children known or ever known to Birmingham social care services.



2. OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Our full mission statement is available on our [website](#) but in summary we: champion the educational achievement and holistic wellbeing for children in care, care leavers and those known or ever known to social care.

Our vision is for every child to thrive academically and personally so they can lead successful adult lives regardless of their circumstances.

We value inclusion, aspiration, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ensuring that children's voices are central to all decisions.

Key commitments include:

- **Boosting Educational Achievement** – Closing attainment gaps and fostering high aspirations.
- **Quality Education, Employment and Training** – Ensuring access to excellent early years education, teaching, training and learning environments.
- **Holistic Wellbeing** – Supporting emotional, mental, and social development.
- **Personalised Education Plans (PEPs)** – Every child has an ambitious, regularly updated plan. The plan has clear targets and there is effective use of pupil premium funding in line with DfE guidance for school leaders.
- **Training and Support** – Equipping educators, carers, and professionals with knowledge on effective policy, practice, pedagogy, attachment, trauma, and positive relationships.
- **Effective Resource Allocation** – Using pupil premium funding strategically to maximise impact.
- **Shared Priority** – Working collaboratively so education for children with a social worker is everyone's responsibility as a corporate parent.
- **Culture of High Aspirations** – Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive.



3. OUR STATUTORY ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Children who are known or have ever been known to social services often have early childhood or adolescent experiences that can impact their education and the social wellbeing. The role of the Virtual School Headteacher became statutory for all local authorities in England in 2013 to bridge the gap, ensuring these children receive the same opportunities as their peers.

In Birmingham, this means:

- Acting as the lead responsible officer to ensure the local authority improves the educational experiences and outcomes of all children in care, including those living outside of Birmingham.
- Ensure high-quality, effective Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for every child in care and promote aspiration and achievement – so every child can reach their full potential.
- Ensure suitable education is in place for every child known to social care and challenge barriers or inequalities in education.
- Track and monitor the attainment, progress, attendance, exclusions, and educational placement changes of all children known to social care.
- Managing the Pupil Premium Plus grant for children in care to improve their educational outcomes.
- Provide advice and information to parents, schools and professionals to support the education of children known or ever known to social care, including previously looked after, children in need, children on kinship or special guardianship orders
- Providing strategic leadership and oversight across early years, primary, and post-16 education to promote the educational outcomes of all children known or ever known to social care.
- Champion improved attendance, inclusion, attainment, and progress and advocate for of all children known or ever known to social care.
- Celebrating the success and achievements of our children and young people.



CHAPTER 2: MEET THE TEAM

Birmingham Virtual School is a multi-disciplinary team, structured to provide comprehensive support for children known or ever known to social care.



HEAD OF SERVICE

Virtual School Headteacher
Lisa Smith

Provides overall strategic direction and leadership for the service, ensuring statutory duties are met and resources such as the Pupil Premium Plus grant are used effectively to promote achievement.

TEAM MANAGERS

Lead the teams by phase and locality in and out for Birmingham. They have operational oversight of all our young people and their progress.



South & Early Years
Naomi Molesworth



North
Mark Cole



**Post 16, CiN & CP,
Development Officer and PLAC**
Hannah Redfern

EDUCATION OFFICERS & ADVISORS

Directly work with schools, their leadership team and designated teacher. Undertake corporate parent visits with our settings to promote high quality inclusive policy and practice.



North
Education Officer
Laura Towers



Education Advisor
David Mowatt



Central
Education Officer
Kathryn Holland



Education Advisor
Marion Frankland



Education Officer
Nancy Barnett



East
Education Advisor
David Erfani



South
Education Officer
Danielle Parkes



Education Advisor
Bianca Ward



South West
Education Officer
Fran Hicks



Education Advisor
Claire Best



North West
Education Officer
Carla Osborne



Education Advisor
Veronica Wright



Education Officer
Claire Bagnall



Education Advisor
Ava Bailey

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION ADVISORS

Directly work with schools, their leadership team and designated teacher. Undertake corporate parent visits with our settings to promote high quality inclusive policy and practice.



South
Early Years Education Advisor
Lisa Southall



North
Early Years Education Advisor
Alison Champness

POST 16 EDUCATION OFFICERS & ADVISORS

Directly work with schools, their leadership team and designated teacher. Undertake corporate parent visits with our settings to promote high quality inclusive policy and practice.



**Post 16
Education Officer
Shamelia Benjamin**



**North
Post 16
Education Adviser
Sukhi Kaur**



**Post 16
NEET Adviser
Emma Travis**



**Post 16
Education Officer
Mandy Finnegan**



**South
Post 16
Education Adviser
Nitesh Solanki**



**Post 16
NEET Adviser
Tamarah March**

Directly work with our 16-18 year old NEET young people meeting with them to complete a PEP and working with other professionals to put in place interventions or short courses to re-engage with Education, Employment or Training.

PLACEMENT OFFICERS

Work to secure new schools/provisions/settings. They will liaise school admissions teams regarding a school in year or normal round admission application and ensure the parent or social worker/carer has submitted the application.



**South & Central
Placement
Officer
Jade Terrett**



**South East
Placement
Officer
Sadiya Gill**



**North West & Central
Placement
Officer
Merie Eglesfield**



**North East
Placement
Officer
Salma Habib**

CiN & CP EDUCATION ADVISORS

Support and advise professionals on educational for children in need and child protection cases. Work with school to ensure high aspirations and improve outcomes. Use data to inform practice and resourcing.



South
CiN & CP Education
Advisor
Kyna Dixon



North
CiN & CP Education
Advisor
Abigail Malcolm

PLAC ADVISOR

Support and advise professionals on educational for children previously looked after. Work with school to ensure high aspirations and improve outcomes.



PLAC Education
Advisor
Ava Bailey

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Manages our growing Birmingham & West Midlands CIC Foundation local offers. Promoting access opportunities for all of our young people to widen participation and access to enrichment activities.



Development
Officer
Myles Lawrence

TIAAS

Leads and manages the School Lead Practitioners for TIAAS. Promotes the Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Schools programme across the city and oversees training delivery linked to TIAAS.



School Improvement
Partner TIAAS
Alix Etheridge

Leads and manages the school Lead Practitioners for TIAAS. Promotes the Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Schools programme across the city and oversees training delivery linked to TIAAS.



TIAAS LLP
Vicky Wooton



TIAAS LLP
Lisa Taylor-Hawkins

Practitioners with experience of leading TIAAS pedagogy and implementation successfully within their own settings. LLPs work directly with schools supporting the delivery of TIAAS training, sharing strategies and resources, promoting networking and school links. They help schools and nurseries to work strategically towards accreditation.

FINANCE, ePEP & DATA MANAGERS



**Pupil Premium Plus
Manager**
Marcia Folkes



ePEP Manager
Annemarie McNair



**Data Intelligence
Officer**
Ranjit Kaur



**Data Intelligence
Officer**
Lewis Huges

BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICERS

Provides essential administrative and data management functions.



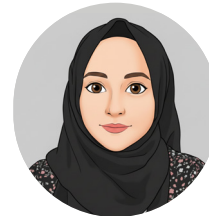
**Business Support
Officer**
Manawar Ali
Supports
Lisa Smith



**Business Support
Officer**
Aaminah Munzoor
Supports
Mark Cole



**Business Support
Officer**
Anita Banger
**Supports Mark Cole
& ePEP Updates**



**Business Support
Officer**
Sana Lone
Supports
Hannah Redfern



**Business Support
Officer**
Nadia Rani
Supports
Naomi Molesworth

CHAPTER 3: OUR SERVICES

1. EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

We:

- Visit all settings with Birmingham CiC/CiN/CP/ PLAC on roll to discuss our young people and their progress, the practice and progress for children known to social worker and provide support, advice and training (DT & DSL).
For Birmingham schools and settings we will record these visit notes into your school prospective lite area for sign off by the school.
- Report on a wide range of educational outcomes to the Executive Director - Children and Families and BCC's Corporate Parent Board as part of our pledges and out statutory duties.
- Maintain roll of CIC in education settings (as if we were a school) and record and monitor attendance for all children known to a social worker. Schools, colleges and other education settings are required to inform us of managed moves, reduced timetable, dual registration, take up of Early Years Entitlement, withdrawal of place from college or a training/apprenticeship offer, access to an Alternative Provision, possible suspensions or Permanent Exclusion.
- Collect daily attendance for CiC, CiN and CP and analysis authorised and unauthorised attendance, suspensions, off roll status and reduce timetables.
- Collect and monitor academic performance through termly progress data through our PEP and collect Key Stage national assessment data and Key Stage 4 and 5 mock exam results as well as National Exam results collections.
- Maintain and quality assure all PEPs for CIC -we expect these to be good or better; and provide schools with an education plan template for PLAC. We will set actions for your DT and social worker to improve PEP quality standards.
- Support social worker and parent with school applications and selecting parental preference for school place for all children including those with EHCP. We support admission services or SEND with consultation or to direct or appeal as needed.
- Support school improvement teams by sharing information related to strong or weak education outcomes for children with a social worker and undertake corporate parent visits.
- Allocate, manage and report on effective spend of Pupil Premium + in line with conditions of the grant. We produce a termly Finance Broadcast and send this to any School Finance officers whose details are on the PEP. See our [website](#) to access our Pupil Premium policy and foster carer leaflet on PP+.
- Raise awareness of attachment, trauma, mental health and SEND needs for children ever known to social care fund.
- Fund and oversee Birmingham Council 's Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools/ Settings programme (TIAAS).
- Provide education focused training for designated teachers, SENCOs, designated safeguarding leads, social workers, carers, BCC colleagues.
- Host an annual DT conference, DT network meetings and a TIAAS award event.
- Work with school and college to reduce suspensions/withdrawal of place or permanent exclusion acting as the young persons advocate. See our [guidance](#) for further support
- Provide advice, guidance, training and signposting to families of those with children in care, on kinship or guardianship orders or previously in care.
- Work directly with young people who are NEET or Care Leavers at Yr 13 to support them into higher or further education, employment or training.
- Celebrate our young people's achievements through rewards events and post cards
- Provide a range of enrichment activities outside of education that support our young people's talents and interest as a corporate parent.

2. CORPORATE PARENT VISITS

Birmingham Virtual School's Corporate Parent Visit is an advisory, supportive and collaborative process designed to help schools, colleges and other education settings strengthen their provision for Children in Care. The visit activities include reviewing practice, data, personal education planning, and Pupil Premium Plus use. Through a collaborative discussion with the Designated Teacher and senior leaders, the visit provides tailored guidance, celebrates strengths, identifies areas for development, and produces actionable next steps.

The visit directly supports a school's own self evaluation through use of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) Self Evaluation Framework, which schools are encouraged to complete in advance so that strengths, gaps, and development needs can be jointly identified and used to inform action planning and ongoing improvement. Because the Corporate Parent Visit gathers evidence across areas such as achievement, inclusion, behaviour and safety, quality of teaching, and leadership as structured within NAVSH and aligned to the Ofsted framework, it provides a clear audit trail that schools can draw upon when demonstrating inclusive practice, curriculum ambition, and effective support for vulnerable learners during an Ofsted inspection.

Schools may also use the visit notes and reflections as part of their formal documentation for Ofsted, annual governor reporting, or internal Inclusion reviews, helping them to evidence how they meet the needs of Children in Care and how their practice is improving over time.

Virtual School officers will contact any schools expecting Ofsted to offer them a Corporate Parent Visit or schools, colleges and settings can contact us at any stage to request a visit by contacting your Education Officer directly or contacting us at [**BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk**](mailto:BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk).

Under the current schools inspection framework HMI will call the Virtual School as part of their triangulation of inclusion. As such we advise all school due inspection within the next 12 months to arrange a corporate parent visit if they have a Birmingham Child in Care on roll.



3. PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPs)

All Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Birmingham Children in Care are completed and stored through our secure **eGov ePEP system**, ensuring a consistent, high quality digital record for every child. The Virtual School's role is to facilitate the child's social worker and school, college and other education setting to ensure that PEPs are completed, agree how pupil premium plus (PP+) can most effectively be used to facilitate the child's educational attainment and ensure they are high quality. The PEP is a joint responsibility between the Local Authority (Social Worker and Virtual School) and the school or education setting.

New to Care:

Statutory guidance states that a PEP must be **started within 10 working days** of a child first becoming looked after to ensure early assessment and planning around the child's education. The social worker should initiate a PEP within 10 days of a child entering care, even if no school place is yet secured.

This initial PEP must be completed and available by the first statutory review of the care plan, which takes place within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after.

AFTER THE INITIAL PEP

PEP review meeting must happen at least twice a year under statutory guidance. In Birmingham (like many other Virtual Schools) the PEP is completed and reviewed each school term as part of ongoing monitoring and statutory care planning.

The PEP is a record of what needs to happen for that child/young person that term to enable them to educationally achieve. It should reflect any other existing plans such as an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or a Pastoral, Behaviour, Individual Education, or SEN Support plan. The PEP should set out a personalised approach to learning which secure age appropriate or ability related skills and is aspirational for the child and young person. A high quality, termly PEP that sets out their educational needs, targets, aspirations and the support required to help them make good progress.

A HIGH QUALITY PEP WILL

- Reflect the views of the child's parent/carer.
- Be a record or reflection of the child's voice (as age appropriate).
- Create a comprehensive and enduring record of the child's experience, progress and achievements (academic and otherwise).

- Be linked to information in other education plans such as EHCPs, PSPs, BSPs, IEPs and SSPPs.
- Identify developmental and education needs (short and long terms) in relations to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences.
- Set termly SMART targets with clear actions by whom and by when, expected milestones, spend and resourcing (if required) and the monitoring mechanisms.
- Review actions from previous PEPs and progress recorded against the targets.

The Designated Teacher in each school, college and other education setting holds lead responsibility for completing the education pages within the PEP, ensuring it reflects personalised learning needs, the school's, colleges and other education settings assessment information, and clear target linked use of Pupil Premium Plus funding.

Birmingham Virtual School operates a robust PEP Quality Assurance Framework, which includes both pupil level and whole school, college and other education setting, audits to ensure that every PEP meets statutory expectations, drives improved outcomes, and provides a consistent standard of educational planning across all settings

For and PEP queries email:
BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

4. PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS (PP+)

FUNDING ALLOCATION AND USE

Pupil Premium Plus is additional funding provided by the Department for Education to help close the attainment gap for children in care and previously looked-after children. For looked-after children, the Virtual School Headteacher is responsible for managing and allocating this funding. In Birmingham, schools receive as a minimum **£1,800 per child in care per academic year**, paid in three termly instalments of £600 (with a possible uplift in the spring term payment), provided the child has been in care for at least one day during the term.

Funding is expected to be used on spent on strategies and interventions that are well evidenced to directly improve educational outcomes and in line with the three 3 DfE Tiers which are:

1. Support the quality of teaching, such as staff professional development.
2. Provide targeted academic support, such as tutoring;
3. Tackle non-academic barriers to academic success, such as attendance, behaviour, social and emotional support.

PP+ is not a personal budget for the child nor should it be used for services that are already funded via different grants or are the responsibility of the school/college/setting or local authority to provide such as school transport, commissioning of alternative provision or foster carer allowance. For previously looked-after children, funding is paid directly to schools via the Education and Skills Funding Agency currently **£2,630 per eligible pupil** for 2025–2026 ([Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency)).

ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPACT REPORTING

Schools, colleges and other education settings are required to demonstrate how PP+ funding is used to improve outcomes for eligible pupils.

This includes:

- Recording planned expenditure and progress in the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- Publishing a statement on the school, college and other education setting website detailing how Pupil Premium funding is spent and its impact.
- Working with the Virtual School to ensure interventions are evidence-based and linked to individual needs.

The Virtual School monitors the use of PP+ for looked-after children and may retain or administer funds directly to ensure effective use. Schools, colleges and other education settings must show measurable improvements in attainment, attendance, and wellbeing as part of their accountability.

For a copy of our policy please visit our website [Pupil Premium Plus policy for Birmingham children in care](#).



5. TRAUMA INFORMED ATTACHMENT AWARE SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS (TIAAS)

TIAAS is a whole school, college and other education setting development programme that supports settings to implement a universal approach to relational practice as part of their culture and ethos.

TIAAS schools, colleges and other education settings:

- have a good understanding of attachment theory and the impact of trauma on children & young people;
- promote the personal, social, emotional, mental health & wellbeing development of all pupils, especially those who are the most vulnerable;
- are inclusive to all pupils & support good attendance.

At the heart of our TIAAS programme are the six key principles of:

- prioritising relationships in all that we do (connection & belonging);
- recognising that a sense of safety is the foundation of all learning and exploration;
- seeing behaviour as communication;
- seeking to regulate before using reasoning and making space for reparation;
- recognising all emotions and offering empathy to all;
- being curious about the experiences of families and what that means for them.

Birmingham Virtual School is committed to TIAAS practice through:

- funding TIAAS training for schools, early years and post 16 settings;
- commissioning & promoting a comprehensive and research led training programme which is delivered to schools by the LA Educational Psychology team and aligns with the Attachment Research Community (ARC);
- supporting a robust and rigorous accreditation system for schools, colleges and other education settings to obtain TIAAS gold, silver & bronze status and awards;
- the role of School Improvement Partner for TIAAS who oversees a team of Local Lead Practitioners (LLPs) who work directly with schools, colleges and other education settings, developing and helping to embed good relational & trauma informed practice.

For further information please contact our SIP at BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk or TIAAS@birmingham.gov.uk.



6. TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

At Birmingham Virtual School, we are committed to equipping professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to improve educational outcomes for children in care and previously looked-after children. Our four-year training offer is comprehensive, practical, and tailored to meet the needs of those working across education and care sectors. We deliver some of our own **training** but also commission a number of national training providers to enhance our programme.

WHO WE TRAIN

We deliver high-quality training to:

- **Education Staff such as Designated Teachers and senior leaders, SENCOs** in Early Years, Schools and Colleges.
- **Social Workers** and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).
- **Foster Carers, Special Guardians, and Residential Care Staff.**

OUR APPROACH

Our sessions are designed to be professional yet approachable, ensuring participants feel supported and confident in applying best practice. Training is consistently rated as good or excellent and includes:

- **Regular Webinars and Twilight Sessions:** Covering statutory responsibilities, Personal Education Plans (PEPs), and effective use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+).
- **Specialist Courses:** Trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice, supporting emotional regulation, literacy strategies, and working with newly arrived young people.
- **Practical Guidance:** Hands-on sessions for using the ePEP system and writing high-quality PEPs.
- **Bespoke Training:** Tailored programmes for schools, carers, and agencies to address specific needs.

Contact us to discuss your training needs email: BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk.

CONFERENCES AND NETWORK MEETINGS

Two annual conferences with inspirational keynote speakers and practical workshops are a highlight of the year, allowing staff supporting Children in Care and other vulnerable students to spend a day reflecting and drawing on new ideas so they can best support our young people.

In spring and summer terms, the DT network meetings offer another opportunity for Designated Teachers and those supporting the role to come together to share best practice and hear BVS updates. Past topics have included PEPs, PP+, Supporting Emotional Well-Being.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

For more details and to book training, visit [Birmingham Virtual School Training](#).



7. ADVOCACY AND WIDER PARTNERSHIPS

At Birmingham Virtual School, advocacy and partnership are at the heart of our mission to improve educational outcomes for children ever known to social care. We act as a strong advocate for every child, ensuring their voice is heard and their needs are met across all aspects of education and wellbeing. Our approach is collaborative, working closely with schools, colleges and other education settings, families, social workers, and a wide network of professionals to create a joined-up system of support.

OUR ADVOCACY ROLE

- We champion the rights and aspirations of care-experienced children, ensuring they have equitable access to high-quality education.
- Through Personal Education Plans (PEPs), we place the child at the centre of decision-making, promoting their voice in shaping their learning journey.
- We provide guidance and challenge to schools, colleges and other education settings and agencies to remove barriers to learning and secure the best possible outcomes.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

A key to success in positively affecting educational outcomes for children known to a social worker is by ensuring that their success within education is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare. This needs to happen at individual children, school, local area and strategic levels in order to have maximum impact.

Key Partners include Parents, Carers, Guardians, Social workers, designated teachers, designated safeguarding leads, SENCOs, LA SEND services, Schools Admission Teams, Independent Reviewing Officers, Health Professionals, Mental Health Services, The Police, Family Placement Social Workers, Teachers, Headteachers, School Improvement Services and LA Inclusive Pathway Services.

BVS also commissions and collaborates with a range of other specialist services and organisations to deliver tailored support. For more details on our key partners visit our website [Key partners | Birmingham City Council](#).



CHAPTER 4: BIRMINGHAM VIRTUAL SCHOOL'S LOCAL OFFER

Birmingham Virtual School offer a range of enrichment and support activities, events and programmes support to Children in Care and those known to a Social Worker. Our offer will be growing through summer 25 ready for delivery in academic year 26-27. For the latest current offer please see our local offer and key partners on our website

A summary of the current 25-26 offer is below:

TUITION SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

For children temporarily without a school or college place we continue to provide tailored tuition across a wide range of subjects to support academic progress, confidence, and continuity. This provision directly addresses educational gaps and provides stable, personalised academic support children in care need to fulfil their potential.

IN-REACH SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS FROM COBS BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TEAM

The City of Birmingham School (COBS) Behaviour Support Team, in partnership with Birmingham Virtual School (BVS), offers a high quality in reach support service designed to strengthen outcomes for Birmingham's children in care. Through a commissioned programme of in school intervention, COBS provides targeted assessment, observation and personalised support aimed at reducing emotional dysregulation, preventing exclusions, and promoting positive engagement in learning. Support may include whole class behaviour strategies, individual and small group work, multi agency collaboration and intensive 1:1 intervention where needed. This partnership offer enhances schools' capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable learners, builds staff confidence through expert guidance, and ensures a coordinated, evidence based approach that is fully integrated into the child's PEP and wider pastoral planning.

TUITION MUSIC LESSONS: A CREATIVE PATHWAY TO GROWTH

In partnership with **Services for Education**, we provide fully funded **1:1 instrumental and vocal lessons** for Year 4 and Year 7 children in care. Students can choose from a wide range of instruments including violin, flute, guitar, and drums. Years 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11: Sessions are 50% funded by Birmingham Virtual School, and the remaining 50% is invoiced to the school. Schools can use the young person's Pupil Premium Plus allocation to cover this cost, making the offer accessible and sustainable.

***N.B.** West Midlands Reciprocal Agreement Under the West Midlands Reciprocal Agreement, any child in care across the West Midlands region can access a music offer through their local Virtual School. This collaborative approach ensures that children placed outside Birmingham still benefit from high-quality music tuition, promoting consistency and opportunity across the region.*



SWIMMING LESSONS

Birmingham Virtual School, in partnership with Serco and Birmingham Community Leisure Trust, is delighted to offer 10 free swimming lessons for children in care across the city. For:

- Primary Age: Pre-Reception, Reception, and Year 1 (approx. ages 1–6), with a focus on building water confidence before school swimming lessons.
- Young people new to care who cannot swim.
- Newly arrived who have not yet learnt water safety skills.

Spaces are limited and each child can access the offer once.

JASS PROGRAMME AT ACKERS ADVENTURE CENTRE

Children in care participated weekly in the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS) programme, taking part in rock climbing, tobogganing, and a variety of outdoor challenges. The JASS is a nationally recognised award that supports the personal development and wider achievements of children in care. Birmingham Virtual School offers JASS as part of its commitment to nurturing confidence, resilience, and life skills in young people.

REP BURSARY OFFER: DRAMA AND THEATRE OPPORTUNITIES AT THE REP

The REP Bursary is a partnership between Birmingham Virtual School and Birmingham Repertory Theatre, providing children in care with access to high-quality drama and theatre experiences. Up to twelve places are reserved each year for Birmingham Virtual School participants, with the opportunity to join at the start of the academic year or, where space allows, mid-year.

CARE TO DANCE

An inclusive dance programme delivered in partnership with Birmingham Virtual School, supporting care-experienced young people across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SERVICES

Birmingham Virtual School is committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children in care, recognising the vital link between wellbeing and educational success.

WHAT WE OFFER

- **Specialist Support:** Our team works closely with a network of trusted partners to provide tailored support for children and young people.
- **Education-Focused Interventions:** Support is available for issues directly impacting education, such as anxiety about returning to school, exam stress, and difficulties with engagement or attendance.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** All interventions are delivered in a nurturing, trauma-informed environment, ensuring children feel safe, respected, and understood.



WMVS CiC FOUNDATION REGIONAL OFFER

WMVS CiC FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP: ART AND SPORT

The West Midlands Virtual Schools Children in Care (WMVS CiC) Foundation is a collaborative partnership of all fourteen Virtual Schools across the West Midlands, dedicated to developing a connected and ambitious offer for Children in Care.

ART AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through the WMVS CiC Foundation, children in care can access a wide range of creative projects and experiences, including:

- Collaborative art workshops with professional artists and creative specialists.
- Opportunities to visit arts, cultural, and sporting venues across the region. Including theatre performances and university trips.
- Participation in regional creative projects, such as film-making and spoken word.
- Regular digital workshops and creative sessions designed to build skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In partnership with Serco and Birmingham Community Leisure Trust children in care benefit from:

- Free swimming lessons and access to a variety of sports and physical activities at local leisure centres (eligibility applies).
- "Give it a go" sessions and Sports Festival Events, encouraging participation and enjoyment.
- Opportunities to try new activities, develop healthy habits, and build confidence in a supportive environment.
- Pathways for progression, including leadership opportunities and involvement in community sports initiatives.

For more information, visit the WMVS CiC Foundation website [What we do | WMVS Children In Care Foundation.](#)



CHAPTER 5: OUR IMPACT

Birmingham Virtual School is committed to ensuring that children in care, those with a social worker, and previously looked after children receive the support, advocacy, and opportunities they need to thrive. Our work spans academic support, enrichment, professional development, and strategic collaboration. This chapter highlights the measurable impact of our services throughout the year.

CASE STUDY:

IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVE PP+ SPENDING

A Year 6 pupil in care was identified as below age-related expectations in reading. Through ePEP monitoring, we allocated PP+ funding for a structured phonics intervention and provided access to an online reading platform. Within two terms, the pupil's reading age improved by 18 months, and they transitioned confidently to secondary school.

CASE STUDY:

TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS

A newly appointed Designated Teacher attended our "Role of the DT" webinar series. Feedback highlighted increased confidence in managing PEP meetings and understanding PP+ allocation. The school subsequently reported improved quality of PEP targets and better engagement with carers.

CASE STUDY:

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

A secondary school raised concerns about a child's SEMH needs. BVS facilitated a multi-agency meeting, resulting in an Educational Psychologist assessment and targeted intervention. The child remained in mainstream education with improved attendance and engagement.



CASE STUDY: *OUR LOCAL OFFER*

Podcast Workshop – Unlocking Creative Talent

As part of our commitment to broadening creative opportunities for children in care, Birmingham Virtual School hosted an innovative Podcast Workshop designed to inspire confidence, develop communication skills, and unlock hidden talents.

What Happened?

Students worked alongside professional facilitators to learn the art of podcasting - from planning and scripting to recording and editing. The workshop encouraged participants to share their stories, explore topics that matter to them, and collaborate in a supportive environment.

One young person arrived at the workshop feeling nervous about speaking in front of others. With encouragement and guidance, she scripted and recorded her own podcast episode, sharing her thoughts on education and aspirations for the future. By the end of the day, her confidence had soared - she spoke clearly, engaged with her peers, and expressed pride in her achievement. She showed real maturity by openly discussing her experiences of being care-experienced, offering an honest and powerful perspective that resonated with listeners. She now hopes to pursue further opportunities in media and podcasting. Work is now underway with her social worker to build on her interest and provide next step opportunities.

Podcast Practitioner Feedback

Aaron Child, Podcast Practitioner, shared:

“These workshops have been some of the most engaging sessions with young people I’ve ever run. In every session, when they put the headphones on and start speaking into the microphone, something shifts. Their focus sharpens. They listen more deeply. Even the quietest kids - the ones who barely speak in class - find their voice. There’s something about that microphone that gives them permission to take up space.

As we listen, ordinary conversations that might have seemed trivial before become entertaining. There are laugh-out-loud moments, emotional moments. The weight of words change. Comments that might’ve seemed throwaway suddenly feel profound, sparking reactions from listening classmates and adults alike. Subtle emotions grow louder, personalities shine brighter.”



CASE STUDY: *OUR LOCAL OFFER*

Care to Dance – Inclusive Dance Opportunities for Care-Experienced Young People

Feedback from Teachers, Carers, and Young People:

Teachers:

"The children have made remarkable progress, with their confidence and self-esteem growing week by week. Their commitment truly shone through in our celebration performance. I am incredibly proud to be a part of Care to Dance and to witness their amazing achievements."

"Witnessing young people use dance as an outlet and a tool to assist their social skills has been a true blessing. Over the few months I've spent with them, I've seen a real shift in character, confidence, and camaraderie. Celebrating their new skills and progress both in and out of dance has been a great experience."

"It's been amazing to see how the young people have grown each week and developed their skills through dance. Watching them shine and express themselves has been so rewarding. Their dedication and enthusiasm is inspiring."

Carers:

"The biggest benefit has been the space to develop relationships, feeling accomplished, and being cared for with other children who are also cared-for, not feeling the odd one out. The staff are wonderful - so positive, respectful, and caring. Since starting Care to Dance, our young person is able to regulate themselves faster and always shares how much they want to be at dance. This is a fantastic group, an opportunity to dance in a nurturing, trauma-informed environment."

"Our young person loves to attend and the team around them have always said, no matter what, Care to Dance will remain a consistency. It is so important to have this space each week to dance and feel good about themselves."

"Dancing at home was fun, but being able to do this in a more structured environment has been really good. They have become more energetic and look forward to dance every week, socialising with their peers. As they have progressed, they have matured and felt less stigmatised about being in care. Their confidence has improved and they have become more motivated around possible careers. The teachers are extremely good and great role models."

Young People:

"This is the only club that I love to go to. I have quit my other clubs, but I never want to quit Care to Dance. I want it to go on forever!"

"When I realised everyone in the group were in care like me, it was really nice to know that we all have the same experiences and can make friends with each other."

CHAPTER 6: FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

1. WEBSITE AND RESOURCES

Our website serves as the central hub for all information, guidance and support provided by **Birmingham Virtual School**. It offers easy access to our priorities, policies and specialist resources designed to champion the education of children in care and previously looked after children. Through clear navigation and regularly updated content, visitors can explore our training opportunities, discover the support available for schools, colleges and other education settings and carers, and learn more about how we work in partnership to improve educational outcomes. The site reflects our commitment to transparency, collaboration and high quality practice - providing a welcoming and informative space for professionals, families and young people alike.

The site contains a number of resources in our **Supporting Documents** page and our **Newsletters**.

2. FOSTER CARER PORTAL

The Birmingham Children's Trust Foster Carer Portal provides foster carers with a comprehensive, web enabled platform designed to offer clear, accessible guidance, practical tools, and up to date policies that support them in their vital role. The online Foster Carers Handbook explains day to day expectations, procedures, and best practice, helping carers navigate common situations and understand the standards required of them, while also serving as a key learning and development resource alongside support from supervising social workers and other professionals. The portal links directly to local policies, procedures, and safeguarding information through the Trust's wider policy hub as well as containing a number of Virtual School Resources such as leaflets on Pupil Premium Plus; ensuring carers always have access to the most current guidance they need to provide consistent and high quality care. Together, the Foster Carer Portal and the Birmingham Virtual School create an integrated support network - equipping foster carers with the knowledge, tools, and professional guidance needed to help every child achieve their potential.



3. DIFFERENT CARE STATUSES AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In England, a young person may become **looked after by the local authority** either through a formal court process or by voluntary agreement. The most common legal route is a **Care Order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989**, where the court decides that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Under a Care Order (whether interim or full) the local authority shares parental responsibility and makes key decisions to ensure the child’s safety, wellbeing, and educational stability. **For more details see [Care Orders \(Section 31\)](#).**

Children can also become looked after through **voluntary accommodation under Section 20**, where parents agree for their child to be cared for by the local authority. Unlike Care Orders, **Supervision Orders** do not make a child looked after, as the child remains at home and parental responsibility stays with the family. **For more details see [Voluntary Accommodation \(Section 20\) – Parliamentary Overview](#).**

For more detailed guidance, carers and professionals can visit the official resources.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY COMPARISON

CARE ORDER (SECTION 31)



LOOKED AFTER?

Yes

Shared: Local authority + parents

VOLUNTARY ACCOMMODATION (SECTION 20)



LOOKED AFTER?

Yes

Parents retain full PR

4. KEY GUIDANCE AND POLICIES

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION GUIDANCE AND POLICY

1. Promoting the Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children.
[Read the guidance \(GOV.UK\)](#)
2. Roles and Responsibilities of Designated Teachers & Virtual School Heads.
[Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK](#)
3. Children's Social Care: Virtual School Head Role Extension.
[Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)
4. Local Authority Guidance: Supporting Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children
[Looked-after children and children in care - GOV.UK](#)
5. Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked-After Children and Care Leavers.
[Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers - GOV.UK](#)
6. Effective use of Pupil Premium Plus.
The following guidance is available on the effective use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+):
[Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK](#)
[Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders](#)

RELATED STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

Virtual Schools also work within other statutory frameworks, such as:

- School Admissions Code
[School admissions code - GOV.UK](#)
- Exclusion Guidance (Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions)
[School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK](#)
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years
[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)



5. BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL LOCAL POLICIES

- Local Authority Guidance
[Local authority guidance](#)
- Admissions Policy
[School admissions code 2021](#)
- Exclusions Policy
[Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](#)
- Attendance Policy
[School attendance advice for schools and professionals | School attendance advice for schools and professionals | Birmingham City Council](#)
- Birmingham SEND Sufficiency Strategy
[Birmingham SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2024 -2030](#)
- Birmingham City Council – Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer
[Home - Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- Birmingham EP Service and TIAAS
[City-wide Initiatives - Local Offer Birmingham](#)



CHAPTER 7: HOW TO ENGAGE WITH US

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

Website: [Birmingham Virtual School](#) | [Birmingham City Council](#)

REFERRAL PROCESS

To access support.

BVS support for parents: [Instructions](#) | [Contact Birmingham Virtual School](#)

BVS support for schools: [Instructions](#) | [Contact Birmingham Virtual School](#)

For education placement advice (especially for children with EHCPs), liaise with SENAR senar@birmingham.gov.uk

EVENTS AND TRAINING CALENDAR

Upcoming sessions for stakeholders

[Upcoming webinars](#) | [Training from Birmingham Virtual School](#) | [Birmingham City Council](#)



