Hampshire County Council

Virtual School

Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus

Policy and guidance April 2026-27

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+ or LAC Premium) is additional grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for children in care. The grant aims to close the attainment gap for this cohort and improve their educational outcomes more effectively. Each year, the DfE publishes a conditions of grant document outlining the arrangements and funding allocations for all types of pupil premium, including PP+. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2026-to-2027

Key facts

- **Eligibility:** PP+ is provided for each child who is in care for at least one day, as recorded in the March 2025 looked after children data return (SSDA903). Pupils from year R to year 11 are eligible for PP+.
- **Management:** PP+ must be managed by the Virtual School Head (VSH) in the local authority that looks after the child, for the benefit of the looked after child's educational needs as identified in their Personal Education Plan (PEP). Unlike other types of pupil premium, PP+ is centrally overseen by the VSH.
- **Previously Looked After Children (PLAC):** Children who were previously looked after by a local authority in England and Wales and are now adopted or subject to special guardianship order (SGO), child arrangements order (CAO), or a residence order (RO) are also eligible for the pupil premium grant. However, schools, not the Virtual School, manage this funding.

What are the current PP+ arrangements in place for 2025/26?

£1600 per child in care is allocated and paid in termly instalments of £600 (summer term), £550 (autumn term) and £450 (spring term). Schools will typically receive the full term's funding for each pupil who has been in care for at least one day in that term.

£1090 per child is held centrally by the Virtual School to deliver a range of services and interventions. These arrangements are reviewed annually.

To minimise any delay, schools will receive their allocation automatically from Hampshire in May (summer term), October (autumn term) and March (spring term).

This arrangement is contingent upon the timely submission of each child's current Personal Education Plan (PEP) by the Virtual School's termly deadline. Late or missing PEPs may result in funding delays or withholding.

The Virtual School expects that:

- PP+ funding is spent in line with the current conditions of grant.
- Spending should link **clearly and demonstrably** to PEP targets informed by a robust needs analysis.
- school leadership teams recognise the staff development needs associated with the education of care experienced children and engage proactively with training and support offered by the Virtual School.

Designated teachers (DTs) should:

- **Maintain clear oversight** of PP+ allocated to their school and actively participate in deciding how this money should be spent.
- **Ensure PP+ is spent** in line with the current DFE conditions of grant, ensuring it benefits individual children and recording and reviewing this spending within each child's PEP.
- **Hold overall responsibility** for decision-making concerning PP+, using an appropriate needs analysis tool to support informed choices about any interventions funded through pupil premium plus.
- **Seek and incorporate** the views of children, carers, social workers, and other stakeholders, recognising that not all needs are immediately visible, and that behaviours may present differently at home and school.
- **Include an account** of PP+ spending in their annual governors' report, together with its impact on progress (particularly English, maths, and social/emotional development), ensuring pupils are not identifiable.

Governors should:

- **Maintain focus** on the education of care experienced children, through regular briefings from the designated teacher, or appropriate training.
- **Hold the school accountable** through the designated teacher for how effectively looked after and previously looked after children are supported including the use of PP+, their progress and outcomes.
- **Regularly review** the support and resources available to the DT to fulfil statutory duties.
- **Expect to receive** the statutory annual report from the designated teacher.

Previously looked after children (PLAC)

Virtual Schools have a statutory duty to provide advice, guidance and information to help improve the educational outcomes of PLAC, though they are **not corporate parents** for this cohort.

Pupil premium for PLAC is paid directly to the schools by the local authority's education finance team. Schools are responsible for ensuring spending aligns with DfE conditions.

Parents and guardians of eligible children must self-declare their child's status to the school where their child is on roll to trigger the funding. The school can then use that information to record on their school census how many children on their roll were adopted from care or are PLAC. Schools must first seek the permission of parents/guardians to record a child's status as previously looked after on the school census.

For additional support, please refer to the EEF guide to pupil premium, updated September 2025 The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium | EEF

Early years pupil premium (EYPP)

Children aged from 9 months old, attending an early years education setting on government funded hours, may be eligible for EYPP if they are currently in care, are previously looked after, or meet other eligibility criteria.

EYPP should be used to narrow the achievement gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Its purpose is to enhance the progress of these children in education through focused, strategic interventions, encouraging practitioners to give particular attention to their development.

Providers may claim up to £655.50 annually per eligible child. EYPP is paid directly to the setting by their local authority; Hampshire Virtual School does not hold this funding. For more details, please refer to the 2026 to 2027 early years national funding formulae: Early years funding: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

Please see our Early Years Pupil Premium guidance available on our Moodle for further information and advice on use: Section: EY Funding | Early Years Resources | Hampshire Virtual School

Post 16

PP+ is not available for post 16 young people who are in care. However, the Virtual School has been allocated grant funding for post 16 support for 2026/27. This funding will be held centrally by the Virtual School to fund the post 16 work within the Virtual School.

The government states that the 16 to 19 bursary fund is intended for young people in education or education providers. The guidance provided by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), is reviewed and updated at the start of every new financial year, informed by any findings from the ESFA's financial audit of post 16 providers. The revised guidance for 2026/27 clarifies that this funding is intended to cover the essential costs of participating in their study programme and not to support activities unrelated to education or services that the education setting would ordinarily provide, such as counselling. For more details, refer to the 16 to 19 bursary fund guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance.

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PP+ frequently asked questions

Does the Virtual School head have to give PP+ to schools?

No. There is no requirement for the Virtual School Head to distribute PP+ directly to schools. However, there is a strong expectation that some funding will pass on some or all of the PP+ funding to a child's education setting. This funding should be used to meet the additional needs outlined in the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and can be distributed to the school on a termly or annual basis. Any funding not passed down to schools by the end of the financial year must be returned to the DfE.

Is there a cut-off date for PP+ funding?

No. The current arrangement for Hampshire is that funding is distributed on a termly basis and is proportionate to the length of the term. A data run of all current and historic looked after children is collected each term. For children who have been in care for a very short period, the VSH can use their discretion to allocate an amount of funding to reflect this.

How can schools find out PP+ arrangements for children in the care of a different LA?

Schools should contact the virtual school in the child's home LA. Most virtual schools will have a website containing contact details and their local PP+ policy. If schools encounter any difficulty, please contact us at the Virtual School: virtualschool@hants.gov.uk

What happens if a child moves school? Does the PP+ funding (and any resources bought for a child from PP+ money, such as a laptop) follow them?

Transferring PP+ funding is a matter for discussion between schools and, where appropriate, alternative providers (APs). The Virtual School would expect that when a child moves school, there is a discussion about the provision and support being delivered. This should include how any funding passed to the receiving school or alternative provider will be used to meet a child's needs in accordance with their PEP. Where a school retains any PP+ after a child has left, it will still be accountable to the LA and Ofsted for demonstrating the impact of pupil premium spending on improving educational outcomes.

Do children in care qualify for free school meals (FSM)?

Children in a funded care placement, such as an LA foster carer or an independent fostering agency (IFA) carer, generally do not qualify for FSM. This is because the carer receives an allowance which covers all meals for each child in their care. Therefore, carers already receive the funding needed to provide meals.

However, this situation may differ for a child who is not in a funded care arrangement. For example, a child placed at home but with the LA in receipt of a care order. In such cases, the normal criteria for benefits-related school meal eligibility still apply, and applications for free school meals can be made as usual.

Please note that current guidance states: “For children who are attending school, meals should be provided by the school and be free of charge for pupils who would normally receive free school meals. Schools have discretion as to whether they charge other pupils.”

What happens in cases where a child is dual rolled at a school and an alternative provider such as an education centre or pupil referral unit (PRU)?

Funding is paid to the school where the pupil is solely registered. In the event of dual registration, funding will go to the main school. The education centre or PRU will need to liaise with the main school to request a transfer of a proportion of the funding. For long-term arrangements, it is possible to request that the money be paid directly to the alternative setting.

Where can additional funding information about children with special educational needs and disabilities be found?

Further information can be accessed from Hampshire’s local offer web pages: Home | Hampshire CTSH

Is PP+ allocated to non-maintained special schools (INMSS)?

Children’s needs are generally met and fully funded through the local authority’s payment for the school place. As such, Hampshire Virtual School retains the pupil premium.

How can schools help ensure that PP+ payments are made on time?

It is imperative that schools accurately record LAC status on their census. Errors in census returns may result in funding being delayed.

What should a school do if they have not received PP+ funding for child in care on their roll?

The school can contact the Hampshire Virtual School directly, who will investigate why and make payment if applicable virtualschool@hants.gov.uk

Is PP+ available for looked after children in the early years?

Children attending early years settings (preschools, nurseries or childminders) **are not** entitled to pupil premium plus funding. PP+ is managed and administered by the Virtual School only *once* a child starts school in Year R.

Children in early years settings may be eligible for EYPP funding if eligibility criteria are met. Please be aware that Hampshire Virtual School does not hold or manage any funding for children attending early years settings, including EYPP.

Please see our Early Years Pupil Premium guidance available on our Moodle for further information and advice on use: Section: EY Funding | Early Years Resources | Hampshire Virtual School

FAQ on EYPP are available here

https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/childcare/providers/eye-eynff/early-years-pupil-premium

https://www.early-education.org.uk/how-spend-your-eypp

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/pupil-premium

What about post-16?

Vulnerable student funding of up to £1,200 per annum is available for post 16 young people in care. https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/eligibility For higher education (HE), there is a £2,000 bursary that the care leavers service will fund. Young people should talk to their personal adviser or a specialist advisor within the education participation team about funding and visit the local offer for care leavers web pages.

The link for Hampshire is: Children in Care and Care Leavers | Hampshire CTSH

Acronyms used in this document

AP	Alternative Provision
CLA	Child Looked After
DT	Designated Teacher (for looked after and previously looked after children)
DfE	Department for Education
EFA	Education Funding Agency
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium
FSM	Free School Meals
IFA	Independent Fostering Agency
INMSS	Independent Non-Maintained Special School
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child
NoR	Number on Roll
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PP+	Pupil Premium Plus
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
VSH	Virtual School Head

Useful links and references

Guides for parents and carers around PP+ for children in care and PP for previously looked after children can be accessed from the Virtual School website:

https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/virtual-school/guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2026-to-2027

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/using-pupil-premium

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/pupil-premium/resources-tools