



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

Help us to recognise our young people by nominating them for a proud certificate.

Virtual School Moodle



Last term, we were really pleased to share our refreshed Moodle site. We hope that by streamlining the content, it is now easier to navigate. There are a number of great resources on our Moodle, including short PowerPoints with voiceovers to support the understanding of the vulnerable groups that the Virtual School supports.

Ofsted

The new Ofsted framework has a specific focus on **pupils known to children's social care by ensuring statutory duties are met, and the impact is clear**. Please do not forget to ask for our support.

We continue to provide training and guidance for designated teachers to maintain high standards of expertise and compliance. Our training brochure is [here](#). We want to ensure that every looked-after child has a robust, high-quality personal education plan (PEP). We do monitor PEPS to evidence progress in learning and wellbeing, so please check targets to ensure they are SMART and link not only academically but also socially and emotionally. Use our needs analysis tools (for example, the PEP Toolkit and Reach2Teach) to think about the young person's behaviours, whether the child or young person is ready to learn, and what support we as adults need to put in place to support them.

Additionally, we are happy to support strong multi-agency collaboration with social workers and other professionals, to help demonstrate inclusive practice and positive outcomes for vulnerable pupils – key indicators under the new Ofsted framework. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any support.

Private fostering

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled) lives with an adult who is not a close family member for 28 days or more, or if there is an intention for the child to stay with them for more than 28 days.



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](#)

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.

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

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**



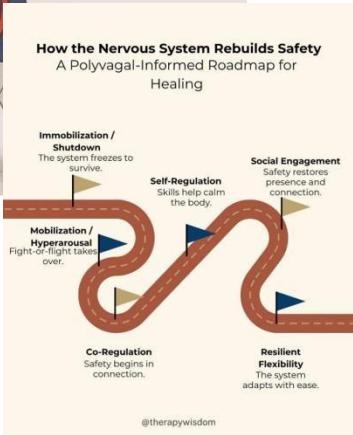
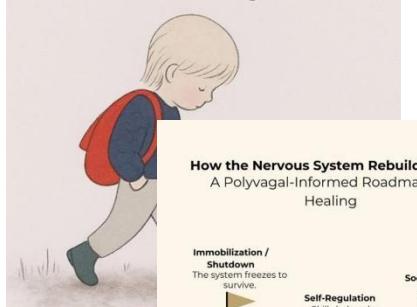


Our statutory DT training sessions are running on **29/01/2026** or **18/03/2026** this term. Please see our [brochure](#) for booking instructions.

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.



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, **Rownhams 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

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 uses two needs analysis tools: the PEP Toolkit, developed by Virtual School staff and Hampshire Educational Psychology, and Reach2Teach, which we have purchased access to 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 to use. 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.

REACH2TEACH		The BIG APP (Behaviour Intervention Guide)				
Highly anxious	Clingy	Can't sit still	Hypervigilant			
Denies need for support	Can't organise or forgets things	Dependent	Resists teacher's guidance			
Continually avoids work	Argues with adults	Reacts to change	Rubbishes teacher's work			
Rubbishes or rips up work	Needs constant feedback	Wants to work on their own	Wants to work on others' behaviour			
Rapid mood changes	Appears arrogant & controlling	Wants to control others	Wants to control behaviour			
Sulks if not picked up	Insists on going first	Wants to control situations	Inds transitions & endings difficult			
Appears arrogant & controlling	Steals or gorges food	Needs constant reassurance	Appears indifferent or uncaring			
Insists on going first	Gets upset easily	Avoids eye contact	Anx & aggressive			
Steals or gorges food	Gets upset easily	Emotional and Behavioural Regulation: does the child/young person:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
		Have difficulties calming themselves down after an alteration? The optimal level is approximately one and a half hours				
		Have uncontrolled/unpredictable emotional outbursts (including temper tantrums, anger/aggression/irritability)?				
		Have difficulty controlling reactions when they do not get immediate attention or when frustration tolerance is low?				
		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 advisors 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 to arrange for support in using the app, then please contact the Extended Duties team on 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.

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** (e.g. 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

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 find 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. In total, 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



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