

Leicestershire Virtual School

Information Flyer

Promoting the education of children in care and previously looked-after children

Who are we?

The purpose of the **Virtual School** is to promote positive outcomes for all children and young people (CYP) in care to Leicestershire and to support schools/settings/colleges to narrow the achievement gap for these CYP. This aim also extends to early years children, care-leavers and children and young people adopted from care.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to have a Virtual School Head. The Leicestershire Virtual School team comprises of the Virtual School Head, a Deputy Virtual School Head, a number of Senior Education Advisors (SEA) and Casework Officers (CO), covering early years, primary, secondary and post-16 education. The team is completed by a community support assistant, a data coordinator and admin staff.

The Virtual School is “virtual” only in the sense that it works to support CYP in care as if they were in a single school, even though they are educated in many different schools and settings across the country. We monitor and track the progress of children in their education, advocating for them and promoting their education to ensure the best possible outcomes for them.

Each child or young person in care has an allocated SEA or CO, who attends and contributes to Personal Education Plan meetings (PEPs), Reviews of Arrangement meetings (ROAs) and other multi-agency meetings as appropriate. Their role in these meetings is to promote higher aspirations and a greater accountability from all those involved in their education and care.

Virtual schools are also required to give advice and information about the education of previously looked-after children.

How can we help you?

Collaborative working:

- Where children in care are without an education placement appropriate to their needs, the Virtual School works with schools, settings, colleges, the Secondary Education Inclusion Partnerships and relevant wider services to ensure prompt access to a high-quality education placement.
- We take a holistic approach to issues affecting CYP, advocating on their behalf and signposting a range of available support e.g. one to one tuition, therapeutic input.
- We also offer a range of initiatives which support children and young people in care to engage in education, raise aspirations and experience successful transitions.
- To promote good education for children in care we work closely with schools, settings, colleges, external partners and professionals in wider services, including the Admissions Service, Social Care, Leicestershire Special Educational Needs Assessment (SENA) Service, Leicestershire Education Psychology Service and Youth Offending Service.

Information, Advice and Training:

- We offer bespoke training, information, advice and guidance for professionals to help them understand the range of barriers to learning experienced by children in care and why they might underachieve.

- Leicestershire Virtual School offers training to whole schools and settings about the impact of trauma and attachment difficulties and gives helpful strategies to use, such as emotion coaching. The Virtual School also offers training to governors, designated teachers (DT), key adults, foster carers and residential staff and social workers.
- Alongside the Virtual School training, we organise workshops and an annual conference.
- We host an annual DT forum and produce a termly DT newsletter.
- The Leicestershire Virtual School supports virtual school heads from other local authorities who have children living in Leicestershire and assist in communication with them regarding individual children and their complex needs.

Monitoring and Tracking Progress:

- We monitor attendance, exclusions, attainment and progress data robustly in order to ensure that everything is in place to support the specific needs of the children.

Personal Education Plans:

- The Virtual School facilitates and coordinates all PEP meetings. Some PEP meetings are chaired by DTs and these are then quality-assured by SEAs or COs to ensure that they are of high quality and provide an accurate ongoing record of each child's achievement.
- DTs are supported to develop and use the PEP in school as a living, working document which contributes to accelerated progress towards SMART academic targets explicitly linked to Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) funding.

Pupil Premium Plus:

- The Virtual Head is statutorily tasked with managing the PPP funding. The Virtual School tracks and monitors the use of PPP and advises on its effective application, ensuring that it benefits the child's educational needs as described in the PEP.

Participation events:

The Leicestershire Virtual School has a programme of participation events to raise aspirations of children in care. These opportunities include:

- University experience days
- Monthly book parcels for primary-aged children (Letterbox, Bookworm, Boomerang)
- Summer activities e.g. music / drama / sports courses
- Tall Ships Trust Year 11 residential trip
- Museum workshops

For more information please look at our website;

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/leicestershire-virtual-school>

or contact the Virtual School Team;

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