



Suffolk Virtual School and College

Autumn Term 2026 newsletter

Suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk

01473 260818

Welcome to the 2026–27 academic year. We look forward to working with both new and returning colleagues.

This first of three termly newsletters shares key information, training and dates for schools and settings.

This newsletter will cover:

- Staffing update: Virtual School Head
- Summer 2026 outcomes
- ePEPs and PEP meetings
- SEND and transition Annual Reviews
- Professional development for DTs, DSLs, PEP writers and link governors/trustees
- Monitoring non-school alternative provision (NSAP)

Staffing Update: Virtual School Head

After serving as Virtual School Head since 2016, Matthew Cooke has been promoted to Suffolk County Council's Assistant Director for Inclusion and SEND.

Esther Das is our new Virtual School Head. She has worked for the Suffolk Virtual School since 2017, most recently as Deputy Virtual School Head.

Summer 2026 outcomes for Suffolk children in care

There is much to celebrate in the 2025–26 attainment outcomes, from Foundation to Key Stage 5.

Foundation, Key Stages 1 and 2

Suffolk's children in care performed well against national comparators across early years and primary measures, particularly in early development and phonics. At Key Stage 2, outcomes were strong in maths, grammar and punctuation.



Key Stages 4 and 5

Young people achieved some excellent individual results at Key Stages 4 and 5. All those with university offers secured a place.

Thank you for sharing results promptly, enabling us to celebrate with our young people.

Our attainment priorities are:

- **Early Years:** increase the number achieving the expected standard in literacy
- **Year 1:** sustain the number achieving the expected standard and the increase in those attaining the top phonics band (37–40)
- **Year 6:** increase the number achieving at least the expected standard in reading and writing, and greater depth in maths
- **GCSE:** increase the number achieving grades 9–4 in English and maths

What schools can do to support our children's attainment

For each Suffolk child in care, relevant priorities should be reflected in their termly plan, including inclusion support where needed. Pupil premium funding should be used where it will have the greatest impact.

Please set targets at the start of each term. They should identify the subject-specific skills and knowledge needed for at least expected progress towards estimated outcomes.

Please use targeted interventions where needed and record their impact in the Live Records.

ePEPs and PEP meetings

a) ePEP feedback and deadlines

Thank you for the summer-term ePEPs, which reflected the care, support and aspirations of school and setting staff for our children.

The strongest plans focused clearly on academic and personal-development outcomes and included uploaded evidence of provision and progress.

We will contact schools and settings with one or more Amber-rated ePEPs. Please contact us if you would like support with personal education planning.

The submission dates for this academic year are:

Autumn term – Friday 4 December 2026

Spring term – Friday 12 March 2027

Summer term – Friday 2 July 2027

b) PEP meetings

A PEP meeting must take place every term for each Suffolk child in care, but the ePEP does not need to be completed during the meeting. Record the decisions and actions from the PEP meeting—and other relevant meetings such as EHCP Annual Reviews—using the dropdown menu in the Pupil Voice and Planning section, showing how they have shaped the term's education plan. Please do not complete the online document during the meeting.

The social worker should arrange the meeting and invite the child and their key adults. Meetings should usually take place in school, although the child may prefer another location or a time outside the school day.

If the social worker cannot attend, you or a delegated colleague who knows the child well should lead the meeting.

Nursery PEPs

For children in nursery, use the Early Years PEP document available near the bottom of our webpage:

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

Early Years colleagues have also produced a toolkit for settings:

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

SEND and transition Annual Reviews

Please update the SEND tab each term and upload EHCP Annual Reviews and other SEND documents, where relevant.

For children with EHCPs in Years 6 and 11, confirm Annual Review dates with their social worker and carer/parent as soon as possible. Reviews must take place this term, regardless of the previous review date, to support their transition in September 2027.

We do not usually attend Annual Reviews because attendees should be people the child knows. For complex situations, please contact us to discuss our attendance.

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

Our autumn programme offers practical guidance from the Virtual School and partner local authority services. It supports staff to improve the outcomes and educational experiences of children in care and other children known to social care.



Session	Speaker/Service	Date	Times
Supporting the importance of welcome: Utilising tools to enhance trauma informed practice for our children in care	Psychology and Therapeutic Service	22 September 2026	10 – 10.45 3.45 – 4.30
EPEP check-in: Writing a high quality and effective education plan	Virtual School	29 September 2026	10 – 11.00 3.45 – 4.45
ePEP check-in: Writing a high quality and effective education plan (for anyone who was unable to attend the previous week's session)	Virtual School	6 October 2026	10 – 11.00 3.45 – 4.45
Effective use of pupil premium funding to improve outcomes	Virtual School	20 October 2026	10 – 10.45 3.45 – 4.30
Language for Life and Learning	Specialist Education Services	13 November 2026	10 – 10.45 3.45 – 4.30

Please complete this form to sign up for this term's professional development sessions – [Autumn 2026 booking form](#)

Slides and resources will be added to the Documents section of each child's ePEP. If you cannot access Welfare Call, email suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk to request them.

Anspear also offers online modules for DTs and other professionals across a range of education topics. Each takes about 90 minutes and includes a downloadable completion certificate. Sign-up details are attached.

Monitoring non-school alternative provision for children in care

Non-school alternative provision (NSAP) plays an important role in supporting Suffolk's children in care. More than 20% of our statutory school-age cohort attended alternative provision during the last academic year.

NSAP can help children develop skills, build positive relationships and maintain their school place. Schools remain responsible for monitoring the education of children on their roll, including when they attend NSAP.



Expectations for schools

Where a child in care attends NSAP, schools must ensure that each term's ePEP clearly records:

- the purpose of the provision and how it supports an appropriate and ambitious education pathway;
- the child's attendance, engagement and experience;
- the activities and learning undertaken;
- progress towards agreed targets and outcomes;
- relationships with peers and adults; and
- the impact of the provision and whether it continues to meet the child's needs.

An exemplar ePEP is attached to demonstrate best practice.

This supports the expectations in [*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*](#) for schools to monitor the attendance, engagement and progress of pupils attending alternative provision.

Monitoring arrangements

Where Suffolk Virtual School directly commissions NSAP, providers will be required to:

1. **Provide a written report at least once every half term**, covering the areas listed above.
2. **Attend a review meeting at least once every half term** with the relevant professionals. The meeting will review the child's experience, progress and the impact of the provision, and identify any changes or additional support required.

In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, we would expect schools commissioning NSAP for children in care to adopt similar monitoring arrangements. Your Virtual School Lead will be able to provide further information and guidance as and when necessary.