

Suffolk Virtual School Newsletter

Spring Term 2026

Welcome back! And Happy 2026.

We hope you had a lovely festive break and feel refreshed for the new term ahead.

We look forward to working with you again this year on supporting our children to enjoy their learning experiences and maximise their outcomes.

An update from us

Our colleague, Ro Harte, retired at the end of the Christmas term. The children, schools and Trusts that Ro worked with last term have been allocated to other members of the team, and you will be notified shortly of their details.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like advice about a Suffolk Child in Care, please contact our admin team suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk or 01473 260818, and they will pass on your message to the relevant colleague.

In this newsletter:

- Autumn term ePEP feedback and key points for the spring term
- Attainment Week
- How we can support your self-assessment for the new Ofsted inspection toolkit
- Work Experience placements at Suffolk County Council for Children in Care in Year 10
- Our professional development offer for the spring term, including the DT Award via University of Suffolk
- SEND documents and the ePEP
- High Needs Funding application deadline

Autumn ePEP feedback

Thank you for submitting the autumn term plans for our children. We were delighted with the quality of the provision and support for each child and their subsequent progress. Reading our children's views of their education experience and seeing how their wishes and feelings have been incorporated into their termly plan was a real highlight.

We very much appreciate the care and consideration that goes into the plan for each of our children each term.

The submission date for each child's ePEP this term is **Friday 13 March**.

What to do with the ePEP when a child has a school change

55 of our children had an in-year school change last term. If a Child in Care on your roll is moving to another school at any time in the term, we would ask that the ePEP is filled in as much as possible with their provision and progress, including targets, recording in their Live Records and details of their move and transition support, for their new school to add to.

Once the child goes on roll at their new school or setting their ePEP will be removed from your account, so it is important that this information is added before their last day with you.

It's crucial for each child to have their education experience captured during a term, and a school move makes this recording even more significant.

If a child moves to your school or becomes a Child in Care **on or after 27 February 2026**, an ePEP for the spring term will not be required.

Attainment Week: 23 - 27 February 2026

Attainment Week is an opportunity for our team to discuss the progress of our children. This term we will be focusing on Early Years, Years 1, 6 and 11, ahead of their assessments in the summer term. Your Virtual School Lead will be in touch to arrange a time for a discussion about the child's progress, support and interventions and use of pupil premium funding to aid outcomes.

For all year groups please ensure that their plan reflects their areas of priority for this term.

A reminder of our focus areas for this academic year:

Early Years: To increase the average number of ELGs gained

In 2025, the average number of ELGs gained was 11.9 (vs 14.3 Suffolk all pupils). Strong in Maths/Understanding the World; gaps in PSED, Communication & Language, and Literacy

Phonics: To increase the percentage of children who met the standard and to increase the percentage of those who reach the higher band

In 2025, 42% met standard (vs 79% Suffolk all pupils). 19.4% reached the highest band 37-40 (vs 48.8% Suffolk all pupils)

KS2: To increase the percentage of children who met RWM combined

In 2025, 31% met RWM combined (vs 58% Suffolk all pupils). 16.7% achieved GDS but lower numbers achieving EXS in maths

KS4: To increase the percentage of children who achieve a grade 4+ in English and maths

In 2025, just under a fifth of the cohort achieved grade 4+ in English & maths.

How we can support with your self-assessment for the new Ofsted inspection toolkit

We're pleased to share details of the support the Virtual School can offer to help you prepare for the new Ofsted inspection toolkit.

The updated framework places a strong focus on how effectively schools support pupils known to children's social care — including children in care, previously looked-after children, and those with a social worker. As these groups sit within the Virtual School's remit, we'd like to work with you to strengthen your school's self-evaluation and evidence of good practice.

Drawing on our experience across schools, we can offer an audit and discussion with your key staff to help identify strengths and areas for further development. The process is designed to complement your existing school improvement priorities.

The audit covers:

- The role of the Designated Teacher for children in care and previously looked-after children and of the Designated Safeguarding Lead for children with a social worker
- The quality and impact of Personal Education Plans, including use of pupil premium funding
- How data is recorded, tracked and used to target support for each pupil

- Partnership working with the Local Authority and compliance with statutory requirements
- Collaboration with wider agencies to secure effective multi-agency support

If you are part of a trust, we can also complete this at trust level to review consistency across schools.

We recommend an in-person session (morning or afternoon) and there is **no cost** to schools. Review paperwork will be shared in advance to help you prepare.

To book a review, please contact us at suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk or call **01473 260818**.

Work Experience placements with Suffolk County Council for Children in Care in Year 10

We are delighted to share that Suffolk Council has ringfenced a number of work experience placements for Children in Care in Year 10.

The placements will take place Monday 13 - Friday 17 July 2026 at Endeavour House, Ipswich.

If you have a Child in Care in Year 10 who you think may be interested in this opportunity, please share the attached flyer which provides further information and details about how to apply.

Applications will open on January 5th and close on January 30th. Applicants will be notified of their status by February 6th.

If you, parents, carers or young people have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the Rising High team at Rising.High@suffolk.gov.uk

Our Professional Development Offer – Spring Term

Session	Presenter	Date	Times
Supporting Previously Looked After Children	Sarah Squirrel, Virtual School PLAC Lead, and Jane Leighton, Specialist Education Psychologist	Tuesday 20 January 2026	10am to 10.45am or 3.45pm to 4.30pm
EPEP Check-In: Going for Gold	Virtual School Team	Tuesday 24 February 2026	10am to 10.45am or 3.45pm to 4.30pm
Working memory, executive function and dynamic assessments	Olivia Blick, Education Psychologist, Psychology and Therapeutic Services	Tuesday 3 March 2026	10am to 10.45am or 3.45pm to 4.30pm
Ensuring smooth transitions for Children in Care	Virtual School Team	Tuesday 10 March 2026	10am to 10.45am or 3.45pm to 4.30pm

Please complete the booking form to reserve a place for the Spring term sessions.

[Spring 2026 Booking Form](#)

Online learning modules for school staff

Our professional development offer also includes access to online learning modules, produced by Anspear Publishing, which now offer the chance to gain CPD certificates from the University of Buckingham. These modules cover a range of topics that are relevant to those working with disadvantaged children in particular and can be accessed via the QR code on the flier attached to this email.

Lots of DTs have already signed up and completed modules, and they have been specifically designed to be accessible, with the option to pick up where you left off. Each module in total should take approximately an hour and a half, with a printable certificate available upon completion.

To gain the CPD certificates, there are set pathways of four/five modules that are required to be completed. These are stated on the flier. All modules are free of cost to schools.

The Designated Teacher Award

We are pleased to share that the University of Suffolk has now launched our Designated Teacher Award; this has been developed in collaboration with the Virtual School and the Psychology and Therapeutic Services. The first cohort launched in November, and you can now apply for the second onboarding in 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](#)

SEND – Key documents and the ePEP

Please could we ask that a copy of a child's EHCP and their latest Annual Review is uploaded in their Documents on Welfare Call.

If you are not a Suffolk school and have a Suffolk Child in Care with an EHCP on roll this is especially important.

In addition, please could you ensure that a copy of the child's Pathway to Adulthood Plan is uploaded to the ePEP for those in Year 9 -11 with an EHCP.

High Needs Funding

A reminder of key deadlines for applications for High Needs Funding:

- Spreadsheets (Wednesday 11th February 2026)
- Evidence Forms (Friday 27th February 2026)

High Needs Funding can be applied for to support a child on an SEN Support Plan or with an EHCP, should additional SEND funding be required to meet their educational needs.

For further information about the process, please go to <https://suffolklearning.com/inclusion/high-needs-funding/>

If you are a school outside of Suffolk with a Suffolk Child in Care on roll and wish to apply for High Needs Funding to support their needs, please contact your Virtual School Lead for information about how to apply.