



Virtual School News

News and key info
for Designated Teachers

MKCC Virtual School

As we come to the end of another busy and successful academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Designated Teachers and school staff for their continued commitment to supporting the education and wellbeing of Milton Keynes' children we care for. This edition of the newsletter contains important updates to help you prepare for the new academic year, including Designated Teacher changes, PEP arrangements, training opportunities and key information regarding post-16 results and enrolment processes. We also highlight recent developments within the Virtual School, share reflections from this year's Designated Teacher Forums, and signpost valuable reading from Ofsted on effective support for children in care. As always, we are grateful for the dedication, collaboration and advocacy shown across our schools and settings, which continue to make a significant difference to the lives and outcomes of our children and young people. We wish you all a restful and well-deserved summer break and look forward to working with you again in September.

Designated Teacher Changes for 2026/27

We appreciate that the new academic year can bring changes to staffing and role/responsibilities. If you know that there will be a change to the Designated Teacher in your setting from September 2026, please do let us know by emailing Dawn.Edhouse@milton-keynes.gov.uk. We will advertise further 'New to Role of Designated Teacher' training sessions in September/October 2026.

Just a reminder, Designated Teachers need to be qualified teachers or headteachers as outlined in the statutory guidance document [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#). We understand that schools and settings frequently have arrangements where other staff support the Designated Teacher to undertake their role and in this capacity, they are also involved in PEP meetings and can access Virtual School resources/training, but the Designated Teacher is noted on every PEP document for reference as they have ultimate responsibility/oversight for the education of the children we care for in their setting.

Post 16 Results Day and Enrolments

Exams are over. Well done to all of our young people that have got through the challenging exam season – and the heat – but we know they couldn't have done it without the support of their school staff teams so thank you.

Our young people by now should have had their post 16 offers from sixth forms and colleges and now all they have to do is wait for results day – or is it? Sixth forms and colleges will be sending out important emails over the summer holidays, especially near results day so it's important that our young people check their emails regularly and understand what they must do on 20th August. Most sixth forms and colleges will expect some form of communication from our young people to confirm their place on courses and it's vital that our young people respond. Given the important relationships you have cultivated over their time with you, you would be well placed to consider reaching out to your year 11 looked after children and their carers to double check they know exactly what to do. Places on some courses go very quickly, our young people have worked hard to get where they are and deserve their first choice. If anyone has any questions about results day or post 16 options, please get in touch with their Virtual School Officer or Jennifer.Appleby@milton-keynes.gov.uk (further contact details can be found on the Virtual School, website).

Children We Care For Reports to Governors 2025/26

A big thank you to all of the schools who have returned their reports that they have shared with their governing bodies for this academic year.

The statutory guidance - [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#) – notes the following:

8. Governing bodies should, through the designated teacher, hold the school to account on how it supports its looked-after and previously looked-after children (including how the PP+ is used) and their level of progress. In some schools, designated teachers do this by providing the governing body with a regular report. The patchy nature in the numbers of looked-after and previously looked-after children in any one school means it would be best to have a flexible approach to providing such a report.

We have a template for the MKCC report on our website - [Virtual school guidance and documents | Milton Keynes City Council](#) – but we are also happy to accept information in any form that a setting is comfortable with as we don't want anyone having to duplicate work e.g. if the governing board have received a PowerPoint presentation, you can just share that with us if it is easier.

We appreciate that some schools will have no looked after or previously looked after children with them currently however given the mobility of the cohort, all settings should be prepared to support our children should an application be received at short notice. Therefore, we recommend that Designated Teachers take an opportunity to reassure their governing body that they are well placed to support children if and when they arrive in the future.

Please share any outstanding reports via email to Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Summer Reading – Ofsted’s Report into ‘How schools and colleges support the academic and personal progress of children in care’

Your role as a Designated Teacher is incredibly important for so many reasons, but if you need more information about your impact and the things that schools and colleges do that can make the biggest differences to children we care for, please take some time to review this research and analysis piece from Ofsted - [How schools and colleges support the academic and personal progress of children in care - GOV.UK](#).

It recognises the challenges some of our children face but also notes the hard work of many education leaders are undertaking to overcome these in their settings. It underlines the importance of understanding each child’s unique circumstances, adaptation of policies and teaching strategies to meet emotional, behavioural and academic needs, planning to meet the training needs of the staff who support the children – specifically linked to trauma, and highlights that communication remains key to securing success.

We will be referring to this research further next academic year.

PEPs

The summer PEP deadline has passed and all Core PEP information (Part 2 of the PEP) should now be with Virtual School Officers for review and quality assurance. Many of the summer term PEPs will have been returned to you and the team are rapidly working through the remaining documents. Quality Assurance and Pupil Premium will be processed as quickly as possible and PEPs returned to you. Please make a note of the Quality Assurance comments as we all work together to continually improve the quality of the PEPs for the children we care for. If you have any concerns please liaise directly with your child’s Virtual School Officer or contact Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Please ensure that PEPs are booked for the Autumn term. We will be advising deadlines for the next academic year within our Designated Teacher Handbook which will be available in September.

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.

As many of you will be aware Virtual School have been delivering some Virtual Reality Training as part of a pilot. We are part way through the pilot with one further school scheduled for September. Overall feedback has been positive. We will be evaluating the pilot and looking to see how we can roll this out as part of our Virtual School training offer for the coming academic year.

Below pictured: two of our participants from St Pauls after their session on Tuesday 7/7/26.



DT Forum

We ran our last forum of the year on the 18th June at Oakgrove School and this was well attended – a big thank you to Oakgrove School for hosting. Please hold the dates in your diaries for next year. We also discussed future DT content – if you have anything in mind please do not hesitate to get in contact with Jenny as we continue to prioritise requests from settings when planning training and forum events - Jenny.Coolidge@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Planning next year

Save the date:

Autumn: Thursday 22/10/26 8am

Spring: Wednesday 24/2/27 3.30pm

Summer: Thursday 24/6/26 8am



Staffing Update

This term we have welcomed Maisha Khan to the Virtual School team as a PEP Quality and Compliance Officer. Maisha will have met lots of you already as she has been attending PEP meetings and introducing herself to the children and young people (and the adults supporting them) on her caseload. Maisha is an experienced secondary school teacher and brings a wealth of ideas and enthusiasm to the role. If you need to contact her directly, you can email Maisha.Khan@milton-keynes.gov.uk.