



Virtual School News

News and key info
for Designated Teachers

MKCC Virtual School

Welcome back after the Easter break. I hope the time away offered everyone a chance to rest, recharge, and refocus (as well as enjoy some chocolate). As we begin the summer 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 for your dedication and commitment and we hope that you find the following messages useful.

Pupil Premium Funding and PEPs

The deadline for completion of Summer Term Core PEPs is 29th June 2026. Please ensure that you have your meetings booked and paperwork delegated via the MKCC Professionals Portal is completed ahead of the meeting (if a Core PEP). This is important as it allows the Virtual School officer to thoroughly prepare for the meeting.

There are 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 PEP meetings). You can read our full Pupil Premium arrangements on the Virtual School website: [Virtual school guidance and documents | Milton Keynes City Council](#). If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with you allocated Virtual School Officer.

Focus on Behaviour

In schools, we often hear children and young people described using terms such as:

- Aggressive
- Defiant
- Argumentative
- Unable to take responsibility (including blaming or lying)
- Unable to concentrate
- Disruptive or distracting (including silliness or making noises)
- Absconding

- Disinterested
- Quiet, silent or uncommunicative
- Disconnected
- Passive
- Withdrawn

While these descriptors may accurately reflect what is being observed, they describe **presentation rather than need**. As Designated Teachers (DTs), you are well placed to lead and promote **professional curiosity** within your schools—encouraging staff to consider not only *what* we see, but *what might be happening for the child or young person* beneath the behaviour.

A trauma informed approach asks us to shift from “What is wrong with this child?” to “What may have happened to this child?” and “What do they need from us right now?”. This reframing supports greater empathy, more effective responses and improved outcomes, particularly for children and young people who have experienced adversity, loss or instability.

To support this work, we have included a range of practical and accessible resources below. These can be used flexibly, for example:

- as prompts within staff or phase meetings, or when preparing for PEP meetings and requesting feedback/comments from teaching staff
- printed and displayed in staff rooms or staff areas
- shared informally to help stimulate reflection and discussion

There are also more in-depth activities designed to be used directly with children and young people, supporting them to understand and communicate their internal experiences.

As DTs, your role in modelling, embedding and sustaining this reflective approach is fundamental in creating school environments where children feel understood, safe and supported. It is also worth remembering that the language which is captured as part of the PEP process forms part of the child’s records and they will be able to read these once they are an adult.

[Exploring-the-internal-experiences-of-fight-flight-freeze-and-collapse.pdf](#)

[Hidden-Needs.pdf](#)

[Behavioural-to-Relational-Responses-at-School.pdf](#)

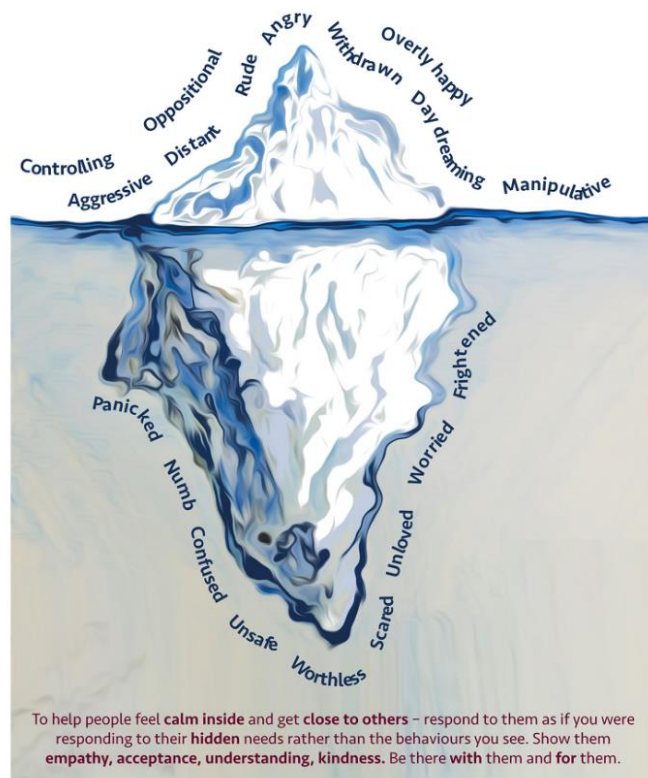
[Rupture-Rocks.pdf](#)

[What-if.pdf](#)

[When-BIG-feelings-take-over.pdf](#)

Bringing Hidden Needs To The Surface

People of all ages, from babies to old age, find ways to **manage their emotions** so that they feel as **protected** and as **safe** as possible. It is human instinct to do this. We guard ourselves against feeling **too vulnerable** by showing the world behaviours which keeps others at a **safe distance**. Our 'real' needs are **buried deep below** the surface where they are hard to see.



To help people feel **calm inside** and get **close to others** – respond to them as if you were responding to their **hidden needs** rather than the behaviours you see. Show them **empathy, acceptance, understanding, kindness**. Be there **with them** and **for them**.

ON THE OUTSIDE

FIGHT, FLIGHT AND FREEZE MODE (HYPER-AROUSAL)

When we feel like we are in danger (even if we are not actually in danger) our nervous system mobilises into a survival response, and may swing us into a fight, flight or freeze reaction. Our nervous system becomes hyper-aroused in order to protect us from harm.

ON THE OUTSIDE WE MIGHT BE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED AS:

- Aggressive, angry, argumentative
- Controlling, inflexible
- Lying or blaming
- Unable to concentrate or finish tasks
- Rejecting of connection
- Loud, noisy, disruptive
- Keeping super-busy
- Running away, hiding, avoiding
- Not managing in free time
- Need to be first
- Baby talk, silly voices, giddy, silly
- Not interested, bored
- Trying to distract
- Scanning the room, watchful
- Not listening
- Hard to move through a task

COLLAPSE MODE (HYPO-AROUSAL)

When we feel like we're in danger (even if we are not actually in danger) and fight, flight or freeze responses can't keep us safe enough, our nervous system can swing into collapse. In collapse, we become immobilised and disconnected from the world around us so that the danger hurts us less. Collapse also allows us to 'hide' until the perceived danger passes*.

ON THE OUTSIDE WE MIGHT BE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED AS:

- Head on a desk or laying in bed
- Socially withdrawn, quiet
- Compliant
- Yes and no answers
- Passive
- Neutral expression
- Glazed eyes
- Slow movements
- Disconnected
- Silent

HYPER & HYPO AROUSAL TOGETHER

Remember: Our nervous system can move into hypo-arousal and hyper-arousal at the same time, so we may notice a mixture of the experiences above

*Porges, S. W. (2011). The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation. W W Norton & Co.

Transitions

As we enter the Summer term, we wanted to take the opportunity to prompt reflection on the importance of transitions and the ways in which we can proactively support pupils through periods of change. This includes key transition points such as starting school for the first time, moving between schools—particularly the transition from primary to secondary—and planning for next steps into post-16 education.

It is also important to recognise that transitions are not limited to school moves. For many pupils, change may involve moving to a new class or teacher, progressing through the school with increased expectations, changes in staffing, or the impact of the long summer break, during which familiar structure and routine are reduced. While these changes affect all children, they can have a particularly significant impact on those within our cohorts.

With this in mind, we have included a selection of resources for you to consider when planning and supporting transitions. In addition, we have developed a practical transition guide outlining suggested activities to support pupils during this crucial period. Please refer to the accompanying document for further detail.

[The-Transition-Storm-1.pdf](#)

[Supporting school transitions | Resources | YoungMinds](#)

[Supporting-Transitions-2.pdf](#)

[Survival In Secondary School](#)

[A guide to transitions and the Boxall Profile® Online](#)

[Guidance for Parents on Transition to Secondary School | Anna Freud](#)

[Emotional wellbeing support for transition](#)

['The Kissing Hand' read by Barbara Bain – \(for young children starting school or nursery for the first time\)](#)

[Starting primary school - BBC Parents' Toolkit - BBC Bitesize](#)

[Circle of Security/ Connection /Being with and Shark Music - Videos for Parents](#)

[How to use play to prepare your child for the first day of school - Family Action](#)

VR Training Pilot Opportunity for Milton Keynes Schools

We still have some remaining slots on our VR Headset Training pilot – please see updated availability below.

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 provide an 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 training, Making Connections or similar.

Training sessions will be available as follows:

Wednesday 22nd April 2026 – 09:30–11:00 - Delivered in school/setting - please ensure you have an appropriate space for 13 people (10 school participants and 2/3 facilitators). ***Last minute availability – please contact urgently to schedule this.***

Friday 8th May 2026 – 09:30-11:00 - Available to book 2 per school (10 spaces in total) delivered at Civic.

~~Thursday 11th June 2026 – 0930-1100 - FULLY BOOKED~~

~~Tuesday 7th July 2026 – 0930 – 1100 - FULLY BOOKED~~

~~Wednesday 23rd September 2026 – 0930 – 1100 - FULLY BOOKED~~

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

Making Connections

We are looking forward to welcoming another 18 MK schools onto the Making Connections programme this week. By the end of the summer term feel sure we will be celebrating with lots more schools who joined the programme a year ago and have been focussing on making the changes that will secure them an ARC Bronze Award!

We also have a number of MK schools who are working on an attachment and trauma informed based Action Research Project as their progress towards their ARC Silver Award. We're keen to provide opportunities for these schools to share their learning from their projects at both the DT Forums and in future editions of this newsletter. Watch this space!

If you would like to know more about the benefits of the Making Connections programme, visit the webpage for more information [Making Connections | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

DT Forum

Our last DT Forum of the year will be held on: 18th June 2026 8.00-9.30am - please let us know if you would be able to host the session. Contact Jenny Cooledge on Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

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 \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#). 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 or Jenny Cooledge – Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk – for further information if this would be of interest to you.