



# Virtual School News

## Spring 2026

Keep up to date with the latest news and offers for children in care, previously looked-after children (PLAC), children with a social worker (CWSW) and those in kinship care

### Welcome back to the new term

We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Christmas break and had a well-deserved rest! I want to express my sincere thanks for everything you've done throughout 2025 to support our looked-after children and those with a social worker. These are some of the most vulnerable children in our care, and I am continually inspired by the incredible work schools are doing to help them achieve their very best.

### ☀️ Asset – our electronic PEP system

Last term, we introduced the 'Proud Button' to Asset. This is a way to celebrate achievements with a certificate. If a child does something particularly commendable, we'd love to recognise it! However, we understand that not all children enjoy public praise, so please check with them first about how they'd prefer to receive their certificate. To date, we have issued over 200 Proud Certificates. Some of the things our young people have done are:

- *Working so hard on his phonics and reading and making such good progress!*
- *Having a very active role in gardening club and really enjoying harvesting the courgettes and tomatoes.*
- *Always being such a delight at weekly Girls Club and being a good role model to the younger girls.*
- *Working hard to resolve a disagreement with a friend*
- *Following a number of placement moves, spanning over a few months and then in a placement 1 hour away, managed both commutes and still did 3 tutor sessions a week! Great achievement!*
- You are motivated to get into education and have shown interest in learning a trade







It is a private arrangement made by the parents and carers, and in some circumstances, is a choice made by the child. Parents continue to retain parental and financial responsibility for the child.

A private foster carer could be an extended family member, such as a cousin or great-aunt, a family friend or even a neighbour. Close relatives or family members, such as aunts, uncles, step-parents (by marriage), grandparents, or siblings are not considered private foster carers. If they are caring for a child in the family who is not their own, they would be considered [kinship carers](#). This is different to private fostering.

**It is a legal requirement for Hampshire County Council to be notified of a private fostering arrangement by the parent or carer of the child involved.**

Notifications of private fostering arrangements in the Hampshire area should be made to the Community Response team on [0300 555 1384](tel:03005551384).

More information on private fostering can be found here: [What is private fostering? | CoramBAAF](#).

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### **Stay connected – fortnightly emails for designated teachers**

We continue to send fortnightly emails to designated teachers (DTs) with updates, resources and PEP information. Feedback from these has been positive. If you'd like to receive these emails and be added to our mailing list, please contact us at [virtualschool@hants.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@hants.gov.uk).

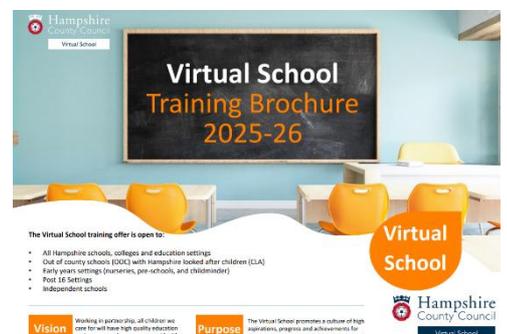
If you're a **new** designated teacher, please ensure we have your contact details and don't forget to book a place on our [Statutory Designated Teacher Training](#).

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### **Training & events – what's new this term?**

For all training, please see our [training brochure](#). Our offer includes:

- Additional attachment webinars
- Support for the Attachment Research Community (ARC)
- Termly sessions with our Educational Psychologist. This term's focus is on **minimising the feeling of shame in difficult conversations**



Our statutory DT training sessions are running on **29/01/2026** or **18/03/2026** this term. Please see our [brochure](#) for booking instructions.

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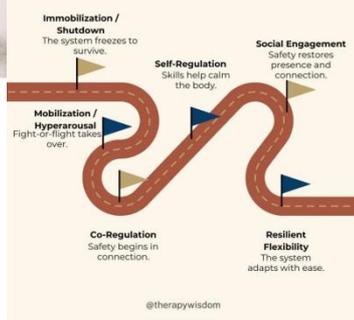
## 👐 Relational Inclusion

I have previously shared the Relational Inclusion blog by Anthony Benedict. This lands in my inbox every Monday, and is thought-provoking, reflective and very useful in terms of resources. There are generally a couple of print-and-stick images that may be useful to share with staff, and some good quotes.

Every child brings two backpacks to school — one with books, and one with feelings.



### How the Nervous System Rebuilds Safety A Polyvagal-Informed Roadmap for Healing



A couple of thoughts from this week's blog – *Relational inclusion asks us to pause. As Bruce Perry says, it's not "What did you do?" but "What happened to you?" and, more importantly, "What's happening inside you right now that you can't put into words?"*

*Exclusion removes opportunities for skill-building. Students learn emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and flexible thinking by being in community – not by sitting in isolated rooms or receiving worksheets on "expected behaviour." (unknown)*

You can subscribe to the weekly blog by clicking [here](#).



## Attachment Research Community (ARC)

The Virtual School has purchased [ARC](#) memberships for **all** Hampshire schools and settings. ARC's purpose is to support all schools and education settings in completing the online self-assessment framework to be attachment and trauma aware in their practice. This benefits all members of the learning community, particularly the most vulnerable, by bringing together, sharing and celebrating best practice.

To date, over 250 schools and settings have signed up as members. We have 26 schools on the Bronze Pathway, two on the Silver Pathway, and many others working on their case studies for Silver. We are delighted that following their validation visit, **Rowhams St John's CE Primary School** is our first **Gold Pathway school**. ★

If you would like to sign up, please complete this [form](#).



### Virtual School Educational Psychologist (EP) consultations

Our Virtual School EP is holding weekly consultations throughout the year. These are bookable for children in care, previously looked-after children (PLAC), children with a social worker (CWSW) and those in kinship care. Details on how to book a one-hour consultation are [here](#).

**What is an Educational Psychologist (EP)?** EPs work to support children and young people in education settings to reach their full potential by working with them and key adults supporting them. They draw on a range of psychological theories in their work, and the underpinning ethos involves looking at the environment around the child.

**What is a consultation?** The consultation is a problem-solving space where key adults in a child’s life meet to discuss their strengths, needs and aspirations with an EP. During the hour, the group will work to understand the child’s situation and whether this can be moved forward in any way.

#### Consultation with the Virtual School EP is not:

- Part of an education, health and care needs assessment.
- Part of a diagnostic pathway for disorders such as ADHD and ASD.
- A pathway to an in-depth EP assessment and school visit.
- Linked to Hampshire Educational Psychology team.

For further information on how to access any of the above, please speak to your school SENDCo.

**Who can come?** Important adults in the child’s life, such as parents/carers, teachers and other school staff, social care staff, virtual school staff, and other relevant adults and professionals. The child may also want to join the meeting to share their views.

### Needs analysis tools

The Virtual School has two needs analysis tools: the PEP Toolkit, developed by Virtual School staff and Hampshire Educational Psychology, and Reach2Teach, which we have purchased for all DTs. Our [Writing an effective PEP training](#) provides designated teachers with an understanding of the purpose and significance of needs analysis tools, alongside exploring the different tools available. It will help DTs look deeper and beyond the operational aspect of completing the personal education plans (PEPs) and focus on an effective process for writing a meaningful PEP.

REACH 2TEACH		The BIG APP (Behaviour Intervention Guide)						
Highly anxious	Clingy	Can't sit still	Hypervigilant	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Denies need for support	Can't organise or forgets work	Independent	Resists teacher's guidance					
Continually avoids work	Argues		Rubbishing teacher's work					
Rubbishes or rips up work			Wants to work on their own					
Rapid mood changes			Interprets others' behaviour					
Sulks if not picked			Finds transitions & endings difficult					
Appears arrogant & controlling								
Insists on going first								
Steals or gorges food								
Gets Upset easily								
	Emotional and Behavioural Regulation: does the child/young person:							
	EBR1 Have difficulties calming themselves down after an altercation? The optimal level is approximately one and a half hours							
	EBR2 Have uncontrolled/unpredictable emotional outbursts (to release/relieve pent-up anger/aggression/anxiety)?							
	EBR3 Have difficulty controlling reactions when they do not get immediate attention (poor frustration tolerance)?							
	EBR4 Overreact to affection or attention? (they may become overexcited, loud, boisterous)							



The needs analysis tools are proving particularly useful not only for our children in care but also for PLAC, CWSW and those in kinship care, as they focus on presenting behaviours and how professionals can use strategies to support the young person.

We have a team of Designated Teacher Champions and SEN advisers who can support schools in a Team Around the Child (TAC) approach using Reach2Teach. A TAC can help to increase understanding and explore helpful strategies. If you would like support with using the app, please contact the Extended Duties team at [VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk](mailto:VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk).

If you are a new DT or a DT who hasn't accessed Reach2Teach yet, please do so through the PEP or contact [virtualschool@hants.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@hants.gov.uk).

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### **Extended Duties team**

The Extended Duties team within Hampshire Virtual School plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable children and young people who fall outside the scope of the Virtual School's statutory responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Children with a social worker (CWSW)** who are not in care
- **Previously looked-after children (PLAC)** who are no longer eligible for statutory support
- **Children in kinship care** (such as special guardianship orders, child arrangement orders and informal kinship arrangements)

While not offering direct case management, the team provides consultation and advice to schools and professionals working with individual children. This includes advice and guidance around transitions, reintegration, and education planning for children in complex circumstances.

If you would like to get in touch with the Extended Duties team, email [VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk](mailto:VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk).

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### **Education support plan (ESP)**

The ESP is a collaborative tool developed by Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, and Isle of Wight Virtual Schools, along with Adopt South, to support children affected by trauma and loss. It is now used in place of the previous EPAC (education plan for adopted children). The ESP provides carers, schools and professionals with a clear process to identify and respond to the needs of children who have experienced care adversity – such as adopted children, those under special guardianship orders (SGO), child arrangement



orders (CAO), those in kinship care or those supported by a social worker on CP or CIN plans.

Whilst the ESP is **not statutory**, it is strongly recommended to support improved attendance, engagement and outcomes. The ESP should be initiated at the start of the academic year or when a child moves to a new education setting and then reviewed termly.

The plan focuses on the specific needs of children impacted by trauma and loss that are not already addressed in other plans, ensuring tailored support for vulnerable learners.

The ESP has now been in place for just over a year, and we recently asked schools for feedback. Parents registered with Adopt South were also asked to complete a survey. The feedback shows us that the ESP is generally found to be easy to use, with parents rating it 3.8 out of 5 stars and schools rating it 4.24. Parents reportedly found the sections relating to 'how my child is doing now' and 'identifying needs and setting targets' very helpful, with other sections, 'my child's life experience so far', 'my child's views' and 'parents thoughts and views' somewhat helpful. Overall, schools reported that they found all sections very helpful. 70% of parents and 88% of schools who responded either agreed or strongly agreed that the ESP enabled strengths-based conversations that helped guide appropriate provision and support.

11% of schools that responded have not yet used the ESP, mostly because there is another individualised plan in place, but others were unaware of the ESP. More information and a copy of the ESP can be found on the Virtual School Moodle: [Course: Education Support Plans](#).

Thank you to all of you who completed the survey and provided feedback. We will use your observations and suggestions to inform future developments.

If you would like to get in touch with the Extended Duties team, email [VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk](mailto:VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk)

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Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments.

Have a great term 😊

*Michelle*

Michelle Nye  
Virtual School Head