

***Wokingham Virtual School
Post-Looked After Children
Guidance 2021/2022***



Ruth Blyth
Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk

The Role of the Virtual School promoting the education of previously looked after children taken from the statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018

The role of the Virtual School Headteacher for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the Virtual School Headteacher considers necessary.

Virtual School Headteachers must discharge their duty from the point at which the child becomes eligible for free early education, which is currently the start of the term following a child's second birthday, and conclude when s/he has completed the compulsory years of education.

The duty relates to previously looked-after children who are in education in the area served by the Virtual School Headteacher irrespective of where the child lives. This avoids the need for education settings to work with more than one Virtual School Headteacher and prevents cross-border complications.

Virtual School Headteachers, in conjunction with the Director of Children's Services, should decide the extent of their offer to parents, early education providers and schools but as a minimum, the Virtual School Headteacher must:

- respond to parental requests for advice and information – e.g. advice on school admissions in their area. Where appropriate, the Virtual School Headteacher should sign-post parents to other services that can offer advice and support;
- respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area in respect of individual children supported by the local authority. In particular, the Virtual School Headteacher should develop/ build on existing good working relationship with designated teachers for previously looked-after children in their area; and
- make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+.

However, it is important to note that the local authority and Virtual School Headteacher are no longer the corporate parent for previously looked-after children and the Virtual School Headteacher role in relation to these children reflects this. Virtual School Headteachers ***are not expected to monitor the educational progress of individual children or be held to account for their educational attainment***. Any intervention in the education of a previously looked-after child must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have parental responsibility for the child. They, like all parents, are responsible for overseeing their child's progress in education.

Virtual School Headteachers will want to satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously looked-after status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, Virtual School Headteachers will need to use

their discretion. In such circumstance, Virtual School Headteachers should discuss eligibility with the designated teacher at the child's school to agree a consistent approach.

What might providing information and advice look like?

- Providing advice and information to frequently asked questions online.
- Providing advice to individual parents/ carers and schools where they have a query.
- Advising schools on how they can support previously looked after children to improve behaviour to help avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- Advising schools on how to best use Pupil Premium to support previously looked-after children.



Post Looked After Children Information for School Staff, Parents, and Guardians

Post looked after children are sometimes referred to as previously looked after children. More commonly they would be recognised in the following categories:

- Adoption
- Special Guardianship Order
- Child Arrangements Order, previously known as a Residency Order

The majority of these children will have previously been in the care of the local authority, and would then join their new family situation under a new Court Order. Children who are returned, or reunified, with their birth parents are not in this category of Post or previously Looked After.

There are some children who are placed with extended family members under a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order. Please check with the child's guardian as to whether they were previously in care. This may have only been for a very brief period of time, but will still count as a care episode.

The DFE, and Wokingham Virtual School, recognise that the needs of care experienced children are ongoing. For this reason the remit of the Virtual school was extended to provide educational advice, guidance and signposting around the needs of this vulnerable group.

If you cannot find the information that you require please contact the Virtual School via email: virtuelschooladmin@wokingham.gov.uk or Ruth Blyth, Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk

PLAC Pupil Premium

Like other types of PP, the purpose of PP+ is to raise educational attainment and close the gap between post-LAC children and their peers. Although the main aim of the pupil premium is to raise attainment, you can spend your pupil premium on:

- non-academic outcomes, such as improving pupils' mental health
- non-academic improvements, such as better attendance
- activities that will also benefit non-eligible pupils

Although this funding is not ring-fenced to individual children, Schools should be aware that the needs of FSM, Service Children and PLAC children are different and therefore pooling all pupil premium together is not always the most effective way of meeting their needs.

Previously Looked-After children are generally disadvantaged due to their early life experiences and therefore this funding should be used to address some of the subsequent difficulties they face within education. This is typically academic under achievement, social and emotional difficulties and school awareness of trauma and attachment needs.

Unlike currently Looked-after children's Pupil Premium, Schools are not expected to spend the PLAC grants entirely on individual children.

The DFE states:

"The pupil premium is additional funding given to schools to improve the educational and personal outcomes for pupils who have been adopted from care, including (but not limited to) their attainment. It is not intended that the additional funding should be used to back-fill the general school budget nor is it the policy intention that the funding should be used to support other groups of pupils, such as (for example) those with special educational needs or who are low attaining. The funding is not ring-fenced and is not for individual children – so the Department would not necessarily expect the school to spend £2300 on every child adopted from care on roll at the school. This is partially because a child may have left the school and new pupils may have joined but also because a school is best placed to determine how the additional funding can be deployed to have the maximum impact. For example, a school may decide to train their staff in recognising and responding to attachment related issues; or that a particular adopted child needs tailored support that is in excess of the £2300 the school has received."

There is a growing body of research and guidance to support schools. The DFE *"encourages all schools to use robust evidence when making decisions about how to spend their Pupil Premium. Schools may contact their LA and national organisations such as BAAF and Adoption UK for support and guidance. The Sutton Trust Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit is also a useful source of information schools can draw on. The characteristics of formerly looked after children do not disappear overnight. Schools may also find Virtual School Head, Virtual School Staff and the Designated Teacher at the school a valuable source of information"*.

Pupil Premium Plus is an opportunity to address the learning needs of previously looked-after children through the provision of **additional** interventions and learning resources tailored to the individual need of the child. It is **not** intended to replace services, support or resources that the local authority, schools, early year's providers, parents/carer's or other agencies working with previously

looked-after children already provide, or that is provided to all children in the area as a universal service or as part of their educational entitlement.

The department of Education recommend Pupil Premium Plus should be used to improve outcomes for Previously Looked After children in the following areas:

- Acceleration of academic achievement and progress;
- Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is more able;
- Improving school attendance e.g. in cases of School refusal
- Reducing internal and external exclusion;
- Developing social, emotional and interpersonal skills where they are a barrier to learning and can be directly linked to under-performance;
- Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider.

Accountability

Ofsted inspections look closely at the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the gap between them and their peers. At the end of each academic year, there is a legal requirement for schools to publish information online about their PP funding allocation, how it has been used and the impact this funding has had on disadvantaged pupils. The school are not required to provide a breakdown of costs per pupil who attract PP+ as this funding is not seen as a personal budget per child.

Role of parents and guardians

The DfE takes the view that: “The role of parents and guardians in their child’s education is crucial and we expect schools will want to engage with them about the education of the pupils on their roll, irrespective of whether they attract the pupil premium. However, we would hope that schools would want to take advantage of this relationship with regards to formerly looked after children as the school may have only become aware of the child’s status when they are told this by the child’s parent ahead of the School Census. They may be unfamiliar with the detail of any barriers to learning individual children may be facing as a result of their history. Schools should, of course, be mindful of the sensitivities that may exist around the child’s history and ways in which their experiences prior to leaving care are affecting the child currently.”

Parents and Carer’s are welcome to contact Wokingham Virtual School if they wish to seek advice or further information.

Wokingham Virtual School’s commitment to supporting parents, guardians and schools of Post-Looked after Children is:

- ***to offer our attendance to one Educational Meeting each academic year (at present this will be virtual attendance)***
- ***to offer advice and guidance on an ad-hoc basis however this is limited to 2 hours per academic term.***
- ***to sign post parents/guardians/professionals to the correct support when appropriate.***

Parents/Carers, Social Workers, Designated Teachers, – what questions should we be asking?

- What is the current level of attainment?
- Is the pupil at Age Related Expectations (ARE)? (that is the expected point for their age in the core subjects)
- If they are not at ARE, what is being done to address any gaps in core subjects?
- What progress is being made in core subjects?
- If they are not making good progress, what interventions can be offered?
- Are there any additional special educational needs?
- Has an Education Plan for Adopted Children (EPAC) been written and needs assessment undertaken? What are the pupils & parent/carers views?
- Are there any long-term needs? Or requirements for therapeutic support?
- What extra support or interventions can be put in place using Pupil Premium?

Wokingham Virtual School Offer

We recognise that the needs of some of the Post-Looked After Children within our authority are vast and since Covid we have seen an influx of PLAC who are struggling in educational settings. As a response to this and with our awareness of the ever-growing restraints on school budgets Wokingham Virtual School would like to offer Wokingham Schools the opportunity to bid for additional funding each term to support PLAC, the total amount is capped at 5K per term. More details can be found on the following pages along with the funding application form.

PLAC FUNDING GUIDANCE

Each term, schools will be able to bid for additional funding from the Virtual School to help support their Previously Looked After Children. The amount requested will be capped per school however each bid will be discussed by a panel to ensure that there is fair access to funding.

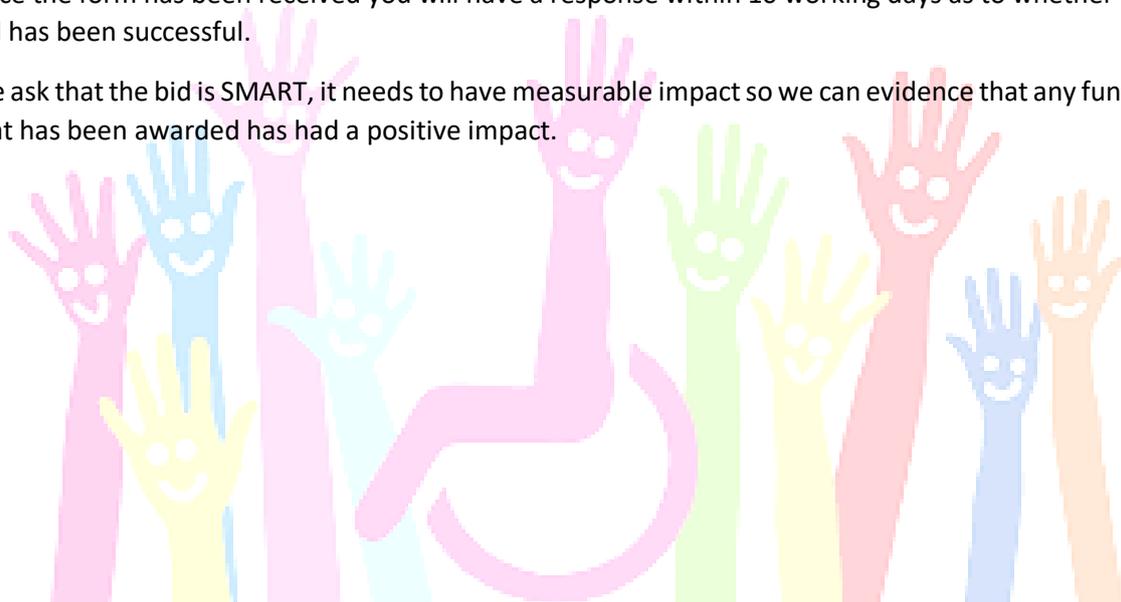
The rationale behind providing this additional funding is:

Wokingham Virtual School recognises that the needs of some of the Post-Looked After Children within our authority are vast and since Covid we have seen an influx of PLAC who are struggling in educational settings. As a response to this and with our awareness of the ever-growing restraints on school budgets Wokingham Virtual School would like to offer Wokingham Schools the opportunity to bid for additional funding each term to support PLAC.

Please complete the following form and submit to VirtualSchool.Admin@wokingham.gov.uk

Once the form has been received you will have a response within 10 working days as to whether your bid has been successful.

We ask that the bid is SMART, it needs to have measurable impact so we can evidence that any funding that has been awarded has had a positive impact.



PLAC Bid Application



Name of Educational Setting	
Address	
Name of Designated Teacher	
Name of Lead Teacher for the bid	
Email address:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Amount of funding requested:	

What is the current situation?

What will the funding purchase and how will you measure impact?

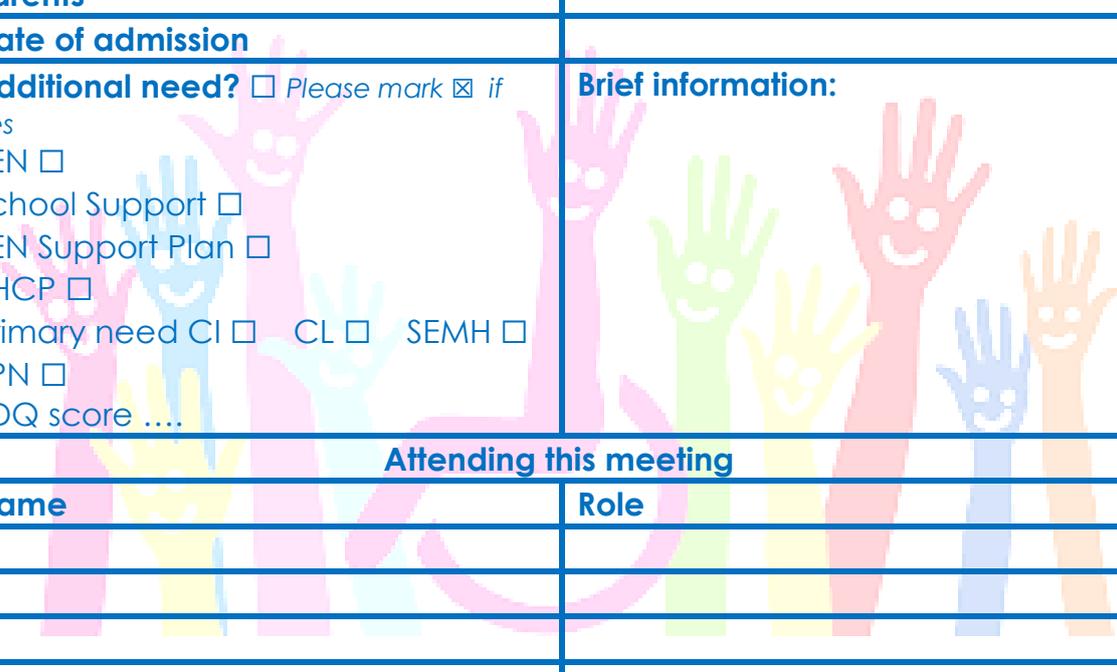
Will you commit to writing a short case study for the VS on the impact of funding? YES/NO

If funding is received it is an expectation that the child will have an Education Plan. Can you confirm that this will be the case? YES/NO

Exemplar Education Plan for Post-Looked After Children

Confidential (completed jointly by parent/s and school)

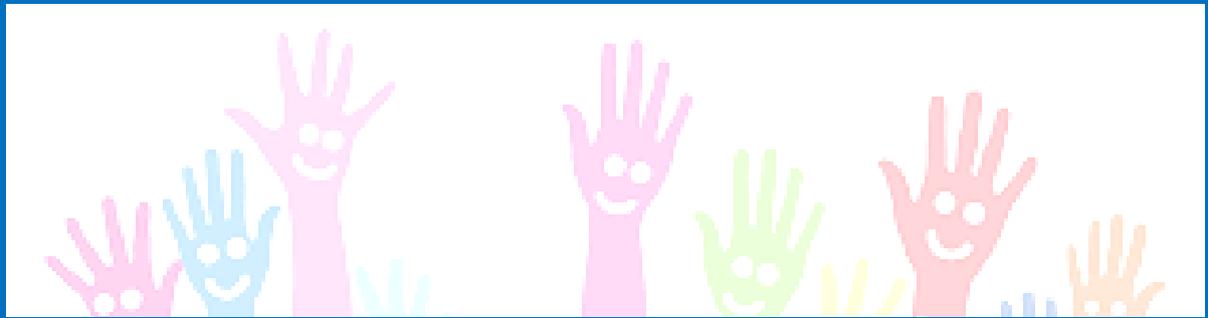
Education Plan

Name of School/Educational Provision	
Date	
Meeting for	
Date of Birth	
Date placed with adoptive family	
Age at placement	
Year group	
Parents	
Date of admission	
Additional need? <input type="checkbox"/> Please mark <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> if yes SEN <input type="checkbox"/> School Support <input type="checkbox"/> SEN Support Plan <input type="checkbox"/> EHCP <input type="checkbox"/> Primary need CI <input type="checkbox"/> CL <input type="checkbox"/> SEMH <input type="checkbox"/> SPN <input type="checkbox"/> SDQ score	Brief information: 
Attending this meeting	
Name	Role

Professional Involvement			
Service	Role and name	Date started	Still involved?
Post adoption team			
Education (e.g. Ed Psych)			
Social Care			
Health (e.g. Specialist CAMHS)			

Speech & Language Therapy Service			
Physiotherapist/ OT			
Parent/Family Support Service			
Other			

Significant information on pre-adoptive and early adoptive experiences
(e.g. brief description of significant birth family history, periods in care, attachment experiences).



Area of Pupil Strength	Evidence of Strength
Area of Pupil Need	Evidence of Need

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Any other relevant information?

Action needed	By when	Person Responsible
1.		
2.		
3.		

Young Person's views
 What are the young person's views on their education, strengths, needs, etc?

What further information is needed, who will gather this information? How? When?

Parents have agreed that copies of this plan will go to:

Arrangements for ensuring confidentiality of this plan:

Completed by	(parent/s)
	(school)
Review date	
To be attended by:	





Context:

Challenge/issue:

What did the Virtual School PLAC funding provide?

Impact of funding to date

Next Steps:



Post-Adoption support: Adopt Thames Valley

A question that has been asked frequently by schools is:

'Where can schools signpost families to get further support post-adoption?'

Although Adopt Thames Valley do not have a leaflet or booklets to support families of adopted and SGO children, they are keen to support struggling families. If a family is struggling and feel they need support, they can raise a referral to see if there is anything that the Permanence Support Team can do to help.

On the Virtual School website, you will find the Referral form that families would need to complete **in full**. The form needs to be completed by the parent/guardian themselves and not the educational establishment that the child is attending.

Once this form is returned and processed there is a 5 working day SLA within which they will be contacted by Adopt Thames Valley helpdesk. The helpdesk will be able to provide them with information and advice around what is available to them and what their options are.

Alternatively, families are able to call Adopt Thames Valley directly on 01865 323121 and they will complete the form with the family.

