



# Virtual School News

News and key info  
for Designated Teachers

MKCC Virtual School

Welcome back after the February half-term break. I hope the time away offered everyone a chance to rest, recharge, and refocus. As we begin the next half term, we look forward to continuing our work together to support our children and young people, celebrate their achievements, and strengthen the partnerships that help them thrive. Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment. We hope that you find the following messages useful.

## Pupil Premium Funding and PEPs

**The deadline for completion of Spring term Core PEPs is 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026.** Please ensure that you have your meetings booked and paperwork is completed ahead of the meeting (if a Core PEP). Many of our PEPs for the Spring term are Review PEPs and may therefore be scheduled after this date but must be completed by the Easter holidays.

As we come to the end of the financial year, we hope that you have worked together with our Virtual School Officers to plan the use of any remaining Pupil Premium Grant funding. A reminder that any requests for funds for the 2025/26 financial year must be with the Virtual School by Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March as we will be unable to process any allocations after this time.

All approved additional Pupil Premium Plus funding requests have now been processed and you should have been informed of the outcome by email. Allocations for the 2026/27 financial year will be available through the usual PEP meeting procedures from Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April.

There will be no changes to Pupil Premium Grant funding allocations for the 2026/27 financial year, with £1900 being available to request as part of the PEP process (2x £950 across 2x Core PEPs). If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with you allocated Virtual School Officer.

Please be advised that there will be work being undertaken on the MKCC Professionals Portal on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March from 8.30am. This means that the portal will be unavailable to users who are wishing to complete delegated Part 2 sections of PEP forms. The work is anticipated to take approximately 4 hours, and the portal should be available again in the afternoon. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

## Focus on Year 11

Year 11 can be a difficult time for our looked after children, especially in the lead up to exams. Past experiences or trauma may affect their confidence, focus, and emotional wellbeing and then the added pressure of exams may increase anxiety or feelings of overwhelm. This could show up in many ways, including withdrawal, low motivation, tiredness or changes in behaviour. Gentle encouragement, clear routines and expectations, reassurance and flexibility can make a big difference and help the young person to feel safe and supported during this important period.

The DfE Pupil Experiences in School 2024-2025 report highlights that children who feel that they belong, enjoy school and feel safe, as well as those who report positive relationships with staff, show significantly higher engagement and motivation. These elements are shown to be consistent predictors of positive outcomes and because of this we are asking Designated Teachers and other school colleagues to be mindful of this especially in Year 11 where the stakes can feel high on both sides.

At the point of writing this newsletter, we have had 22 incidences of suspension for looked after children in Year 11 this academic year, totalling 48.5 days, as well as sanctions including removing attendance at prom. Whilst we appreciate every school's right to adhere to their outlined behaviour policies, we welcome flexibility, accommodation and advocacy when considering presenting behaviours as we all understand that these are often a form of communication. Clear goals, teacher encouragement and scaffolding are key for motivating learners, especially in Year 11, and your role as a Designated Teacher could not be more important at this time in our children's lives.

And finally, hopefully, our year 11s will have made applications and are being invited for interview and receiving offers. Most of these will be conditional offers, based on predicted grades, and confirmation of a place usually takes place on or around GCSE results day – Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2026. It is important that our young people realise that they can make a number of applications and then decide what to do over the results period, 'putting all your eggs in one basket' has proven risky for some of our young people in the past and has meant a scramble for places in August. Our advice is to have a Plan A and a Plan B! If any of our young people need advice and guidance about post 16 options, please get in touch with their Virtual School Officer.

## EHCPs

Part of the ongoing work of the Virtual School involves oversight of cohort level data collected via a variety of mechanisms. We have noticed a small discrepancy in relation to children being reported as having an EHCP on systems such as Studybugs when their plan is in the draft stage. A reminder that a child does not have an EHCP until the point at which the plan is finalised.

## DT Forum

We held our last forum on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February, kindly hosted by Stantonbury. It was lovely to see a good turnout. We split into two groups and ran a demo for the VR Headset training we are rolling out as a pilot – see details below. For those who attended we would be grateful if you could complete the feedback survey - [Cornerstone VR - DT Feedback – Fill in form](#). We also held a Solution Circle session to support professionals with this approach.

The Virtual School facilitates Designated Teacher Forum sessions on a termly basis, our next one is scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> June 2026. These sessions provide important updates and information relating to children looked after (CLA), previously looked after children (PLAC), and children with a social worker. They also offer valuable opportunities for networking and professional dialogue with colleagues who hold the same – often singular – role within their setting. Forum content is shaped collaboratively by participants and typically includes discussion of effective practices, emerging challenges, and input from partner agencies. We will be sending out details nearer the time but look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible.

## VR Training Pilot Opportunity for Milton Keynes Schools

We are running a pilot to roll out VR Headset Training.

The training will utilise immersive VR technology to support staff in schools and settings to gain an insight from the perspective of a child/ young person. The aim is to increase knowledge of trauma informed responses and have the opportunity to consider and discuss how experiences may transfer to the learning environment. 360-degree viewing allows you to see things from a different perspective. Some of the videos contain distressing content and therefore we would urge schools to consider who from your school attends and how they will be supported following the training as well as to check there are no health conditions which may be impacted by VR use. We would ask that schools are also able to demonstrate they have undertaken some trauma informed training prior to this – such as Virtual School Trauma and attachment awareness, Making Connections or similar.

Training sessions will be available as follows:

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026 - 0930 – 1100** – Delivered in school/setting - please ensure you have an appropriate space for 13 people (10 school participants and 2/3 facilitators).

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 – 0930 –1100** - Delivered in school/setting - please ensure you have an appropriate space for 13 people (10 school participants and 2/3 facilitators).

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – 0930-1100** – Available to book 2 per school (10 spaces in total) delivered at Civic.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – 0930-1100** - Available to book 2 per school (10 spaces in total) delivered at Civic.

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2026 – 0930 –1100** - Delivered in school/setting - please ensure you have an appropriate space for 13 people (10 school participants and 2/3 facilitators).

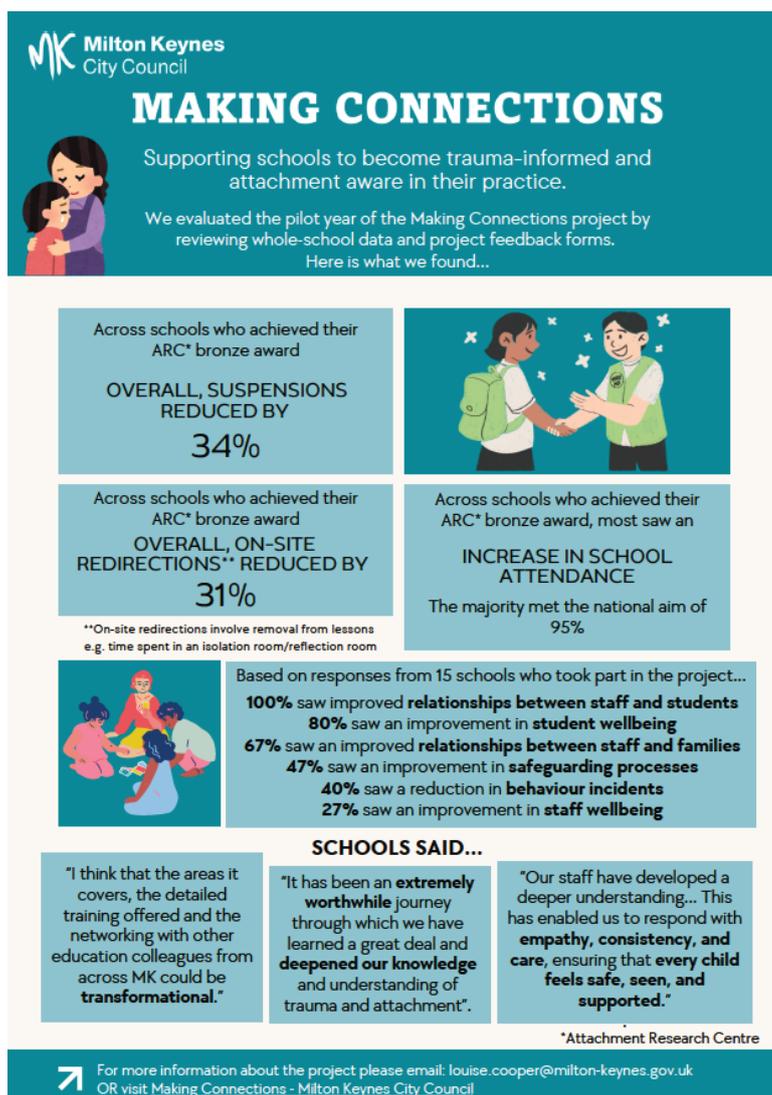
**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2026 – 0930 – 1100** - Available to book 2 per school (10 spaces in total) delivered at Civic.

Please email Dawn Edhouse – [Dawn.Edhouse@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Dawn.Edhouse@milton-keynes.gov.uk) to express your interest and preferred date – we will then be in touch with further details.

## Making Connections - Register your interest now!

We are pleased to be able to once again extend the Making Connections programme to another 20 MK schools and settings. This MKCC designed and delivered programme for schools aims to increase understanding and use of attachment aware and trauma responsive practice. 40 settings are currently part of the programme, with 12 from the original pilot having received recognition for their practice with an ARC Bronze Award.

A full evaluation of the pilot programme shows Making Connections is having a positive impact – the key findings are included in the infographic below.



To find out more about the programme, which provides a quality framework tool and research-backed training as well as individual school-focussed support from Educational Psychologists and the Virtual School, [click here](#).

To express an interest in becoming part of the 2026-27 Making Connections programme, please complete the [Expression of Interest form](#) by 5pm on Monday 9 March 2026.

We will notify schools of whether they have a place on the programme by 16 March 2026, with introductory information being shared at a welcome meeting early in the summer term.

## Youth Group Offer



## Youth Club.

Thursdays at 3.30pm – 5pm @ [Conniburrow Family Centre](#)  
1 Germander Place  
[Conniburrow MK14 7D](#)

**Weekly after school session for 8–16-year-olds.**

Need a break? Just want to hang out?

Why not come and join us at the drop in for some crafts, games and music after school on Tuesdays?

Refreshments will be provided.

For more information or to register your interest contact [Danielle.loftus@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.loftus@milton-keynes.gov.uk) or 07484 911781.

## Training Opportunities

A reminder that there is a variety of training opportunities available free of charge to settings supporting children looked after by Milton Keynes City Council. 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact Katy Enser – [Katy.Enser@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.Enser@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk) or Jenny Cooledge – [Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk) – for further information if this would be of interest to you.