



Suffolk Virtual School
Real outcomes for our children



Suffolk Virtual College
Real outcomes for our young people

Suffolk Virtual School and College

Autumn Term 2025 newsletter

Welcome back to those who have previously worked with our Virtual School and a big welcome to those who are new to working with us.

We hope you all are rested after the summer break; we look forward to working with you this year.

This is the first of three termly newsletters that we will send to keep you up to date of key information, training opportunities and dates relating to our cohorts.

Summer 2025 results for Suffolk Children in Care

As ever, we are very pleased with the attainment results for our children for the last academic year. At all stages – from Foundation to Key Stage 5 – there is lots to celebrate about our children's outcomes.

In summary:

Foundation, Key Stages 1 and 2

Against national comparators, Suffolk's Children in Care performed well in all early years and primary attainment measures, with particularly strong results in early development, phonics, and greater depth in maths.

In Key Stage 2, Suffolk Children in Care performed strongly in maths (greater depth) and reading (average scaled score).

Key Stages 4 and 5

There were some fantastic individual results for young people at Key Stage 4 and 5. At Key Stage 5 all young people with university offers have secured a place. Our validated results will be in our Annual Report later this term.

Thank you very much for sharing the results on results day; it meant that we have been able to celebrate the successes of our young people with them.



Raising attainment

Having analysed the attainment of our cohort, we have identified the following areas which will be the focus of our targeted attainment discussions with you.

- Early Years: To increase the number of children achieving expected standard in the following areas – Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional development and Literacy development
- Year 1: To increase the number of children achieving the top band (37-40) in the Phonics screening
- Year 6: To increase the number of children achieving at least expected standard in maths
- GCSE: To increase the number of children achieving 9-4 in maths

How can we improve the attainment of our Children in Care?

We would ask that you consider these areas, where relevant, in relation to the Suffolk Children in Care that you work with and think about how their termly plans and pupil premium funding can be used to maximise their outcomes.

As you will see below, our first DT session this term will focus on raising the attainment of Children in Care. Strategies to maximise each child's outcomes will include DESTY and maths tuition.

Virtual School Professional Development for DTs, DSLs and link Governors/Trustees

We are pleased to publish our professional development sessions for this academic year.

In addition to our regular virtual sessions via Teams, we have added an in-person event each term. These will take place in Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft each term, and will focus on a specific topic to support you and your colleague's work with Children in Care, Previously Looked After Children and children on CIN/CP plans in your school and/or trust.

Please take a look at the online and in-person sessions and sign up via the booking forms available on the following webpage or at the end of this newsletter.

[Professional development opportunities - Suffolk County Council](#)



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Feel free to share the schedule with colleagues in your school/trust – all are welcome.

Note: the summer term in-person session dates will be confirmed in the spring term.

If you are unable to attend an online session, we will be adding the slides and resources for each session to the Documents section of each child in care's ePEP. If you do not have access to Welfare Call, please get in touch and we will send you the slides via email – suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk

You can also access online learning aimed at DTs and other professionals via a suite of modules produced by Anspear. The modules cover a wide range of education related topics, and each takes about an hour and a half to complete. A downloadable certificate is available upon completion. Details about how to sign up are attached to this email.

The Designated Teacher Award

We are also delighted to announce that the University of Suffolk is launching our Designated Teacher Award; this has been developed in collaboration with the Virtual School and the Psychology and Therapeutic Services, with two cohorts running, November 2025 and May 2026. For expressions of interest please complete the university's form below:

<https://forms.office.com/e/zBSauLeJA9>

and email our office inbox as we are hoping to be able to provide pupil premium towards the £763 course fee: SuffolkVirtualSchool@suffolk.gov.uk

For more information please see:

[Championing Children with Care Experience - The Designated Teacher Award | University of Suffolk](#)

For the full list of our Virtual School Network sessions, please see the table at the end of our newsletter and via our webpages

[Professional development opportunities - Suffolk County Council](#)



Our colleagues in the Specialist Education Service are also offering free Therapeutic Training for Suffolk schools. Please see the attached flier for the dates as well as the link below for more information: [Therapeutic Thinking](#)

Welfare Call ePEPs and PEP meetings

a. ePEPs

Many thanks, as ever, for the high quality ePEPs for our children for the summer term. Their plans demonstrated a clear focus on maximising their outcomes, both academically and personal development-wise, and it was a pleasure to read about the care, support and aspirations for our children from you and your colleagues.

The submission dates for this academic year are:

Autumn term – Friday 5 December 2025

Spring term – Friday 13 March 2026

Summer term – Friday 3 July 2026

b. PEP meetings

A reminder that a PEP meeting should take place every term for a Suffolk Child in Care. It is not necessary for a PEP meeting to be held for the ePEP to be completed; the actions and decisions agreed in the meeting (and any other relevant meetings such as EHCP Annual Reviews) should be recorded in the ePEP (using the dropdown menu in the Pupil Voice and Planning section) to show how they have shaped the term's education plan for the child. Please do not fill in the online document during the meeting.

PEP meetings should be arranged by the child's social worker and, alongside the child, their key adults should be invited. Best practice is that PEP meetings take place in school, but the child may wish to hold their meeting elsewhere and outside of the school day. Please see the attached summary for the roles and responsibilities of participants in a PEP meeting from our more detailed PEP Meeting Guidance for social workers.

If for any reason the child's social worker cannot attend a PEP meeting, we would ask that you or a delegated colleague who knows the child well leads the meeting.



Nursery PEPs

For children in nursery please use the Early Years PEP document, available on our webpages. It can be found towards the bottom of the page in the link below:

[Personal Education Plans - Suffolk County Council](#)

Our colleagues in Early Years have produced a really lovely toolkit for Early Years Settings. For more information please see:

[Inclusion – Children in Care, PEP, EAL & EYPP – Suffolk Learning](#)

Children in Care with SEND

Thank you as ever for your support for our Children in Care with SEND. Please keep the SEND Tab updated each term (including recording No SEN if applicable) and please upload the children's EHCP Annual Reviews and other SEND documents.

For our children with EHCPs in Year 6 and Year 11, please confirm their Annual Review dates with their social worker and carer/parent, as soon as possible, as you'll be aware that these need to take place this term, regardless of the date of their last Annual Review. We do not usually attend Annual Reviews as we are very committed to the principle that the people in attendance should be people the child knows, but if it is a complex situation, please do get in touch if you would like one of us to attend.

As part of understanding our children's profile of need, we ask all schools to complete the teacher based SDQ, once a year.

Please record the total score and the date completed on the Personal Development Tab. (You will find a link to the questionnaire and a scoring calculator, in the top guidance of this Tab.)

A score of above 17 is a concerning score and we would expect that children with an SDQ score of 20+ would be at least SEND Support for SEMH.

For more information, please see:

[The strengths and difficulties questionnaire \(SDQ\): Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

Please discuss the score with the child's social worker and carer, as it may be a referral to CONNECT (the CAMHS service for Children in Care) would be appropriate and please also discuss with your Virtual School link and seek further advice and guidance from your Local Authority's specialist education services. In Suffolk, this would be:

[Specialist support for mainstream schools - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)



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For all our schools (whether in Suffolk or other local authorities), we also offer funded:

[Analysis of Additional Needs Tool - Suffolk County Council](#)

Simply contact us to discuss further and we can initiate the referral. Our Psychology and Therapeutic Services Inclusion Facilitators also offer a range of interventions, which again we fund via pupil premium:

[circle-of-friends-info-flyer](#)

[sensory-profile-info-flyer](#)

[2021-08-11-team-pupil-info-flyer](#)

For more information about our broader Virtual School 'Local Offer', please see our attached document.

And for children attending Suffolk schools, please see link below for Suffolk SEND for High Needs Funding (HNF) deadlines:

[High Needs Funding – Suffolk Learning](#)

Virtual College

The Virtual College is the part of our service which oversees children in care and care leavers in Years 12 and above, up to the age of 25. The college's remit is to support those working with our young people to engage and thrive in education, employment or training.

Excitingly, we will be extending our use of the Welfare Call ePEP to learners in school sixth forms and SEND specialist settings from this term. If you are the DT in such a setting and have Year 12 and/or 13s who are Children in Care/care leavers on roll, we will be in touch with you to share instructions on how to use the ePEP with these young people.

If you have any questions about a young person and education, employment or training, please contact suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk and the relevant person from the team will be in touch.



Extended Duties

A. Previously Looked After Children

Our Virtual School Lead for Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) is sarah.squirrell@suffolk.gov.uk

Our role for this cohort is to offer advice and information to parents and schools regarding the education of children living in Suffolk who were previously in care. We do not hold a corporate parenting responsibility for children previously looked after and we are not entitled to monitor them as we do our Children in Care; our duties do not extend to taking on case work or actions. However, we aim to empower all our parents and schools with the advice, information and expertise that we have gathered whilst supporting our Children in Care to ensure that all the children in our remit can fulfil their potential in school.

Please find attached our checklist resource for Previously Looked After Children, developed in collaboration with Jane Leighton, Specialist Education Psychologist (Adoption).

For more information please also see our webpages:

[Previously Looked After Children - Suffolk County Council](#)

Please remember to include Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) on your October census - 2 October 2025; return date – 29 October 2025

See extract below from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/find-a-school-census-code>

Code	Description
N	Not declared
A	Not looked after – adoption from England or Wales
G	Not looked after - special guardianship order (SGO) from England and Wales
R	Not looked after - residence order (RO) from England and Wales. Residence orders were replaced by child arrangements orders in April 2014.



C	Not looked after - child arrangements order (CAO) from England and Wales
O	Not looked after – adopted from state care outside of England and Wales

B. Children with a Social Worker

Jude Kemp (judith.kemp@suffolk.gov.uk) is our Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Lead in Suffolk Virtual School.

‘Children with a social worker’ refers to all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker (SW) within the past 6 years due to safeguarding or welfare reasons. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a children in need plan or a child protection plan.

The CWSW role entails:

1. Making visible the disadvantages the CWSW cohort face
2. Enhancing partnerships between settings and local authorities to promote high aspirations
3. Promoting practice that supports children’s engagement in education
4. Levelling up children's outcomes to narrow the attainment gap

However, are not able to:

5. Work directly with individual children and families (including tracking of individual progress or providing academic interventions)
6. Respond to requests from parents/carers to offer advice and information

For more information, please see the guidance below:

[Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)

This is a role of ‘strategic influence’ to support children and families engage with school and education.



As Designated Teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead, in the first instance, your key link will be the allocated Social Worker / Family Support Practitioner for the Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) / Early Help Assessment (EHA) pupil(s) you are supporting across your setting if you are experiencing barriers to education. This partnership and multi-agency approach is strength and protective factor for this cohort.

We would advise that a key step is identifying and tracking the attendance and attainment of this CWSW cohort.

Whilst the Virtual School is unable to offer any direct casework for the CiN / CP cohort, we can offer some signposting to schools in addition to strategic and advisory discussions with social workers.

As DT and/or DSL, you may find it useful to work with your SENDco to explore one or more of the links below to support your CWSW pupils to access and engage in education alongside your partnership with the social worker. Please see some key pointers below that have come out of our Action Research Project into this cohort:

1. Is the pupil on your SEND register to acknowledge previous and ongoing Adverse Childhood Experiences? What SEND assessments can your SENDco undertake this term? Can you begin to explore accessing Higher Needs Funding?
3. Complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to ascertain an SEMH starting point ([Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire \(SDQ\)](#))
4. Explore any unmet SEND needs via Specialist Education Services (SES [Specialist Education Services – Suffolk Learning](#)) – call an Inclusion Support Line ([Inclusion Support Line – Suffolk Learning](#)) or book an Inclusion Support Meeting ([Specialist Education Services: Inclusion Support Meetings](#))
4. Consider contacting the Inclusion Facilitator Service to explore a Team Pupil or Assessment of Additional Needs Tool ([Inclusion Facilitation - Suffolk County Council](#)) to support building a SEND picture.
5. If you are worried about a cycle of suspensions or possible Permanent Exclusion, please reach out to the Education Access Team where you can book a 30 minute consultation ([Education Access Team – Suffolk Learning](#))



2025-26 Suffolk Virtual School Professional Development session for DTs, DSLs and Governors / Trustees

Autumn term

Date	Session	Presenter
23 September	Extended Duties: Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)	Jude Kemp, Assistant Virtual School Head, CWSW Lead
7 October	Attendance Strategies	Sarah Squirrell, Assistant Virtual School Head, Attendance Lead
21 October	ePEP check-in (Going for Gold)	Esther Das, Deputy Virtual School Head, Achievement, Attainment and Progress
11 November	Working in partnership with carers and residential children's homes teams	Suffolk Foster Carers Association, Residential Services and Adoption and Fostering Service
25 November	Working memory, executive function and dynamic assessments	Olivia Blick, Education Psychologist, Psychology and Therapeutic Services

Please use this link to reserve a place: [Autumn 2025 Booking Form](#)

Spring term

Date	Session	Presenter
20 January 2026	Supporting Previously Looked After Children	Sarah Squirrell, Assistant Virtual School Head, Attendance and PLAC Lead and Jane Leighton, Specialist Education Psychologist



24 February	ePEP check-in (Going for Gold)	Esther Das, Deputy Virtual School Head, Achievement, Attainment and Progress
3 March	Working memory, executive function and dynamic assessments	Olivia Blick, Education Psychologist, Psychology and Therapeutic Services
10 March	Supporting Children in Care in relation to end of Key Stage assessments and transitions	Esther Das and Ro Harte; Deputy Virtual School Heads

Please use this link to reserve a place: [Spring 2026 Booking Form](#)

Summer term

Date	Session	Presenter
5 May	Supporting children in kinship care	Sarah Squirrell, Assistant Virtual School Head, PLAC Lead
19 May	ePEP check-in (Going for Gold)	Esther Das, Deputy Virtual School Head, Achievement, Attainment and Progress
9 June	SEMH toolkit	Ro Harte, Deputy Virtual School Head, Access and Inclusion
23 June	New to the role of Designated Teacher induction/refresher session	Esther Das and Ro Harte; Deputy Virtual School Heads

Please use this link to reserve a place: [Summer 2026 Booking Form](#)



In-person sessions

Autumn term

Venue	Date	Time	Topic
West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds	Monday 29 September	1.30pm – 4pm	An Introduction to Trauma Responsive Practice, Jemma Carter and Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services
Endeavour House, Ipswich	Tuesday 30 September	10am - 12.30pm	An Introduction to Trauma Responsive Practice, Jemma Carter and Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services
Riverside, Lowestoft	Tuesday 4 November	10am - 12.30pm	An Introduction to Trauma Responsive Practice, Jemma Carter and Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services

Spring term

Venue	Date	Time	
Endeavour House, Ipswich	Monday 12 January	9.45am - 12pm	DESTY GOALS Emotion Coaching – Stephanie Fitzgerald
Riverside, Lowestoft	Monday 12 January	2pm - 4pm	DESTY GOALS Emotion Coaching – Stephanie Fitzgerald
West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds	Tuesday 13 January	2pm-4pm	DESTY GOALS Emotion Coaching – Stephanie Fitzgerald

Summer term

Venue	Date	Time	
Endeavour House, Ipswich	Monday 27 April	am (time to be confirmed)	Dynamic Assessments Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services



Riverside, Lowestoft	Tuesday 28 April	am (time to be confirmed)	Dynamic Assessments, Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services
West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds	Wednesday 29 April	am (time to be confirmed)	Dynamic Assessments, Olivia Blick, Psychology and Therapeutic Services

Please use this link to reserve a place: [Booking form for in-person training 2025-26](#)