




# Designated Teacher Handbook



Milton Keynes Virtual School



Academic Year 2024/25



Highway Maintenance



This electric vehicle is  
**100%** POWERED BY  
YOUR WASTE

# Contents

Page 4	<b>Using this DT Handbook</b>
Page 4	<b>What is a Virtual School</b>
Page 5	<b>The Virtual School team and contact details</b>
Page 7	<b>The role of Milton Keynes Virtual School</b>
Page 7	<b>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</b>
Page 8	<b>Preparing for and completing the PEP</b>
Page 16	<b>Additional guidance for completing PEPs</b>
Page 17	<b>Pupil Premium Plus funding</b>
Page 18	<b>Attendance monitoring arrangements</b>
Page 18	<b>Attainment data collection and examination results</b>
Page 19	<b>Suspensions and permanent exclusion guidance</b>
Page 21	<b>Virtual School activities</b>
Page 22	<b>Previously Looked-After Children</b>
Page 22	<b>Pupil Premium Plus funding for Previously Looked-After Children</b>
Page 23	<b>Support for DTs (including DT Forums)</b>

Page 23	<b>Training/CPD</b>
Page 24	<b>Glossary</b>
Page 25	<b>APPENDIX 1: Guidance for ensuring all PEP targets are SMART</b>
Page 28	<b>APPENDIX 2: Facilitating Child Centred PEPs</b>
Page 33	<b>APPENDIX 3: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) – A Guide for Schools</b>
Page 37	<b>APPENDIX 4: Consent for support for Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) Form</b>

# Using this DT Handbook

We have created this handbook to support Designated Teachers (DTs) for looked-after and previously looked-after children in all education settings to undertake their role effectively. This is written with the intention to be used alongside **'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities'** (DfE, 2018). Governing bodies of maintained schools, academy proprietors and the designated staff member at maintained schools and academies must have regard to it when promoting the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

## What is a Virtual School?

**Milton Keynes Council Virtual School holds a statutory role to promote the education of looked-after children in the care of Milton Keynes Council, previously looked-after children living in Milton Keynes and all children living in Milton Keynes who have or have had a social worker.**

The school is 'virtual' because children and young people do not actually attend. They remain the responsibility of the school or education provider at which they are enrolled.

Specifically, the Virtual School are here to support children and young people (CYP) highlighted above by:

**Promoting** their educational achievement

**Raising** their attainment

**Advising** and guiding professionals

**Supporting** schools to develop programs and systems which will ensure the gap is narrowed between all children with a social worker and their peers

**Training** professionals

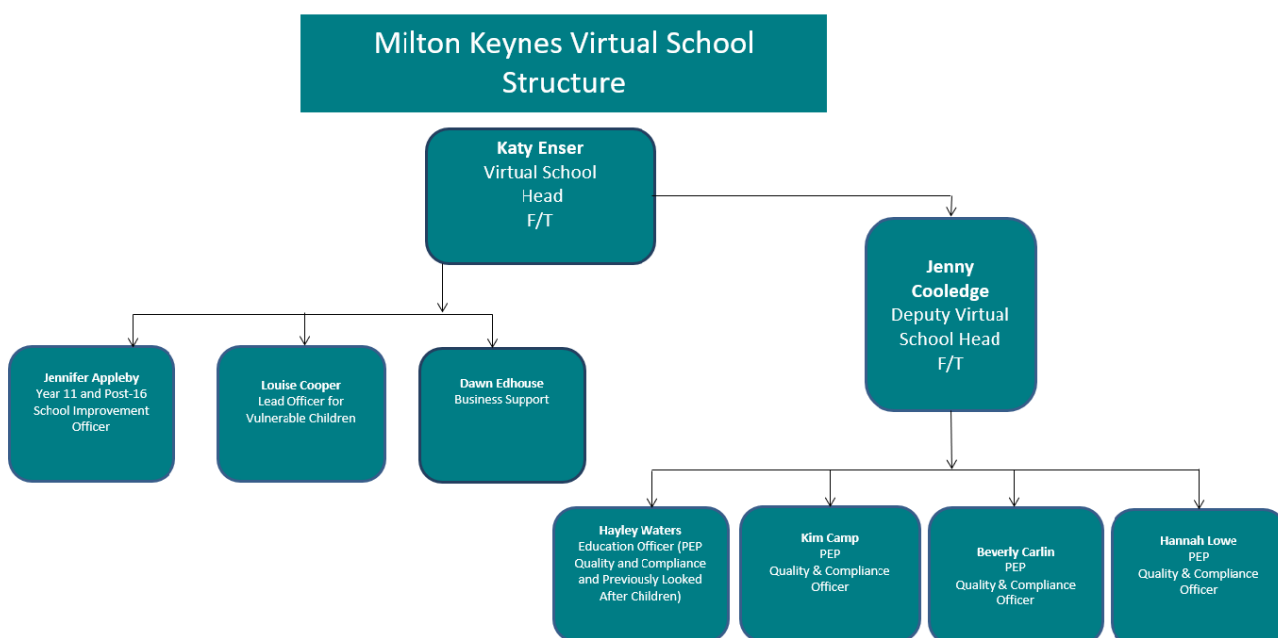
**Championing** the educational needs of all vulnerable children with partner agencies

Many of these children will have experienced distress, loss and trauma which may influence their development and education. We work with those adults around a child to promote a child centred approach which is informed by research and knowledge, finding collaborative solutions to enable children and young people to be successful.

Our pages on the Milton Keynes Council website include further information and resources.

Virtual School | Milton Keynes Council ([milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://milton-keynes.gov.uk))

## The Virtual School Team and Contact Details



To contact the Virtual School please ring the Virtual School Duty Line: 01908 254779 between 09:00–15:00. Or contact us via email:

Katy Enser – Virtual School Head

Email: [Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Jenny Cooledge – Deputy Virtual School Head

Email: [Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.Cooledge@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Jenny Appleby – Post-16 Improvement Officer  
Email: [Jennifer.Appleby@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Jennifer.Appleby@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Kim Camp - PEP Quality and Compliance Officer  
Email: [Kimberley.Camp@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Kimberley.Camp@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Beverly Carlin - PEP Quality and Compliance Officer  
Email: [Beverly.Carlin@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Beverly.Carlin@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Louise Cooper – Lead Officer for Vulnerable Children  
Email: [Louise.Cooper@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Louise.Cooper@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Hannah Lowe – PEP Quality and Compliance Officer  
Email: [Hannah.Lowe@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Lowe@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

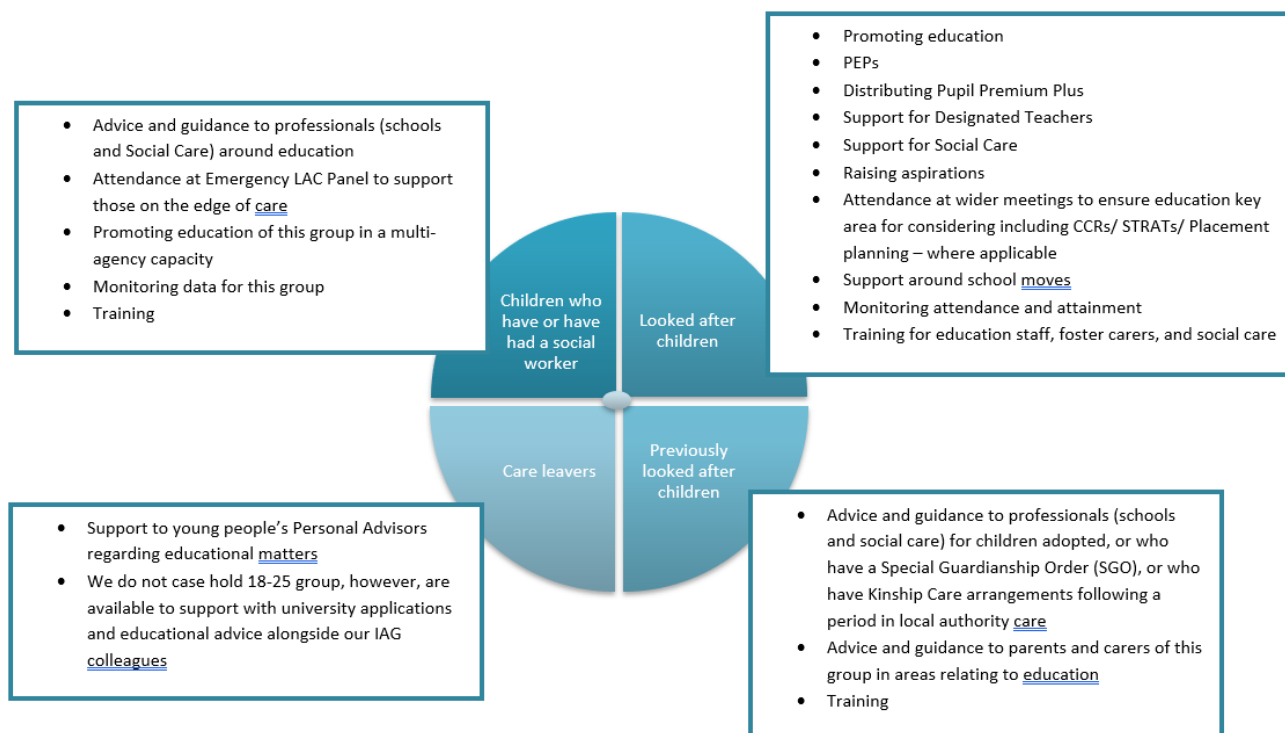
Hayley Waters – Education Officer (PEP Quality and Compliance and Previously Looked After Children)  
Email: [Hayley.Waters@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Hayley.Waters@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

Dawn Edhouse – Specialist Business Support Assistant  
Email: [Dawn.Edhouse@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Dawn.Edhouse@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

---

# The Role of Milton Keynes Virtual School



## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

PEPs are a statutory requirement for looked-after children. They are reviewed termly. 2 PEPs per academic year will be held as core PEPs, one will be held as a review PEP, which is a shorter 'lighter touch' process. PEPs are completed on our LCS system which is accessed by education professionals via Milton Keynes Professional Portal. PEPs should be live, working documents which support the education planning for children and young people.

PEPs remain the joint responsibility of the education provider and the social worker, however MK Virtual School will monitor all PEPs, attend Core PEP meetings wherever possible and support all parties to complete their contribution to the PEP.

# Preparing for the PEP

The Virtual School Officer should, in consultation with all those who will attend, arrange a date and time for the PEP meeting and will share this with the school. Once the date, time and venue has been agreed, **it is the responsibility of the Social Worker to invite any other relevant parties to the PEP meeting.** Meetings can be virtual or in-person, however there is an expectation that at least one PEP per academic year takes place at the school.

In preparation for the PEP, the Designated Teacher should ensure that they can access the Milton Keynes Professional Portal. The PEP will be allocated to the Designated Teacher two weeks ahead of the meeting to allow for education information to be pre-populated and reviewed **ahead** of the meeting. Best practice is for the Designated Teacher to ensure that all staff who teach or work closely with the child have the opportunity to input into the meeting and this might be achieved by circulating and collating a round-robin ahead of the meeting. Additionally, **the child's awareness of the process should be considered ahead of the meeting and the Designated Teacher should discuss the meeting with them to plan how they would prefer to attend/express their views.** By doing this we can ensure that the child feels comfortable and understands the purpose of the meeting.

For any looked-after child aged between 4-16 and who has been in care for 12 months or more, the Designated Teacher will need to complete an SDQ form ahead of the PEP meeting. This will be allocated to the Designated Teacher on the Milton Keynes Professional Portal by the Virtual School Officer. Further information about SDQs and how they can be completed and used both ahead of and during the PEP meeting can be found in Appendix 3 of this document.

**Below are step by step guidelines for how to complete a PEP via the Milton Keynes Professional Portal.**

1. You will receive an email from MKCC Professional Portal. *Despite our best efforts some receiving IT systems send these emails to junk mail so if you are missing an email please check your junk folder.* Follow the link to complete the form.

## New Milton Keynes PEP

A new Milton Keynes PEP has been sent to you. Please log in to the [Milton Keynes City Council professional portal](#) in order to complete this form. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register for access using this email address.

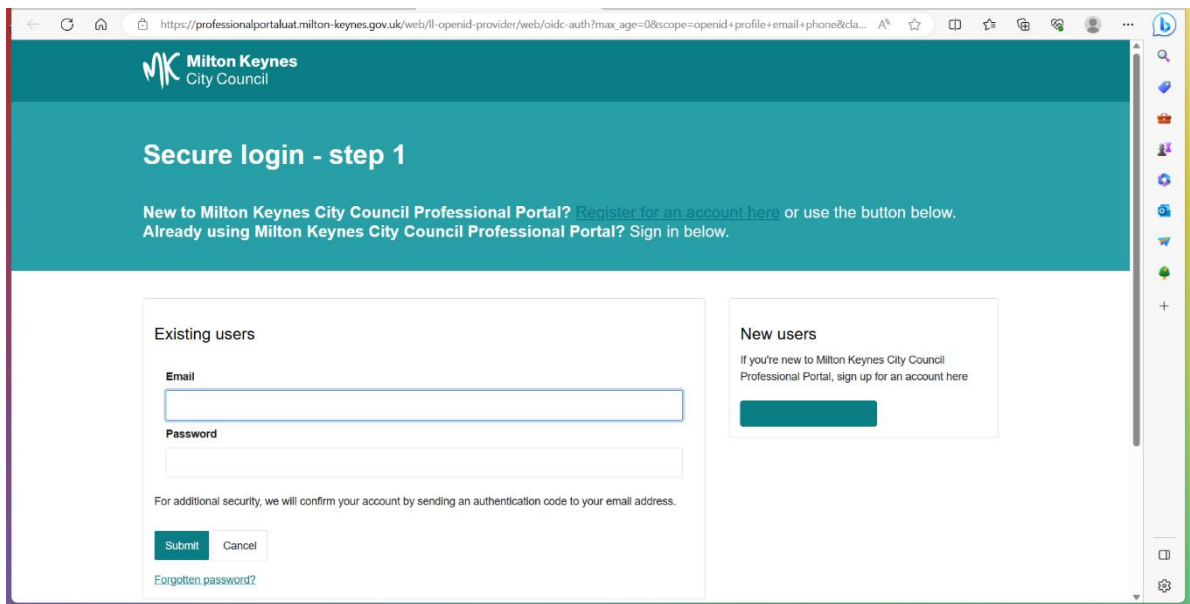
For any queries please contact the Virtual School duty line on 01908 253549.

Many thanks,

Milton Keynes Virtual School

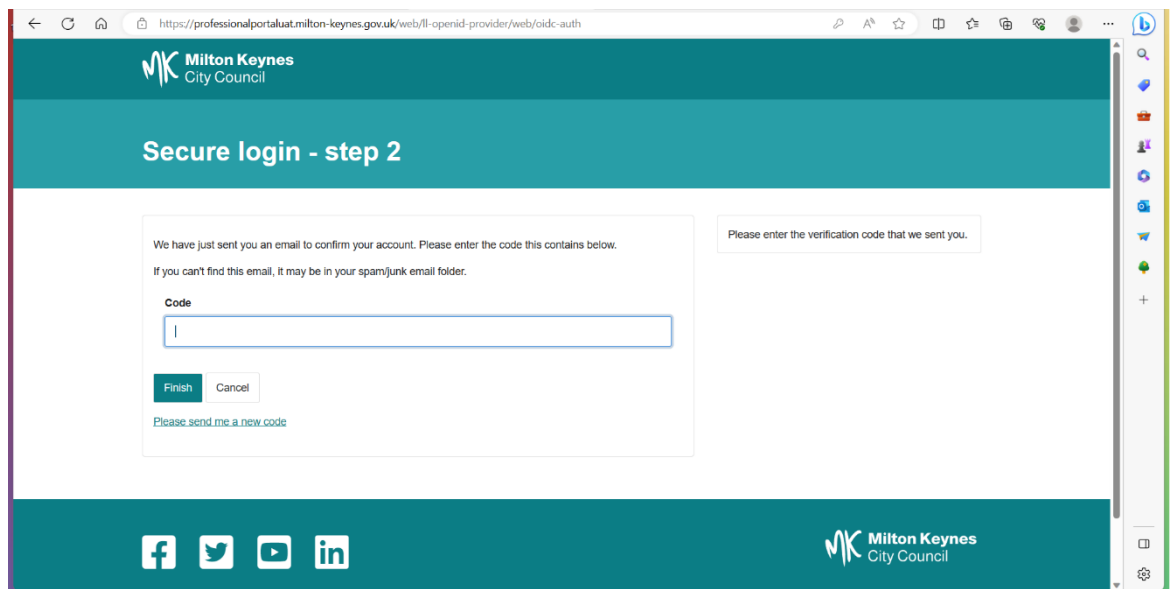


2. You will be taken to this screen - – if this is the first time you will need to create an account. Follow the register for an account link, otherwise log in with your email and password.

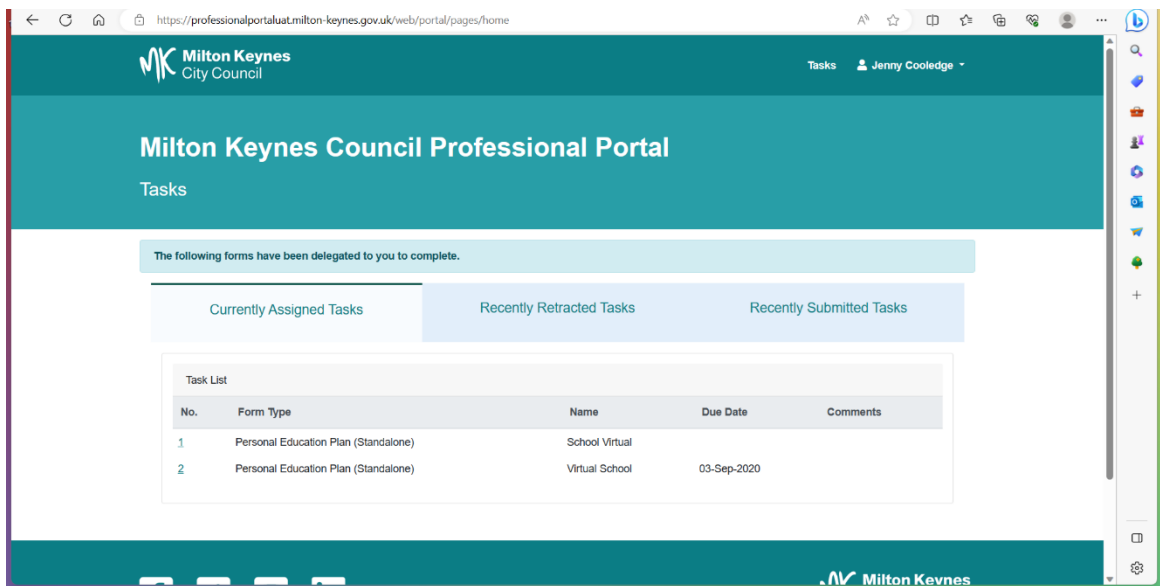


3. If you are not an existing user – please *click register for an account here* shown above and follow the prompts on screen.

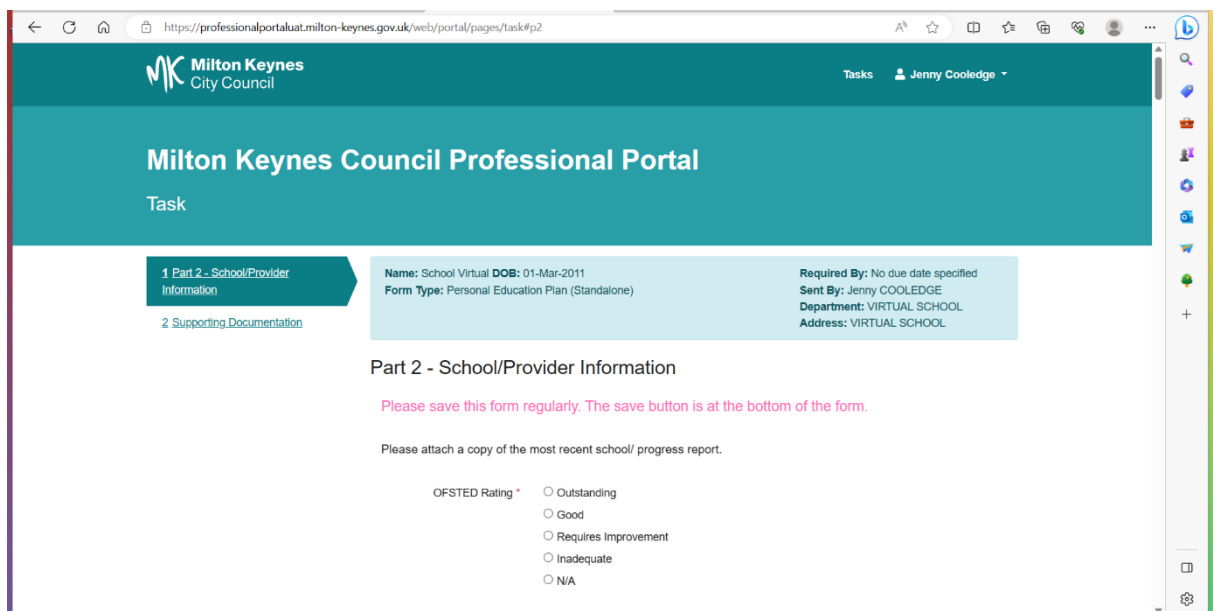
Once you add details you will be asked to verify your email address – you will be sent a number to your email which you will need to add into the form. Once this is completed you will be directed to your account. See image below.



4. Your home page of your account will show your tasks (*yours will show the name of the child or young person for this example our child is called Virtual School*).



5. Clicking on a task will take you to that task – for a PEP form – complete all the boxes as detailed below: **Please note it is advisable to save your work regularly.**



<https://professionalportaluat.milton-keynes.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/task#p2>

**Suspensions \***  
*Number of days and reasons if none, enter N/A*

Last SDQ score (completed by the School)

Timetable  Full time  
 Part time

Timetable attached?  Yes  
 No

Timetable details including number of hours attending   
*If in Nursery/Pre-school setting please provide details of when they attend*

SEN \*  EHCP  
 SEND Register  
 No SEND

EHCP Review date

Primary need

<https://professionalportaluat.milton-keynes.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/task#p2>

Is there an SEN Support Plan / IEP or similar document in place? If so, please attach a copy to this form.  Yes  
 No

Gifted and Talented Register  Yes  
 No

Details

Mental Health Lead at school/provider \*

Wellbeing/Mental Health intervention in place?  Yes  
 No

Details

Any concerns or worries

Have you sought the child/ young person's views prior to the meeting?  Yes  
 No

*Please attach any documents, present views at the meeting.*

6. Note that some sections apply to different phases/school types – please select as appropriate to the child or young person you are working with.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://professionalportaluat.milton-keynes.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/task#p2>. The form is titled "Curriculum level" and includes the following options:  Early Years Foundation Stage,  Primary,  Key Stage 3,  Key Stage 4,  Special School, and  Post 16. Below this, the "Secondary" section is active, containing two text input fields for "English" and "Exam board details". It also includes two radio button questions: "English - Grade 4 or above?" (with  Yes and  No) and "Is the young person making at least adequate progress?" (with  Yes and  No). The "Maths" section follows, with two text input fields for "Maths" and "Exam board details", and two radio button questions: "Maths - Grade 4 or above?" (with  Yes and  No) and "Is the young person making" (with  Yes and  No). The browser's address bar and various icons are visible at the top and right.

The screenshot shows the same web browser window with the URL <https://professionalportaluat.milton-keynes.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/task#p2>. The form includes the following sections: "Engagement/motivation" with a text input field; "Achievements - In education" with a text input field; "Achievements - Outside education" with a text input field and a note "Please discuss activities with child/careers"; "Homework" with a text input field; "Exam Concessions" with a radio button question "Have exam concessions been considered for this young person?" (with  Yes and  No); "Concerns" with a radio button question "Are there any concerns about the child's/young person's progress?" (with  Yes and  No); and a final text input field for "Are they able to persevere when the learning has a level of challenge?". The browser's address bar and various icons are visible at the top and right.

7. Targets should be SMART and where appropriate link clearly to use of Pupil Premium.

New / Previous	Target	Actions and Success criteria	Date to be reviewed	Linked to Pupil Premium F
Previous	I can spell the keywords correctly on three occasions, 1x daily	Help needed Use the Precision Teaching method to teach Kye to learn to read whole words on sight. Only give him 3 words to learn at a time. Once he has learnt those 3, introduce	11-02-2022	

8. Please select the appropriate button to identify whether the child or young person is eligible for Pupil Premium Plus. Pupil Premium Plus is available in most cases for children in reception to year 11, if you are unsure, please discuss during the PEP meeting. If eligible, the form will request that details of Pupil Premium Plus spending to date is provided, along with requests for funding for the next period. Up to £950 will be paid out per Core PEP, with £1900 available across the financial year. This section requests a full breakdown of how the funding should be used. Please also see the section on Pupil Premium Plus for more details.

Is the child eligible for Pupil Premium Plus Grant?  Yes  No

(Eligible year groups are Reception to Year 11 – please also see link to guidance below)  
<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/virtual-schools/virtual-school-guidance-and-documents>

Review of previous Pupil Premium Plus spending \*

Pupil Premium Plus impact to date \*

Improved engagement  
 Increased ability to regulate  
 Improved progress  
 Too early to assess impact  
 N/A (i.e. child/young person not eligible for Pupil Premium or not previously received)

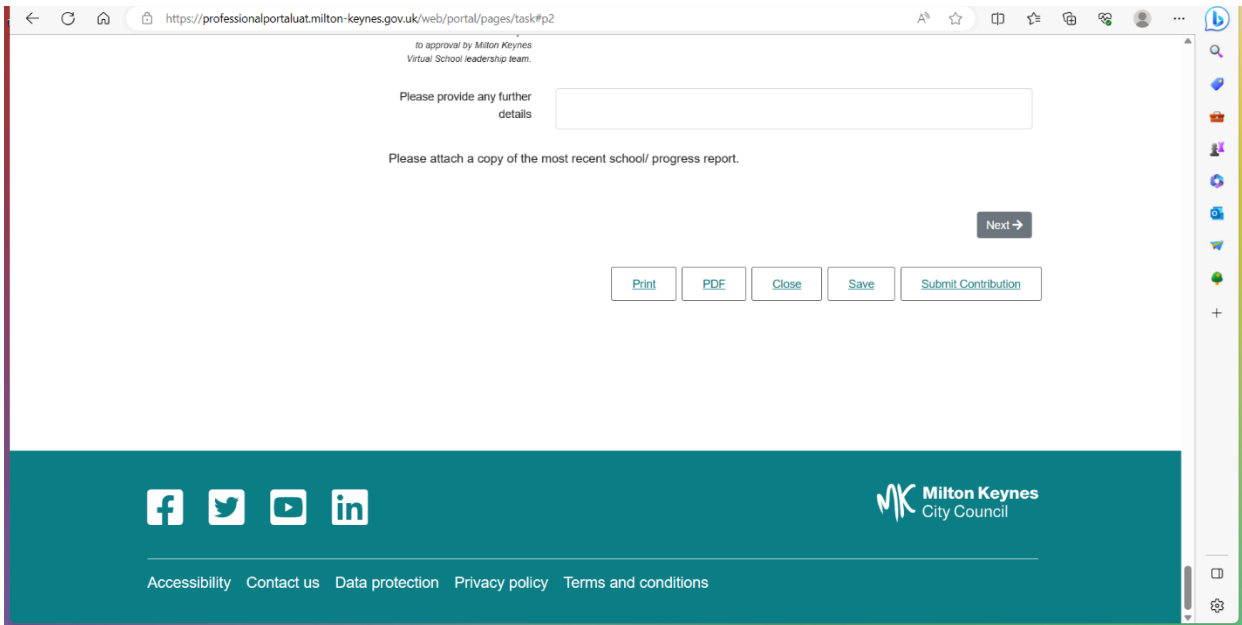
Please outline planned Pupil Premium Plus Grant use including a clear breakdown of costings

Please provide as much detail as possible

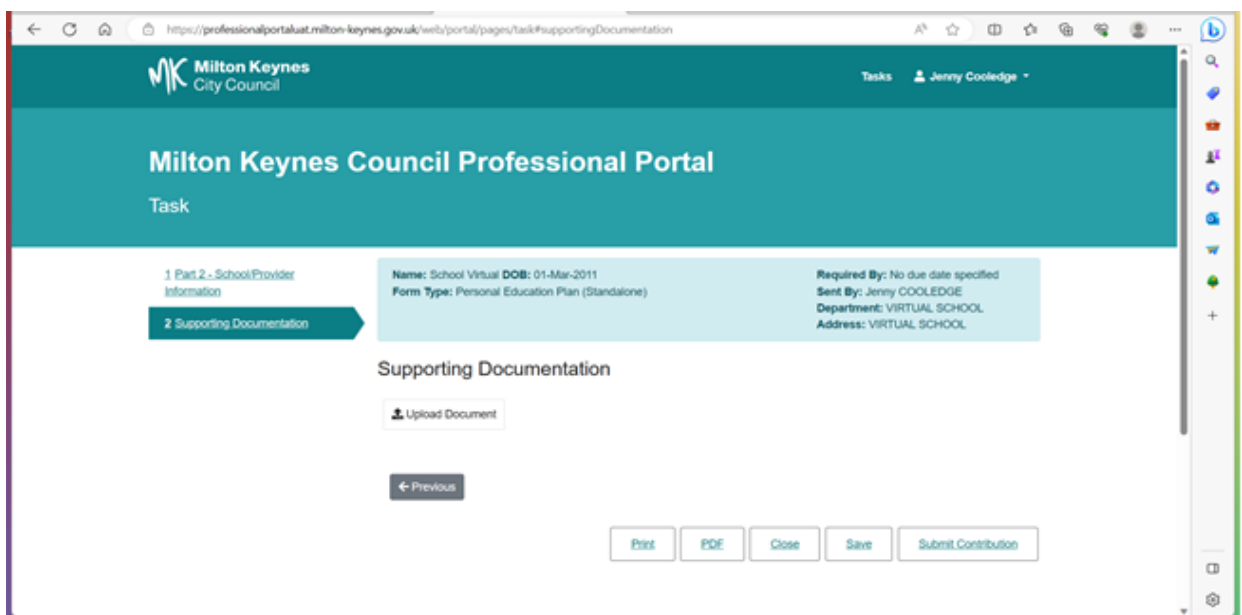
Amount requested

Up to £950 can be requested

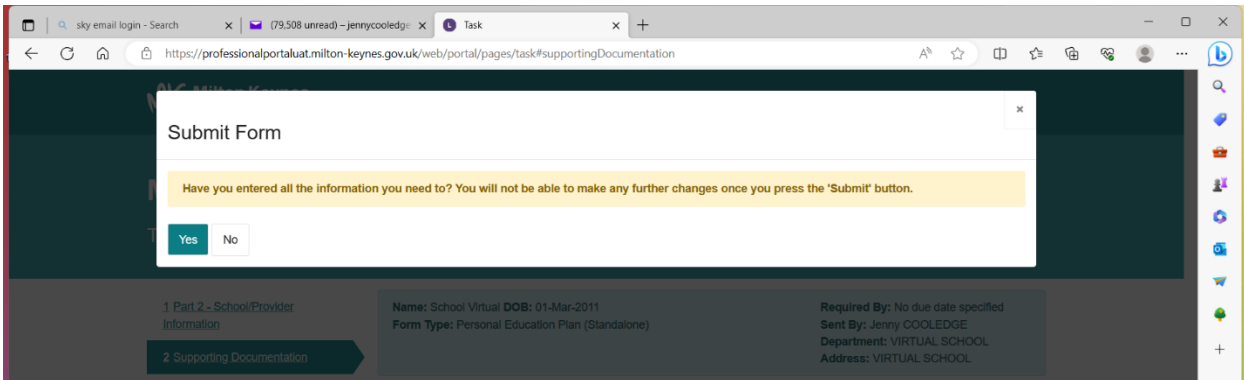
9. Please note prior to continuing and pressing 'Next' you can print or save to PDF the information you have provided – this could be useful for a school file or to have for your reference during the PEP meeting. You will receive a copy of the PEP after it has been quality assured by the Virtual School. This document will have all sections, including notes of the meeting, so a full account of the PEP can be held on the child or young person's file.



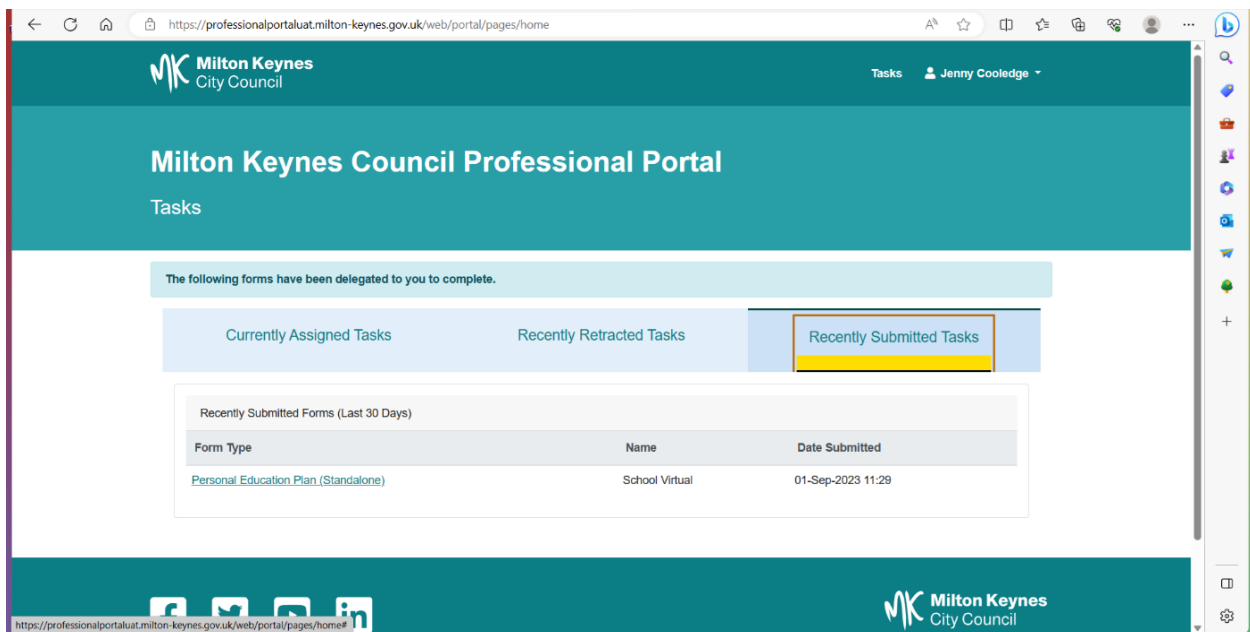
10. To upload supporting documentation once Part 1 is complete, select upload document. **We would expect termly reports to be presented at each PEP meeting** and these can be uploaded here for ease if not logged elsewhere. Additionally, if the child or young person is on the setting's SEND register, we would expect their most recent IEP to be uploaded to evidence the graduated response.



11. It may be useful to keep the PEP active to you until after the meeting is held so that you can add any further details as discussed at the meeting. The Virtual School will be able to view your input prior to you submitting fully. Please however ensure you save as you go to avoid losing anything. Following the PEP meeting you will need to select submit to fully complete your section, **this must be undertaken within 5 working days of the PEP meeting**. Failure to complete this section may result in Pupil Premium Plus funding being delayed or not allocated as well as escalation to the Virtual School Head for further action.



12. Once submitted you will be able to see your recently submitted tasks and will also receive a confirmation email.



### Milton Keynes PEP confirmation

Thank you for submitting a Milton Keynes PEP back to us via the [Milton Keynes City Council professional portal](#).

Many thanks,

Milton Keynes Virtual School

## Additional guidance for completing PEPs

- **Quality assurance** – Once submitted the PEP will be reviewed by either the Virtual School Head or Deputy Virtual School Head to ensure the PEP is of a high quality. If eligible, the approval process for Pupil Premium Plus (see details below) is also undertaken at this point.
- **Targets** – Targets set for children and young people should be SMART - **S- specific, M- measurable, A-achievable, R- relevant/ realistic, T-time-bound**. Please see Appendix 1 for more detail on SMART targets and a bank of example targets. Designated Teachers are responsible for considering appropriate SMART targets ahead of the PEP meeting, ensuring that these SMART targets are reflective of the provision for a child or young person's SEND, if appropriate. Targets on IEPs and EHCPs should be referenced and represented within PEP meetings. We recognise that there may be a wider group of school/college staff supporting our child or young person and if the Designated Teacher is not the most appropriate person within the setting to set the SMART targets, the views of the most appropriate educational professional should be sought ahead of the PEP meeting.
- **Facilitating child centred PEPs** - We would expect every effort to be made to include children and young people's views regarding their education and to involve them in the planning of their education in order that they get the support they need, they feel heard, and they are engaged in their education. Please see Appendix 2 for key questions, advice, and resources.



# Pupil Premium Plus Funding

The full Pupil Premium Plus Policy is on our website. Please note that Pupil Premium Plus funding is administered throughout the financial year rather than the academic year and therefore a child or young person's eligibility for funding may span their academic year and potentially their educational settings. An overview of the process is outlined below:

- Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children will be requested twice per financial year via the Core PEP process.
- Up to £950 will be paid per Core PEP. Requests will be detailed on the School Section (Part 2) of the PEP via the Milton Keynes Professional Portal.
- Funding will be approved by the VSH/DVSH so long as both the request and the PEP meet the criteria outlined in the policy. These can be summarised as follows:
  - The PEP is a high-quality written representation of the child's current educational situation.
  - Funding use links directly to the needs of the individual child and is underpinned by well informed (through assessment and school data) targeted support.
  - Clear, SMART targets are in place to monitor progress and the impact of Pupil Premium Plus use.

Pupil Premium Plus use should be **ambitious** and **aspirational** and should focus on:

- Targeted academic support as well as wider strategies which may impact on academic progress, such as:
  - Attendance
  - Behaviour
  - Social skills
  - Wellbeing and emotional support
  - Promoting inclusion (by reducing internal and external suspension)
  - Supporting transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider

# Attendance Monitoring Arrangements

We have a statutory responsibility to monitor the attendance of our looked after children. To do this, we commission a company called Welfare Call to undertake this data collection on our behalf. Our preferred method of collecting this data is via data extraction and Welfare Call will liaise with your Data and Attendance teams to efficiently collect this data.

In line with our responsibility to promote improved educational outcomes for all children with a social worker we also currently monitor the attendance of children on Child Protection Plans and those supported by the Contextual Safeguarding Team. We have commissioned a company called Asset for Schools to collect the data on our behalf. The data collection provider is anticipated to be changing during the autumn term 2024 in line with the Milton Keynes City Council response to the requirements of Working Together to Improve School Attendance. All Milton Keynes Schools and settings will receive detailed communication about this once it has been agreed.

Research has identified a range of contributing 'risk' factors to EBSA. West Sussex EPS (2018), Thambirajah et al (2008) and Staffordshire EPS (2020) note that it is often a combination or predisposing factors (in school, family and/or child) interacting with a change of circumstances that leads to EBSA behaviours. These risk factors are more likely to be present for LAC, PLAC and Children with a Social Worker, hence the need for careful monitoring, preventative measures and early intervention when things go wrong.

Guidance on tackling Emotionally Based School Avoidance for both schools and parents and carers is available here [Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) | Milton Keynes City Council \(mksendlocaloffer.co.uk\)](https://www.mksendlocaloffer.co.uk/emotionally-based-school-avoidance)

## Attainment data collection and examination results

**Providing attainment data** - We collect attainment and progress in a number of ways throughout the year. We have a role to monitor this information for looked after children and the information provided on the PEP forms is important to allow us to work together with settings to promote the best outcomes for our children and young people as well as act as informed corporate parents. We would expect that academic progress data is reported fully, for all subjects studied, on every Core PEP form completed. Additionally, we also gather this information at key points through the year via an external contractor; Welfare Call collect our attainment data at 3 points in the year (Autumn, Spring and Summer).

**KS4 and KS5 exam results** – we would like to help support our young people once they receive their results. Sometimes translating the results they receive can be tricky and we are often working with tight deadlines for the start of the new academic year. Please ensure that your Data teams are

aware of your CLA cohort and that they are ready to share KS4 and KS5 results with the Virtual School on results day. Arrangements for sharing results will be communicated in the summer term but if in any doubt, please email the VSH – [Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk).

## **Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance**

When a child is taken into the care of the local authority, every effort should be made to support them to achieve their potential in education. This responsibility is shared by all adults who work with the child and as such, all partners should do everything possible to ensure that all children we care for are never permanently excluded and that suspensions are avoided. Permanent exclusion and suspensions for a child in care is not a comparable consequence as for a child living with their family; the consequence can potentially be loss of their home, not just their education setting. Additionally, for children with a social worker, education is an important protective factor, providing a safe space to access support, be visible to professionals and realise their potential. For these reasons, and in line with DfE guidance, we ask that headteachers should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil who is a looked after child and carefully consider whether a potential suspension could be managed in a way which avoids disrupting their attendance to school.

Where a school has a concern about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion/suspension, of a looked after child, it should, in partnership with others (including the local authority as necessary), consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. This should involve consideration as to whether the child has an unmet SEND. Schools should engage proactively with parents, foster carers or children's home workers, the local authority that looks after the child and the Virtual School Head. Through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process, all professionals should look to develop and implement flexible and creative approaches to address behaviours that are causing difficulties.

Strategies to support a reduction in suspensions or risk of permanent exclusion may include:

- Regular mentoring with an identified key person in the school setting
- Academic monitoring and interventions
- Behaviour reports
- Incentives to reinforce positive progress
- Personalised timetable
- Increased frequency of professional meetings to review progress, targets and strategies
- Assessment of suspected barriers to progress and identification of unmet SEND
- Collaboration with alternative providers to provide additional support
- Partnership arrangements with other schools
- Informing the child, parents and carers and professionals of potential external support

Further information can be found in the DfE Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff (February 2024) - [Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The Virtual School would ask that the following is always considered when deciding on whether to suspend a looked after child:

- Have reasonable adjustments been made for this child?
- Is there any reason to consider assessing the child for unrecognised SEND?
- Will the child be impacted by a change in routine or setting which will cause difficulties to their reintegration?
- Have the child's views been encouraged, heard and recorded?
- Does the child have any needs that may have impacted on their ability to provide their views? If so, were these needs considered and were any steps taken to ensure that they were best able to provide their view?
- Could the suspension be completed on-site rather than at home/placement?
- If the child has an EHCP, has the SEND case worker been contacted and has an interim annual review been called?
- Were the EHCP strategies followed in full prior to the exclusion. If not, was the deviation from the EHCP relevant to their behaviour leading to the exclusion?

DfE guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units (August 2024) can be found here - [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

This guidance outlines the contact that should be made where a child is at risk or subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion and can be summarised as follows:

- Where a child has a social worker e.g., because they are the subject of a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, the headteacher must inform their social worker, and the child's parents or carers, without delay after their decision. This is in addition to notifying parents.
- ***Where a child is looked after, the Headteacher must contact the social worker and Virtual School Head, without delay after their decision. As relevant, the school should also engage with the child's foster carers or children's home workers.***
- Where a child is previously looked after, the school should engage with the child's parents or carers and the school's designated teacher. The school may also seek advice from the Virtual School on strategies to support the child.

Schools must never have an unofficial arrangement where a child is not allowed on the school site. "Informal" or "unofficial" exclusions, such as sending a child home to "cool off" are unlawful, even if they occur with the agreement of parents or carers. All suspensions must be formally recorded.

Information sharing is vital in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, including their educational outcomes. Whenever a headteacher suspends or permanently excludes a child who has

a social worker, they must, without delay, after their decision has been communicated to parents or carers, also notify the social worker. Whenever a headteacher suspends or permanently excludes a looked after child, they must, without delay, notify the social worker and Virtual School Head. The information outlined in paragraphs 66-69 in the Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance (DfE 2024) must be provided in writing to the local authority. Additionally, both the social worker and/or the Virtual School Head must be informed when a governing board meeting is taking place, in order to share information as both are able to attend the meeting should they wish to do so.

Following a suspension, a school should support a child to reintegrate successfully into school-life and full-time education. Ideally the reintegration strategy would offer a child a fresh start, an opportunity to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others, building engagement with learning and a fostering of a renewed sense of belonging in the school community. The strategy should be communicated at the reintegration meeting and in the case of looked after children, the Virtual School Head should be invited to contribute to this collaborative process.

Part-time timetables should not be used to manage a child's behaviour and must only be in place for the shortest time necessary. Any pastoral support programme of other agreement should have a time limit by which the child is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. These arrangements for looked after children must always be in agreement with the looked after child's social worker and Virtual School Head.

## **Virtual School Activities**

As a Virtual School, we want to ensure that our children and young people have access to as many opportunities as possible and as well as supporting the opportunities offered within education settings, we offer additional aspirational options. Previously we have facilitated events such as an Opportunities Fair, promoting attendance to the CIC Council as well as supporting opportunities for advocacy. This is a constantly evolving landscape and we will provide regular updates throughout the academic year via our website, Designated Teacher communications and forums.

It is imperative that all of the work we do with our children and young people is aspirational and supports them to achieve their potential. If you would like discuss potential opportunities then please contact your Virtual School Officer for an initial conversation.

## Previously Looked-After Children

Virtual School have a role to support previously looked after children in an advice and guidance capacity. We can support educational settings as well as parents and carers, however we do not hold a central list of these children and therefore any support required needs to be requested. We are happy to speak with schools and education providers on a hypothetical basis to provide broad advice. Similarly, in line with new statutory responsibilities, we can also offer advice and guidance to Kinship carers (and the professionals supporting these families) regardless of whether the child was ever in the care of a local authority. More specific and detailed support requires consent from those with Parental Responsibility. Please see Appendix 4 – consent and referral form.

Working with this group of children and young people and the adults around them is a lot like working on a jigsaw puzzle and sometimes requires us to gather up the pieces and bring them together. Our approach and involvement can vary therefore from case to case. Our advice would be to seek support as soon as possible as despite being placed with long term families, the early experiences of a child can continue to have an impact.

## Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Looked-After Children

The Virtual School do not hold Pupil Premium for previously looked after children. Schools need to ensure that these children are recorded on their Census and will receive funding directly. Please see the following links for further information:

[Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

In relation to Pupil Premium Plus for previously looked after children the Designated Teacher should:

- ensure adoptive parents and guardians are aware that they can declare their child eligible for pupil premium and work with them to understand their setting's published Pupil Premium Strategy and how this will be deployed to make a positive difference to their child.
- consult the Virtual School on how to use the funding effectively, where appropriate
- be familiar with their setting's Pupil Premium Strategy as they will be the main contact for queries about how pupil premium funding is being used to support previously looked-after children.

# Support for Designated Teachers

MK Virtual School are keen to support DTs to undertake their roles in supporting both looked after and previously looked after children as well as other children and young people who may have similar experiences (such as children who have or have had social care involvement).

**DT Forums** – These free sessions are facilitated, half termly, by colleagues in the Virtual School. They provide an opportunity for designated teachers to share good practice and support one another, at the same time as receiving training and information from the Virtual School team. Designated teachers are the intended audience – but other school staff are welcome to attend if this would be helpful (for example: Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) or Heads of Year).

Dates of DT Forums can be found on the [MKCC Virtual School webpage](#).

**DT Newsletters** - You will also receive a half termly newsletter from the Virtual School with key information, reminders as well as useful advice and guidance to support you in your roles.

## Training/CPD

**Training** - Virtual School are able to deliver bespoke training sessions including whole school training. Please contact us to discuss your requirements in more detail. We also have training packages which we have externally commissioned which can be utilised in INSET and/or twilight training sessions.

Additionally, we offer access to online short courses through AC Education. Please contact us to arrange licences to access these. We ask that you sign up for one course at a time, but if you are interested in more than one topic feel free to get back in touch and this can be arranged. The full offer of available courses can be reviewed here: [Children Services Training Online - AC Education \(ac-education.co.uk\)](#)

Additionally, the team at MK Virtual School are able to provide bespoke training to education settings to support and enhance the academic progress of our children and young people. Please contact the Virtual School Head or Deputy Virtual School Head to discuss further.

Training for governors in Milton Keynes education settings is available via Milton Keynes City Council Governor Traded Services. More information can be found here: [Training & Events | MKPDP - Milton Keynes Professional Development Portal](#)

# Glossary

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Adoptive placement	Placement with potential adopters prior to adoption being finalised
CCR	Child Care Review
CIC	Child In Care
CLA	Child Looked After
CO	Care Order
DT	Designated Teacher
Duty	Duty phone covered by social worker normally on a rota basis.
DV	Domestic Violence
EYFS	Early Years and Foundation Stage
FAST	Family Assessment and Support Team
FC	Foster Carer
FCO	Full Care Order
FSM	Family Support Meeting
FSM	Free School Meals
ICO	Interim Care Order
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PP/ Ever 6 PP	Pupil Premium attracted by those previously eligible for free school meals now or in the previous 6 years.
PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
PR	Parental Responsibility
RO	Residence Order
S20	Accommodated under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. Parents retain primary responsibility with the Local Authority acting as a corporate parent. A person with Parental Responsibility can remove a child from Local Authority Accommodation at any time without giving notice.
S44/ Section 44	An Emergency Protection Order is sometimes issued in an urgent situation where a child is suffering from, or is likely to suffer from, harm or abuse and is a temporary arrangement pending an Interim Care Order hearing.
SEND	Special Education Need and Disability
SGO	Special Guardianship Order
SW	Social Worker
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound



# APPENDIX 1: Guidance for ensuring all PEP targets are SMART

## What are SMART targets?

Termly PEP targets should be thought of as smaller steps to support the child or young person to achieve longer term targets and secure academic progress. Consider what the initial goal is for the child or young person and then work your way through the questions below to form a SMART target.

### **Specific**

Is this specific to the child or young person and their needs? What specific skills or knowledge need to be acquired within the curriculum or targeted area? Who needs to be included? Why is this a goal?

### **Measurable**

How can you measure progress towards this target? How are you going to be able to demonstrate success?

### **Achievable**

Does the child or young person have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, how can they be supported? What is the motivation for achieving this goal? Is the amount of effort required for the child or young person in proportion to what the goal will achieve?

### **Realistic**

Will the child or young person be able to achieve this goal? Will they be able to celebrate a success by their next PEP meeting?

### **Time-bound**

What is the deadline and is it realistic? Will this target be achieved in time for the next PEP meeting?

## Example Smart Targets

### **Early Years SMART Targets**

- *We want the child to know their colours* - I will be observed on 4 out of 5 occasions to successfully sort the primary colours, red, blue and yellow, into the correct boxes during a two week period.
- *We want the child to be potty trained* – With the support of my key worker I will use the potty, flush and wash my hands on 2 out of 3 occasions.
- *We want the child to not hit other children* – I will develop positive peer relationships whilst sharing by using kind hands and feet on 2 out of 3 occasions during each nursery session.

### **Primary SMART Targets**

- *We want the child to be more confident in lessons and access the tasks set but this is being impeded by early experiences* - X will continue to need access to art therapy when we return

to school Sept 2020, to help them to be able to understand and articulate their feelings about their early life experiences. This will be measured by an increase in task completion in lessons where currently 0 tasks are completed due to anxiety being a barrier.

### **Secondary SMART Targets**

- *We want the young person to become more confident in Maths* – I will develop my skill set in Geometry and Measures and I will be able to apply the formula for finding the area of a triangle when I am given the perpendicular height and base. I will score 40% in my November Shape homework.
- *We want the young person to focus and improve in English* – I will improve my ability to discuss Shakespeare's work by revising the key theme of love in Twelfth Night. I will do this by revising using GCSE Pod and working with my English mentor. I will be able to write about why Viola keeps her love for Orsino secret and memorise two quotations to show this. I will demonstrate success by achieving a grade 5 in my English mock exam in November.
- *We want the young person to not lose their temper* - To begin to recognise feelings of restlessness, frustration or anger and take yourself away from the situation by accessing the regulation station 50% of the time by April 2022, and 60% of the time by June 2022. Supported by the funded 1:1 teaching assistant.
- *We want the young person to have no further exclusions* – To access the Student Centre during breaktime every day and share a positive from the previous day with your mentor. To identify three successes every week with your mentor during your Friday mentor session.

### **Post-16 SMART Targets**

- *We want the young person to complete their BTEC Unit 10 assignment* – To complete the Unit 10 Health and Social Care assignment I need to write up my observations from the work placement at the nursery to demonstrate that I know what is meant by 'person-centred' or 'child-centred' practice. This will be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> October.
- *We want the young person to pass their GCSE Maths resit* – To prepare for the GCSE Maths resit on 25<sup>th</sup> May I need to be able to calculate a percentage discount using monetary values and revise fractions and percentages. I will use BBC Skillswise tasks as well as continue to attend extracurricular Maths support sessions this term.
- *We want the young person to improve their attendance* – This term I will be on time to 90% of my lessons.

### **SEND SMART Targets**

- *We want the child to improve their concentration* - X will be encouraged to persevere with an adult led task for 10 minutes, using a now and next board and a digital timer. He will be encouraged to move cards to demonstrate when sections of the task have been completed and to regularly check the timer for progress. X will be rewarded if still engaged and focus has been maintained when the timer bleeps.
- *We want the child to use a specific programme to support their learning in Maths* - X will be able to access the MathsWatch resources independently and increase their Maths grade. They will access the resources on the website and will use the in-built assessment tools to monitor progress. A weekly 1:1 session with a TA will monitor use of the software and oversee the assessment data. X's carer has bought a tablet and the school have agreed to provide the software.

- *We want the child to be able to express their thoughts verbally* – When the teacher is going to ask the class to think, pair, share their ideas, X will be partnered with a teaching assistant who will be given a visual clue that the teacher is about to use the technique. The TA will then take X outside of the classroom and have the discussion in a quiet area. This could eventually be developed so that a peer joins them outside of the classroom and the TA facilitates the discussion.

## APPENDIX 2: Facilitating child centred PEPs

We would like to gather children and young people's views regarding their education and to involve them in the planning of their education in order that they get the support they need, feel heard and are engaged in their education.

We know that the trusted adults who work with them most are best placed to have these conversations. We want to ensure that our approach to gathering their views meets their needs, age, level and reflects them individually.

We have therefore developed this document as a prompt for adults to gather views in whatever form the child or young person would like to feed into their Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. This could be answering key questions and sharing a photo of a favourite piece of work. It could be photos of the child or young person undertaking a favourite activity – particularly useful if their needs are such that communication challenges would prevent them from communicating this in another format.

It would also be useful to gauge ahead of the meeting whether they would like to attend their meeting and for plans to be made to facilitate this. They could attend for a part of the meeting if this was more appropriate.

### Early Years

Where appropriate ask the child to identify:

What they enjoy

What is tricky for them

Favourite books and rhymes

Who are their key adults?

To draw a picture of themselves at nursery – perhaps an adult can discuss the drawing or artwork and annotate to explain what different parts are.

Photos to show child's favoured activities may also be useful depending on age and stage.



**Primary**

Again, dependent on age and stage:

What do you enjoy?

What have you enjoyed learning about this week?

What do you find trickier?

What would you like more help with?

Who helps you at school?

Do you feel safe at school?

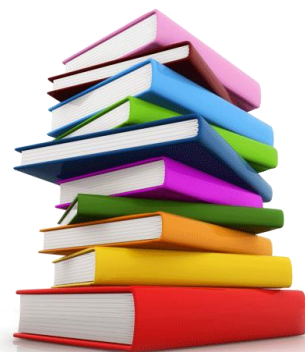
Do you have a favourite subject/ book/ activity?

What do you do out of school?

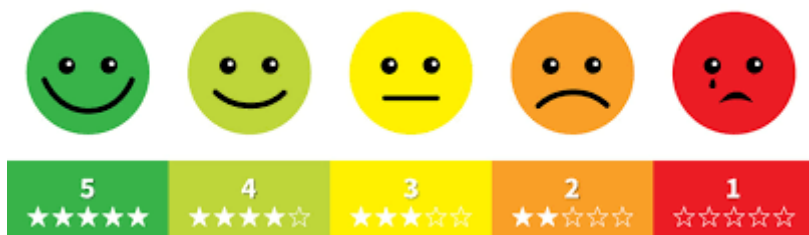
What would you like to be when you grow up?

Is there anything you would like us to know?

Is there anything you think you need that you do not have?



Think about the things school do to help you (trusted adults may need to provide specific examples/ adapt this question accordingly and think about what has been put in place using Pupil Premium Plus to allow us to look at impact). How would you rate the activities/interventions/ extra help put in place? Please encourage any comments.



Comments/ drawing space....

## Secondary

What is working well at school?

What subjects do you enjoy the most? Do you have a favourite and why?

Are there any subjects you do not like? Can you tell us why?

Are there any subjects you would like any additional help with?

Who are the adults in school you can go to if you need help with anything?

Future plans – provide an opportunity to think about option choices/ next steps after 16/ plans for the future (depending on age).

What do you do out of school?

Is there anything that could be done differently that would help you?

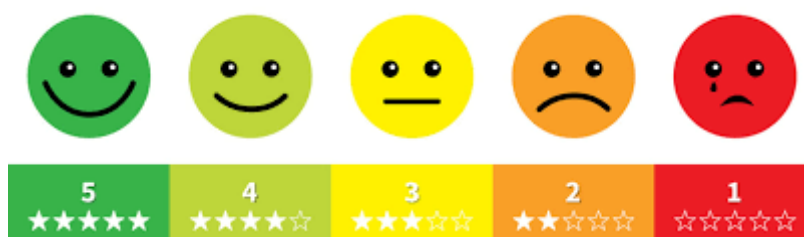
Do you feel safe at school?

Is there anything you would like us to know?

Is there anything you think you need that you do not have?



Think about the things school do to help you (trusted adults may need to provide specific examples/ adapt this question accordingly and think about what has been put in place using Pupil Premium Plus to allow us to look at impact). How would you rate the activities/interventions/ extra help put in place? Please encourage any comments.



Comments/ drawing space....

### Post 16

What is currently working well in education?

What are you enjoying?

Anything you do not enjoy as much?

Anything you would like extra help with?

Have you got people you are able to go to for support if needed?

Future plans – what are your next steps? Plans for the future. What are your future goals/carers/areas of interests? What are your aspirations? For example go to University/complete an apprenticeship? What are your magic wand type dreams?

What do you do outside of Education? Do you work part time? Are you seeking part time work? *(Also consider wider opportunities/ activities – clubs, groups, volunteering).*

Is there anything that could be done differently that would help you?

Is there anything you would like us to know?

Is there anything you think you need that you do not have?



### Special School

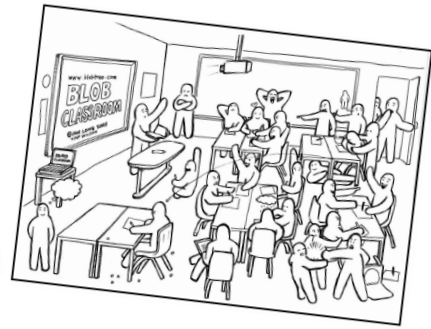
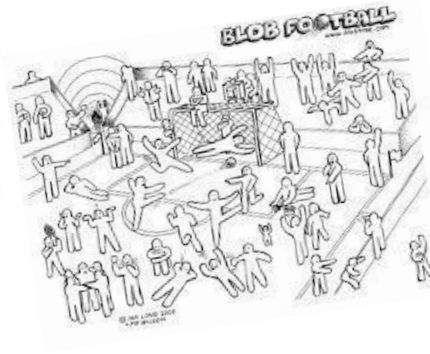
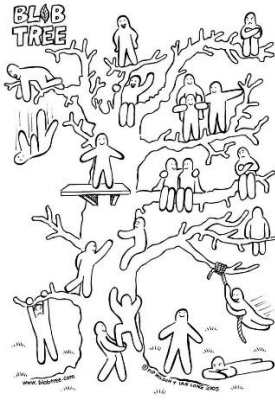
Feel free to use any communication tools ordinarily used by the child/ young person for example PECS.

Provide photos or use age and stage questions from those listed above as appropriate to the individual needs. This can be supported as needed, for example scribed or annotated.

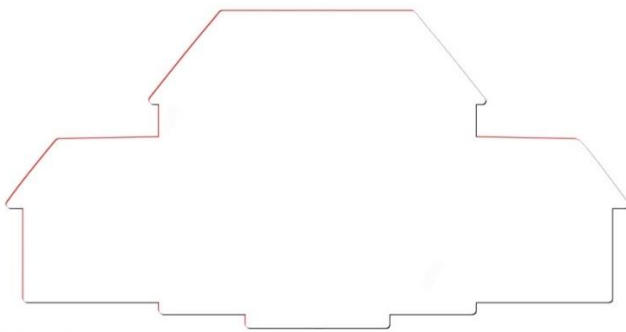


**Other ways and ideas to capture views and instigate conversations to input into the PEP.**

### Blob Trees

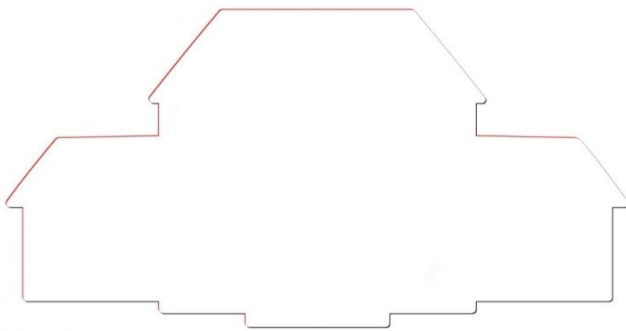


**3 Schools**



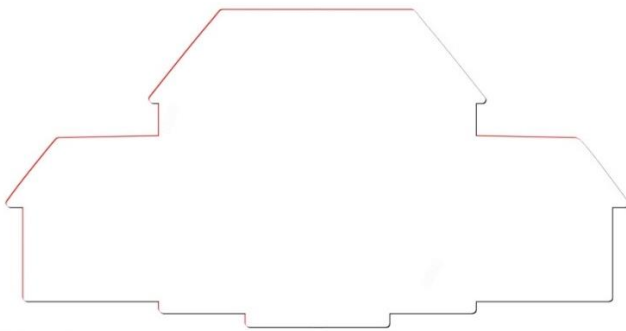
HOK

School of worries



HOK

School of good things



HOK

School of dreams



# APPENDIX 3: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – A Guide for Schools

## Introduction

'Promoting The Education of Looked-After Children and Previously-Looked After Children' (Feb 2018) outlines that the Virtual School Headteacher should work with Designated Teachers to ensure that schools are able to identify signs of potential mental health issues and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary. This is in line with Government advice for Designated Teachers (see Paragraphs 56 and 57 of the statutory guidance for Designated Teachers), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>, which states that:

*'Designated teachers should put in place robust arrangements to complete their element of the SDQ and engage with the relevant VSH and, where the school has one, the officer responsible for links with mental health services regarding this. Designated teachers should use the results of the SDQ to help inform the child's PEP'.*

## What is an SDQ?

*The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for 4-17 year olds. It exists in several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists. Further information and questionnaires for different age ranges and professional use can be found on the Youth in Mind SDQ website [sdqinfo.org/a0.html](http://sdqinfo.org/a0.html)*

It can be used as follows:

- As a screening tool to assist in ensuring the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of looked-after children are being met
- As a questionnaire with a rating between 0-40, where a rating of 17+ is regarded as an indicator that further follow-up may be necessary

It should not be used:

- As a sophisticated, free standing, quantitative psychological/psychiatric/psychometric tool
- As a threshold to be met to qualify for services. Children with SDQ scores below 17 may still have significant emotional wellbeing and mental health needs

## Context

Currently the *minimum* requirement is for an SDQ to be completed for looked-after children after for one year in care and annually thereafter. The completion of SDQs and the average score of a Local Authority's looked after children is a key performance indicator.

All looked-after children who have been looked after (in care for a year or longer and are aged between 4 and 16yrs old) must have an SDQ completed on them by:

- Their carers, typically, foster carers or carers in residential homes at the request of their social workers who record the outcomes and act on them. This should include sharing with professional networks
- A teacher or member of support staff at their school/education setting, typically their Designated Teacher

Additionally, looked-after children can complete their own SDQs to provide additional information for discussions by professionals.

### What are the benefits of completing the SDQ?

The SDQ provides a means of regularly measuring the emotional and behavioural experiences of looked-after children and supports the professional network to form a view about a looked after child or young person's (CYP's) emotional wellbeing. Regular review enables the network around the child and young person to act earlier to put in place appropriate support to minimise these needs.

### Completing the SDQ

#### *Who should complete the SDQ?*

The SDQ needs to be completed by someone who knows the child or young person well and has regular contact with them. Ideally this would be someone who has had regular weekly contact for at least six months but preferably longer. The Virtual School recognise that this may be more challenging where there have been recent changes to settings. The Designated Teacher does not have to fill out the SDQ themselves but is responsible for identifying the most appropriate staff member to complete it, and ensuring it is completed. It is crucial that the person completing the SDQ is not basing their answers on a specific day but rather over a period of time otherwise the results may not provide an accurate reflection of the child or young person's needs.

#### *How to complete the Teacher SDQ?*

The Teacher SDQ will be completed electronically via the MK Professional Portal. This will ensure the results are added to the child or young person's records and allow for triangulation of scores.

The Teacher SDQ must be completed in advance of each Core PEP (twice per academic year).

Should it be necessary to delegate completing the SDQ form to another member of staff, a paper version is available *on the Youth in Mind SDQ website* [sdqinfo.org/a0.html](http://sdqinfo.org/a0.html). Alternatively, please ask your Virtual School Officer to provide a copy. Please note, the responsibility for completing the electronic form remains with the Designated Teacher. Scanned copies of the paper form will not be accepted.

To prepare for discussion at the PEP meeting, the following questions may be helpful to consider:

1. Are there any concerns (high/very high) in any areas?
  - What may be contributing to this?

- What is already in place that is supporting the CYP's mental health and wellbeing?
- How do we know if this is making a difference?
- What else can be put in place to support these needs?

Please note: Targets and support should focus on the root cause of difficulties. For example, consider whether difficulties with concentration and attention may be related to the CYP finding it difficult to settle to learning due to their emotional needs, rather than an underlying attention difficulty? If this is the case, targets and support need to focus on the emotional needs.

2. What other information does the network have about the CYPs emotional wellbeing? For example, but not limited to:
  - Foster Carer and Young Person SDQ if available;
  - Round Robin teacher views regarding CYP's emotional wellbeing and presentation across school;
  - In house systems for assessing CYP's wellbeing;
  - Information from other professionals involved with the CYP.
3. Is there a clear understanding of the CYP's areas of strength and difficulties in relation to their emotional wellbeing? If not, what needs to happen / what information needs to be gathered, and from whom, in order to develop this understanding?
4. Does the information gathered from a range of sources 'fit' with what the SDQ results are indicating? Do you need to find out any more information in a particular area to further explore this?
5. Are there any differences between what different sources of information are telling you? If so:
  - What may have led to these differences?
  - Consider whether the CYP presents differently in different contexts.
  - If so, what do we know about when they are managing well? How can we apply what is working well in one context to another context?
  - Does the person who completed the SDQ only see them in particular types of situations? Is this representative of their presentation and behaviour more generally?
6. What are the CYP's views about their own social, emotional and mental health needs?
  - What are their main concerns? What do they think might support them?
  - How can we take their views into consideration when identifying targets / strategies?

Schools and educational settings may also wish to complete an SDQ in other situations:

- When the child or young person's situation has changed e.g. carer, school etc. to evaluate whether this has had a positive or negative effect
- At the start and end of a planned intervention
- To quantify concerns
- As part of an application for statutory SEND assessments

Please do contact the appropriate Virtual School Officer to request that an SDQ assessment is delegated to you via the MK Professional Portal if you wish to complete an additional SDQ.

### What are the next steps once the SDQ is complete?

During the PEP meeting, it may be helpful to consider the following questions:

- Are there any trigger points that can be foreseen that may impact the CYP's mental health and wellbeing (e.g. anniversary of significant events i.e. coming into care, parent or sibling birthday; transitions; exams; change in contact arrangement; sensitive curriculum topics etc.)?
- What additional support can be put in place in relation to these trigger points?
- Does the CYP have a trusted adult in school who they are aware that they can talk to about their emotional wellbeing and seek support / be signposted to additional support if needed?
- What additional support is available that might be appropriate for this CYP? e.g. school nurse/in-school pastoral support/key person/mentoring/extracurricular activities/group work targeting a specific area e.g. self-esteem; social skills; understanding and managing emotions etc.?
- Do current interventions/support need to be adapted in terms of frequency/length/group composition/contexts/target setting and/or progress monitoring?
- Does the child or young person need further consultation with appropriate professionals?

***Please note that if a child or young person is at immediate risk/experiencing a mental health crisis, you should follow your school guidance and liaise with their Social Worker. This may involve attending A&E immediately.***

# APPENDIX 4: Consent for support for Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) form

## Milton Keynes Virtual School Support for Previously Looked After Children

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the role of the Virtual School to offer advice, information and guidance to schools and families of children who are previously looked after following a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), Child Arrangements Order (CAO) and an Adoption Order (AO). Please use the form below to refer.

### Referrer (X):

School		Parent/ Carer		Children's Services	
--------	--	---------------	--	---------------------	--

### Child's Details:

Name of Child			
Year Group			
Adoption Order / SGO / CAO		Date:	
Placing Local Authority			

### School Information:

School Name	
Key Contact	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	

**Family's Details:**

Name of Parent(s)/ carer	
Telephone Number	
Best time to call	

Brief outline of issue to be addressed:

We collect and use information about you so that we can provide you with education services under Children and Social Worker Act 2017 legislation. Full details about how we use this data and the rights you have around this can be found at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/privacy)

If you have any data protection queries, please contact the Data Protection Officer at [data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Name:

Relationship to child/young person:

Signed:

DATE:



**Milton Keynes**  
City Council