

WELCOME BACK!

We hope you have all had a restful summer break and are returning for the new academic year feeling refreshed and ready for the term ahead. A new school year always brings a sense of excitement, new opportunities, and a chance to make a real difference in the lives of the children and young people we support. Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment. We know the positive impact you have every day, and we look forward to working with you again throughout the year.

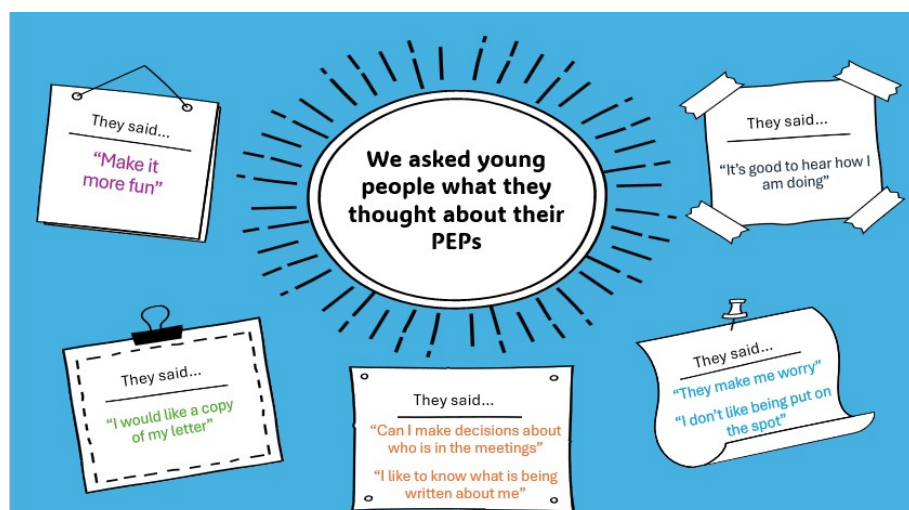
We are delighted to share that Ruth Blyth has now been officially appointed as Head of Virtual School. Ruth has been Virtual School Deputy Head and, more recently, Acting Head. She leads the team with passion, knowledge and a strong commitment to

improving outcomes for our children and young people, so we are thrilled that her appointment now officially reflects the role she has already been carrying out so successfully.

As we start the new term, we'd also like to remind you about the training opportunities available. We have an exciting programme of training available this year, covering a range of topics designed to support and strengthen practice. We'd love you to join us at one or more of these sessions and take the opportunity to connect with colleagues, share ideas and build your knowledge. In particular, our PEP forms have recently changed, so we would strongly encourage all Designated Teachers to attend a PEP training session to familiarise themselves with the updates and ask any questions they may have.

We look forward to another term of working together to achieve the very best outcomes for our children and young people.

Wishing you a happy, successful and rewarding term ahead.



Why change our PEPs?

We have listened to feedback and sought advice on how to make our PEPs more accessible and bespoke to individual young people's needs. This feedback has informed not only the document that is completed, but also how we conduct meetings, how we speak about our young people, and how we write to them in the paperwork.



Training can be completed for whole school staff. If you're looking for specific training, or have a particular area of support that you would like to focus on, please let us know and we will work with our trainers to put together the most appropriate training package.

As we begin a new school year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the vital role you play in the lives of children and young people across Wokingham and further afield. Your commitment, compassion and advocacy help ensure that some of our most vulnerable children are safe, supported, included and able to thrive in education. The difference you make every day often goes unseen, but it is profoundly important and genuinely appreciated.

This year brings a number of significant developments within the safeguarding and education landscape. The implementation of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 places an even greater emphasis on partnership working, information sharing and ensuring that children receive the right help at the right time. The reforms strengthen multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, reinforce the importance of Family Help approaches, and continue to promote educational achievement for children in care, children in kinship care, and children who have or have had a social worker. These changes align closely with the ambitions many of you are already delivering in your schools.

Alongside this, the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 guidance comes into force from 1st September. Key changes include a stronger focus on early help and Family Help, enhanced expectations around information sharing, increased attention to online harms including AI-generated content and deepfakes, a greater emphasis on misogyny and harmful sexual behaviours, and the requirement for all staff to read Part One of the guidance in full. There is also a renewed focus on mental health, child-on-child abuse, filtering and monitoring systems, and robust safeguarding leadership within schools.

For Designated Teachers, the continued focus on educational achievement, attendance, belonging and wellbeing for children in care, children in kinship arrangements and other vulnerable cohorts remains central. For Designated Safeguarding Leads, the ongoing Families First reforms and strengthened multi-agency working arrangements will continue to shape practice across the year. As always, the Virtual School remains committed to working alongside you. Whether through PEPs, training, advice, challenge, support or sharing best practice, we look forward to continuing our partnership with you throughout the year ahead.

Thank you once again for everything you do. Your dedication ensures that children not only remain safe but also feel valued, supported and able to realise their potential. We are proud to work alongside such committed professionals and look forward to another year of collaboration, learning and success.

"Every child needs at least one adult who never gives up on them." Thank you for being that person for so many children and young people.

With best wishes,

Ruth

Ruth Blyth
Virtual School Headteacher

DATES

FOR YOUR DIARY

When	What	Where
September 2026		
10th	Designated Teacher Training	Online
16th	Stress, brain development and responsive relationships	Online
October 2026		
7th	Neurodiversity in the classroom	Online
13th, 14th, 15th	Reflective Supervision Twilight	Online
November 2026		
5th	e-PEP training for Designated Teachers and staff who complete PEPs	Online
11th	Adoption-Based Practice in Education	Online
19th	Positive Masculinities and Mental Health	Online
24th, 25th, 26th	Reflective Supervision Twilight	Online
27th	Attachment and Trauma in the classroom	Shute End
December 2026		
9th	Supporting a child struggling with anxiety	Online
January 2027		
14th	Designated Teacher Training	Online
27th	EBSA	Online
February 2027		
2nd, 3rd, 4th	Reflective Supervision Twilight	Online
10th	Supporting Children's Wellbeing (1 of 2)	Online
25th	Self Harm: Understanding and responding to self harm in young people	Online
March 2027		
3rd	Transition	Online
4th	e-PEP training for Designated Teachers and staff who complete PEPs	Online
17th	Supporting Children's Wellbeing (2 of 2)	Online
April 2027		
15th	Designated Teacher Training	Online
22nd	Suicidal Ideation: Understanding and responding to suicidal ideation in young people	Online
May 2027		
4th	Reflective Supervision Twilight	Online
26th	Making sense of challenging behaviour	Online
June 2027		
10th	e-PEP training for Designated Teachers and staff who complete PEPs	Online
16th	Emotion Coaching	Online
24th	Positive Masculinities and Mental Health	Online
26th, 27th, 28th	Reflective Supervision Twilight	Online
July 2027		
5th	Attachment and Trauma in the classroom	Shute End
TBC	Virtual School Conference	TBC



Don't forget the virtual school are here to assist you should you require any support. You can email us at the following addresses and we promise we will respond within 24 hours.

Ruth Blyth Head of Virtual School

Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk

Kat Johnston Post 16 PEP Officer

Kat.Johnston@wokingham.gov.uk

Aga Kudlak VS NEET Reduction Officer

Aga.kudlak@wokingham.gov.uk

Emma Griffith Early Years Officer

Emma.Griffith@wokingham.gov.uk

Helen Belas PEP Officer

Helen.Belas@wokingham.gov.uk

Amanda Bickerton PEP Officer

Amanda.Bickerton@wokingham.gov.uk

Jemma Holmes Education Coordinator

Jemma.Holmes@wokingham.gov.uk

