
**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

**THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR
CHILDREN IN CARE**

**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR
DESIGNATED TEACHERS, SOCIAL
WORKERS AND FOSTER CARERS
2016-2017**



What is the Virtual School?

There are over 150 children and young people aged 0-25 in the care of Bath and North East Somerset. The Virtual School collects data on progress, attendance and behaviour just as any school would and we work with schools, carers and social workers to make sure all looked after children are receiving the best support possible for their education.



Our aim is that all our children in care make the same or better progress in their learning compared with their peers.

What does the Virtual School do for children in care and schools?

- Provide expert support to children, social workers and carers
- Support schools to produce excellent Personal Education Plans (PEPs) which are focussed on learning outcomes
- Distribute the Pupil Premium Plus to schools and monitor its use
- Ensure that school placements continue wherever possible, even when care placements change, and support transition when school placements do change
- Provide support to designated teachers, social workers and carers through training and networking
- Organise a range of support activities and programmes
- Get involved quickly when things go wrong
- Listen and respond to the voice of our children in care

When must Personal Education Plan meetings take place?

- A PEP meeting must be arranged within 20 days of a child coming into care (10 days if placed in an emergency).
- The PEP should be reviewed every term (i.e. three times a year). This means that there should be:
 - A PEP meeting at least every 6 months
 - A check on the progress of the PEP by the Virtual School in the school term where there is no PEP meeting
 - Interim meetings where there is a need e.g. concerns over a school place
- Designated teachers are asked to chair PEP meetings and complete and submit PEP forms back to the Virtual School.

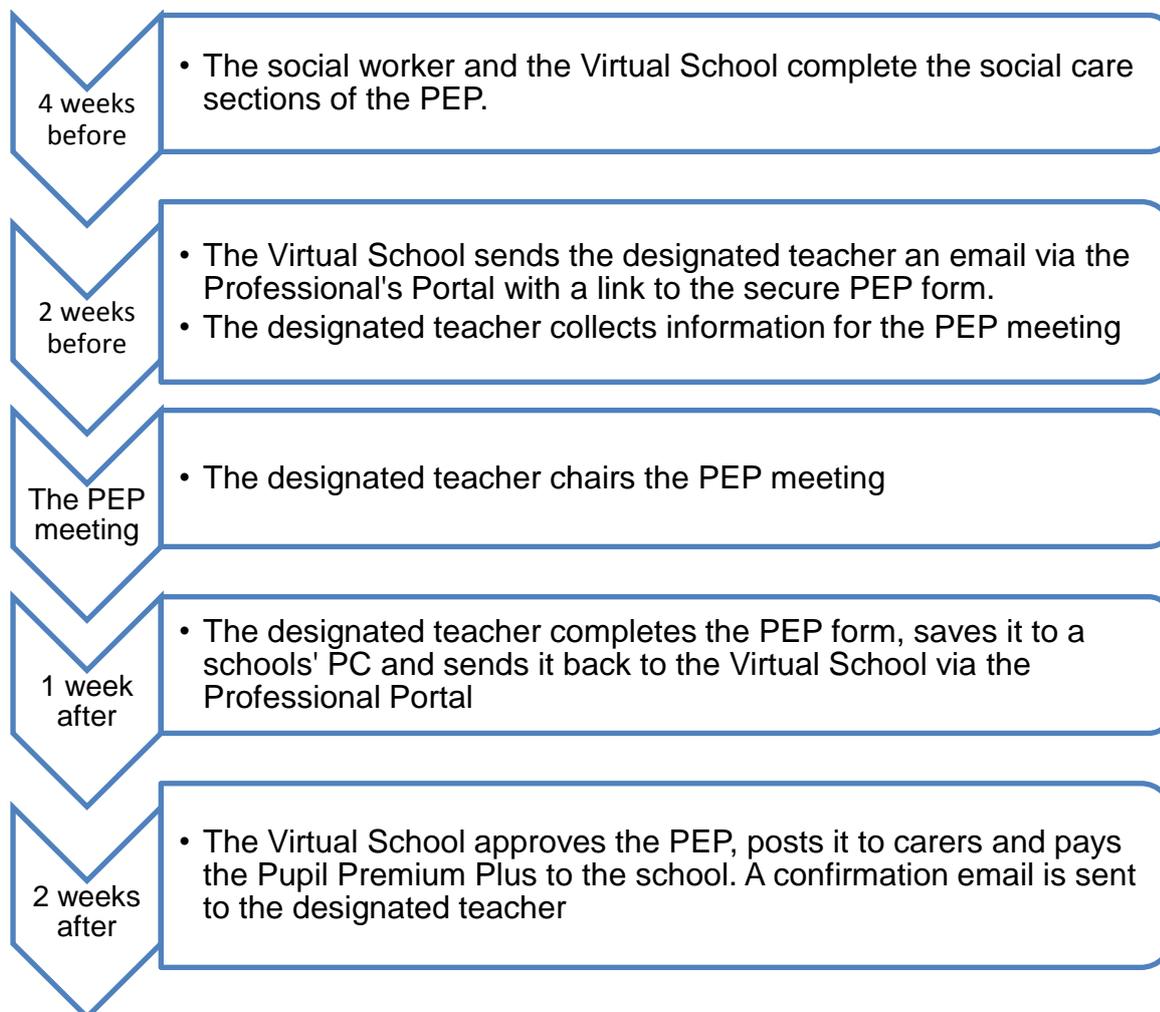


The designated teacher is the child's champion in school and the first point of contact for school colleagues, carers and social workers regarding anything to do with the child's education.

What are Liquid Logic PEPs and the Professionals' Portal?

Liquid Logic is the local authority's social care information system. The Professionals' Portal is a secure system through which schools can receive and return PEPs. A PowerPoint guide is available at www.bathnes.gov.uk/virtualschool

The process for completing PEPs is as follows:



- **The child or young person's views** must be heard and acted on at PEP meetings. It is best practice for somebody the child trusts to discuss and record their thoughts and feelings with them before the meeting.
- **Special Educational Needs:** PEPs should be held at the same time as annual SEN annual reviews and can cross refer to EHCPs and reports rather than duplicate information.
- **PEPs need to be informative, jargon-free and written in a professional language.** PEPs are read and used by people including some who will not have attended the PEP meeting such as Independent Reviewing Officers.

How are attainment and progress measured?

In order to gain some consistency, we ask schools to record the following information in the PEP about attainment and progress:

Early Years/ Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attainment and progress in the key prime areas of learning
Key Stages 1 ,2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current attainment compared with age related expectations Progress since the child's starting point (i.e. previous national assessment) <p>For both: Well above/Above/Expected/Below/Well below</p>
Key Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets for the end of Year 11 and whether the young person is on track to achieve them
Post 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The course level and the young person's progress

Please comment on the young person's strengths and areas for development in the commentary sections in the PEP.

What are examples of good SMART targets and actions?

SMART = Specific Measurable. Achievable Resourced Time-bound

TARGET	ACTION	LEAD	DATE
Make expected progress in maths to reach age related expectations	1:1 tuition in Maths – 10 weeks, 1 hour per week	Mrs Patel (Designated Teacher)	15th March 2017
Make better than expected progress in reading to exceed age related expectations	Read with carer for 20 minutes every school day evening	Mr May (foster carer)	15th March 2017
Improve behaviour so all lesson behaviour grades are 1s or 2s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet TA to see each morning to prepare for day Daily check-in card with TA Weekly mentoring session with school mentor 	Mr Smith (LAC TA)	15th March 2017
Learn team skills and make at least two new friends	Join after school football club on Thursdays and local weekend athletics club	Mrs Patel (Designated Teacher) Mr Jones (carer)	15th March 2017

Please avoid vague targets such as 'Gain confidence in Maths' or 'Better behaviour'

Contact the Virtual School: Virtual_School@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 396932
Go to our website for more detailed guidance www.bathnes.gov.uk/virtualschool

How is Pupil Premium Plus allocated by the Virtual School?

The Virtual School allocates Pupil Premium Plus according to the young person's needs. Designated teachers need to show in the form what the Pupil Premium Plus will be spent on, how much is needed up to the next PEP and how this figure has been arrived at. The Virtual School will approve or amend the requests for Pupil Premium Plus. Designated teachers will need to keep a record of how much Pupil Premium Plus they have spent and how much is left from their budget. Please note that we no longer make automatic payments of £500 per term. Allocations for the full financial year (April to March) are as follows:

Early Years/ Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £300
Reception and Key Stages 1 ,2, 3 and 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £1500
Post 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £1000 for students in the first year of Post 16 education where required, mainly for tuition for retakes in English and Maths GCSE Up to £500 for second and third year students

- The Virtual School allocates the funding it retains to provide **additional support**, for example:
 - Top-up funding to schools above £1500 where the designated teacher makes a good case for additional support
 - Transition support for children and young people moving to new schools
 - Educational Psychologist support
 - Letterbox Club – books and games for children in Years 1 to 7
 - Support for children in care not in education
 - Training for designated teachers and other staff who work in schools
- The Pupil Premium Plus must only be used to **improve outcomes** for children in the following areas:
 - Academic achievement and progress e.g. 1:1 or small group tuition
 - Wider achievement e.g. guitar lessons
 - Inclusion e.g. assigning a mentor for a fixed period of time
 - Transitions e.g. visits to new school with a TA

The 16-19 bursary

A post 16 bursary of £1200 per annum is paid for those young people in care/care leavers in full time education and training. The bursary is:

- claimed by schools and colleges and paid directly to students
- to be used to support access to education e.g. books, equipment, IT, transport, food, trips. The provider may purchase these directly from the bursary
- often paid in instalments and may depend on attendance, work rate etc.

See (www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/overview) for more information.

Suggested agenda for PEP meetings

1. Care information
 - Care placement and plan; contact arrangements
 - Well-being – physical, mental, emotional health
2. Practical issues e.g. transport to school; access to IT; medication
3. Personal Education Plan
 - Young person's views
 - Special Educational Needs – if relevant
 - Review of targets agreed at the last PEP meeting
 - Attendance & exclusions – if relevant
 - Achievements and progress
 - Emotional needs, behaviour and relationships
 - Activities and interests
 - Transition plans – if relevant
 - Feedback from carers and/or parents and social worker
4. SMART targets and action plan
5. Date, time and venue of next PEP meeting

Finally...checklist for any child in care

✓	Are all PEPs complete ? Are you clear about what care information to share with schools about each child?
✓	What are the children's views about their schooling? Are their views accurately included in PEP meetings? How do you include children who are reluctant to tell you their views?
✓	Are the children you are responsible for on track to reach their targets especially in Reading/Writing/English and Maths ? What are the barriers to progress if any? How might we overcome these?
✓	What is the attendance of each child? If it's below 95%, why is this and what is being done to improve it?
✓	Have they had any exclusions ? If so why? What is being done to prevent any more exclusions?
✓	What use is the school making of the resources it receives for children in care e.g. Pupil Premium Plus ? Is it effective? How do you know?
✓	How can foster carers best support the education of the child? (e.g. attending parents evenings; talking about the importance of school; embedding aspirations; homework; reading at home; taking them out to theatres, museums etc;)
✓	Are there plans in place for any transition e.g. primary to secondary school; post 16? Who is taking the lead on this? What needs to be in place for a successful transition?