



Virtual School News

News and key info
for Designated Teachers

MKCC Virtual School

Again, the Easter 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're very lucky to work with so many fabulous and committed people.

Summer Term PEPs

Thank you for your support in getting Pupil Premium Plus funding requests processed by the beginning of March to allow us to complete our end of financial year processes. Our Summer term PEPs will begin after the break and you will be able to request 24/25 financial year funding for eligible children in your next meetings. Please consider planning the order of the Core and Review PEPs for the upcoming year to allow best use of funding, taking into account data review points and planned transitions. If you require any support with the PEP process, please do contact your child's designated PEP Officer.

The deadline for Summer term PEPs is Friday 5th July 2024.

Designated Teacher Forum

Our last Designated Teacher Forum, held virtually on Thursday 21st March, covered the following topics:

- Spotlight on supporting our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in education
- Supporting effective transitions including discussion about preparation, planning, communication and information sharing, positive endings and creating new connections.
- Discussion and examples of creative and effective Pupil Premium Plus use.
- Reminders about the MKCC Virtual School training offer.

The next Designated Teacher Forum is planned for 4-5pm on Thursday 2nd May and will be a training opportunity. Please save the date and further information will be sent out ahead after the Easter break.

If there is any further feedback, suggestions for future content, resources to share, or any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch. We would genuinely love to see more of you there and don't forget that these sessions count towards your CPD as a Designated Teacher.

Focus on SMART Targets and Quality Assurance

Quality assurance this term has continued to demonstrate that we are not always getting SMART targets right. Please ensure that you have considered targets ahead of the PEP meeting so that they can be checked by PEP Officers in the meeting to ensure they meet SMART criteria. Some supporting information about SMART targets is outlined below:

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? Is it as exact and detailed as possible? Has the person who needs to complete the action been identified – what are they going to do and when?

2. Measurable

How can you measure progress? How are you going to demonstrate success? Will we be able to tell that progress is being made and quickly identify if the plan is not working?

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? Small steps are often key to successful outcomes which are sustained over time.

5. Time-bound

What's the deadline and is it realistic? Will this target be achieved in time for the next PEP meeting? "Ongoing" should not be used.

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 you. We will be reviewing this process and so would welcome feedback for our consideration.

Supporting Transitions for Vulnerable Children

As we plan for upcoming transitions for some of our care-experienced young people, the following was shared in our last DT Forum:

Change can create huge anxieties for children with insecure attachments. They have often had many endings and transitions in their lives that were sudden and disruptive and involved the loss of loved ones. Change may make them feel out of control and over-whelmed with uncertainty and feelings of loss.

This can lead to behaviours in school which reduce their capacity for learning, disrupt others, see the child become isolated or even manifest as physical complaints such as headaches and sickness.

Planned transitions (into primary school or from primary to secondary school) offer an opportunity for change to be managed and for children to experience the positive aspects of moving on. A well-managed transition will provide the child with a sense of predictability and an element of control which in turns helps them to focus on their school-work, trust the adults around them and learn about order, routine and structures and the beneficial feelings of containment and security that this provides.

Endings	Beginnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about what is going to change. Allow everyone to talk about how they are feeling. (Utilising open door graphic to go the conversation going. • Encourage a review of work – what were we like? what have we learned? • Make use of stories, particularly journeys that involve moving on • If possible, work up to the last minute to term. If they are ‘off normal timetable’ have structured, mechanical activities planned and communicated in advance – to provide containment. • Write a letter or create something personal and tangible for the child to take away with them (group photos/memory book) • Don’t take displays down from the walls while the children are still around. • Liaise with staff in the new school and arrange for the child to meet their new teacher, key adults and develop a sense of the new school. • Verbalise what is going on for the child “I’ve noticed that and I’m wondering if that’s because ...” • Keep carers informed of transition activities (they might be anxious too!). Share important dates and information and help them to make contact with key adults at the new school. • Acknowledge your own feelings and those of other members of staff – it can be difficult to let go of children who you have a close working relationship with and perhaps have anxieties about their future. Be aware of transference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with staff at the child’s previous setting/school and find out what’s working well for the child and any concerns. • Arrange for the child to meet with key adults before the start of term. • Acknowledge the child’s important attachments at their previous setting/school and arrange for these key figures to be involved in transition visits to the new school wherever possible. • Provide information on the structure and routines of the new school in a format that the child can take with them and refer to. • Provide an opportunity to meet peers in small groups while completing structured ice-breaker activities. • Develop a transition passport in consultation with the child and (their key workers and parents carers depending on age/stage) to provide important information to the child’s new teachers. • Get to know carers and make arrangements for ‘meet and greets’ at the start of the school day for anxious students and check-ins during unstructured times during the first few weeks. • Discuss the use of a transitional object from their parent/carer to provide a sense of security – discuss what the object will be and where the child will keep it and make all teachers aware. • Use short ‘spotlight on’ talks during your staff meetings during the first half-term to make whole school teams aware of any children they may meet in the corridors who need an attachment and trauma aware response.

Training Opportunities

As we come to the Summer term and schools will be seeking to plan their INSET training schedules. Our full training offer can be found on our website: [Training and support | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/training-and-support). There is a wide variety of different options including e-learning and whole school face to face training.

I would like to take the opportunity to advertise whole school attachment and trauma training delivered face to face by AC Education, a one day course designed to increase understanding of the role of attachment and trauma in children's education and strategies to better address their needs. This is currently offered free of charge but must be booked ahead of the end of the academic year. Further information can be found on AC Education's website: [Attachment & Trauma Training Programme | AC Education \(ac-education.co.uk\)](https://www.ac-education.co.uk/attachment-trauma-training-programme)

Please don't hesitate to contact Katy Enser – Katy.Enser@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk – for further information if this would be of interest to you.