



Virtual School News

News and key info
for Designated Teachers

MKCC Virtual School

The half term holiday has fallen in different weeks for different local authorities, wherever you are in your calendar, we hope you are going to have or have had a restful break. As ever, thank you for all your support of our children and of us as a Virtual School team – we couldn't do it without you!

Pupil Premium Plus – Final payments for this financial year

The Milton Keynes Virtual School must have all Pupil Premium Plus funding requests processed on our internal systems by 8th March and as such we have been contacting schools who will not have a spring term Core PEP prior to the end of February 2024 to ensure that any outstanding funding can be accessed. If you believe that your setting has not received Pupil Premium funding in this 2023/24 financial year, then please contact your allocated Virtual School Officer to explore.

Breaking Barriers – PLAC and school attendance

Please see the link below for information about a report from Adoption UK who are launching a campaign around PLAC and school attendance. As many as half of children who are adopted or in kinship care are missing school or unable to take part in lessons*, a new report reveals. The report, [Breaking the Barriers](#), published by Adoption UK to mark International Education Day, adds new evidence to the heated UK-wide debate about a school attendance crisis, which has worsened dramatically since the pandemic.

[Breaking the Barriers](#) shows that adopted and kinship care children are not missing school because of lack of motivation, or because of parents and carers who do not value education. Their absence is due to school systems and approaches that do not meet their needs. Children who can no longer live with their birth parents have often had traumatic early years, and can struggle with their identity. This can have a lasting impact on their brain development and their mental health. Half of kinship carers say their child has additional learning needs. Four in ten adopted children missed school due to concerns about their mental health in 2022. Adopted children are also:

- more than twice as likely as their peers to have additional learning needs.
- more likely to be excluded from school than their non-care experienced peers
- more than twice as likely to be suspended
- commonly spending days in internal exclusion.

A reminder that the Virtual School has a duty to offer advice and information to parents, guardians and carers of children who have left care in England and Wales through an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement/Residence Order or who were adopted from state care outside England or Wales. Please contact Louise Cooper – Louise.Cooper@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk – to discuss further.

Desty – Children and grief webinar

Desty is a resource which a number of the schools we work with have commissioned using Pupil Premium Plus funding to support the development of self-confidence, social skills and emotional resilience. They have an upcoming webinar on 'Children and Grief' on 29th February at 9:30-10:30am which is open to anyone in the Virtual School's network. In this webinar, Stephanie O'Malley (Ed Psychologist & Founder of Education DESTY) will be discussing how grief can appear in many different forms for children. Stephanie will share insights on how to support children through bereavement. This will not only focus on bereavement through death but also other major life transitions.

If you are interested, please do sign up using this link:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/fdcc667f-7217-4f7d-b3a2-83e8a1f355c0@f8e4e087-2415-4e01-906a-6b99eb61def0>

Focus on SMART Targets and Quality Assurance

The termly PEP targets need to be the stepping stones to support the young person to achieve their bigger, longer term targets. Please see the information below to support you to produce high quality SMART targets.

Start by writing down your initial goal for the young person. Work your way through the questions below, adding more information to your initial target as you go:

1. Specific

Is this specific to the young person and to the curriculum/targeted area? Which specific skills or knowledge need to be acquired? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?

2. Measurable

How can you measure progress? How are you going to demonstrate success?

3. Achievable

Does the young person have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, how can you support them? What is the motivation for this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?

4. Realistic

Will the child/young person be able to achieve this goal? Will they be able to celebrate a success by their next PEP meeting?

5. Time-bound

What's the deadline and is it realistic? Will this target be achieved in time for the next PEP meeting?

Review what you have written, and craft a new SMART target based on what the answers to the questions above have revealed.

As part of the process for Core PEPs all are quality assured by either VSH or DVSH prior to any funding being agreed. PEPs are RAG rated and feedback provided in order that we can work to improve the quality of PEPs for our children and young people. We consider the following:

- quality of information provided in Part 2
- the quality of how the PEP is recorded in Part 3 which outlines discussions held in the meeting
- the quality and quantity of the SMART targets.

If you would like to discuss the feedback provided or QA score we would be happy to do this in order to support. We will be reviewing this process and so would welcome feedback for our consideration.

Designated Teacher Forum

Thanks to those who were able to attend the Spring 1 DT forum on 8.2.24 where we discussed SMART targets, quality assurance, pupil voice, EBSA resources and Pupil Premium Plus use. Additional links that were shared by colleagues in the meeting are below:

<https://www.mksendlocaloffer.co.uk/health-conditions-and-disabilities/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hub/useful-resources-parents-and>

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

<https://www.mksendlocaloffer.co.uk/events/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-putting-mk-guidance-practice-your-school-context-1>

<https://www.mksendlocaloffer.co.uk/events/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-putting-mk-guidance-practice-your-school-context-0>

If there is any further feedback, suggestions for future content, resources to share, or any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch. The next DT forum is booked for 21st March 2024. 3.45 – 5pm, further information will be shared next term.

