

**Isle of Wight Council**

**Schools Forum**

**March 2024**

**Pupil Premium for looked after children: Annual Update 2022-23**

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## **1. Summary**

- This report provides an annual overview of the looked after child pupil premium, also referred to as pupil premium plus. It outlines the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) in relation to this grant, and the way that the centrally held portion of the grant is being used to improve educational progress and outcomes of the Isle of Wight's children in care.
- The report is informed by scrutiny of personal education plans which record how pupil premium plus funding is used, additionality funding agreements and by 'Corporate Parent' visits to schools undertaken by the Virtual School when effective use of this funding is discussed.
- Reporting in relation to pupil premium plus is not a statutory requirement. However, it was agreed in 2017 that an annual update would be introduced, for the purposes of transparency and to support collegiate working.

## **2. Background and context**

- As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, there were 300 children recorded as being in the care of the Isle of Wight, with 218 of statutory school age, 38 in pre-school and 44 post-16. A proportion (20%) of these children and young people were placed on the mainland in other Local Authorities.
- The Isle of Wight Virtual School team consisted of
  - Executive Virtual School Head for Hampshire and IOW (20% salary funded by PPPG)
  - Education Adviser (1 FT (Maternity Leave March 2022 – March 2023) (PPPG Funded)
  - Education Officer (1 FT) (PPPG Funded) (Maternity Cover)
  - Education Officer (0.2) (PLAC Funded)

The remit of virtual school staff, in relation to looked after children, is to support the improvement of educational engagement and outcomes for the Isle of Wight's children in care.

- The Virtual School approach is to work with children in care as if they were in a single school, tracking the progress they make and supporting them to achieve as well as possible. One of the key statutory duties of the Virtual School Head is to directly manage the arrangements for the distribution of the pupil premium plus grant for children in care. This should be used without delay to meet the individual needs of children as outlined in their personal education plan.
- Children who were previously looked after but ceased to be so as a result of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order are also eligible for pupil premium plus. The Virtual School Head has no direct responsibility for the use or distribution of this grant beyond

providing advice and guidance and promoting best practice. An Education Officer oversees this area of work for the Isle of Wight on behalf of the Virtual School.

### **3. Pupil premium plus arrangements on the Isle of Wight**

- The statutory guidance published in February 2018 requires the Virtual School Head to directly manage the arrangements for distributing the pupil premium plus to schools on behalf of the children in care to their local authority. This must be undertaken in accordance with the conditions of grant published annually by the Department for Education and outlined in a written and published policy.
- The purpose of the grant is to close the attainment gap for this cohort of children and improve their educational outcomes. It is allocated to the Virtual School on behalf of each child who is in care for at least one day as recorded in the March 2022 children looked after return (SSDA903) aged 4-15 at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. Pupils from Year R to Year 11 are eligible for the pupil premium plus.
- During the financial year 2022-23, the government allocation for each looked after child is £2,530 per child looked after. The Virtual School allocated £1,600 pupil premium plus per child to schools (equating to £307,200 in total) paid in three termly instalments for each child. £930 per child was retained to fund central services and interventions. This arrangement was in line with Hampshire Local Authority whom managed the IOW Virtual School until January 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. The National Association of Virtual School Heads reported that in 2023 the average retained proportion of PPPG in England was £938.
- A full term's pupil premium plus is provided, regardless of when a child was taken into care. Unlike many other local authorities, there is currently no bidding or application process required to access this standard funding other than receipt of a termly personal education plan.
- It should be noted that the Virtual School Head is responsible and accountable for the effective use of pupil premium plus in its entirety and not just for the portion that is centrally held. Given this, they must be assured that, whatever arrangements are in place, all the money is used for the benefit of individual looked after children's educational needs. Where it is not possible to identify how pupil premium plus is being spent (due, for example, to a missing, poor quality or incomplete PEP), the Virtual School can withhold the allocation of pupil premium plus. The Virtual School's Pupil Premium Plus policy and guidance document for 2022-23 may be accessed from the link below.

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/PupilPremiumPlus-policy-22-23.pdf>

- Arrangements for allocating pupil premium plus are reviewed annually based on the analysis of the educational progress and outcomes for the children in care cohort and their presenting needs.
- For the financial year 2024-25, we are reviewing the existing arrangements and will communicate this with all stakeholders in due course.

### **4. Pupil premium plus 2022-23: overview and impact**

- On the Isle of Wight, the majority of the pupil premium plus funding is provided directly to schools to meet individual children's educational needs as identified and recorded in their personal education plans. The identification and assessment of need is therefore crucial to ensuring that the use of the funding is appropriately targeted and that the impact on progress and achievement can be measurable, where possible.

- Our auditing of personal education plans indicates that a comprehensive use of the 'PEP Toolkit' developed by the Virtual School supports schools to identify and understand unmet needs and areas of difficulty. The PEP Toolkit considers children's needs across seven areas, adult or peer relationships, executive functioning, self-regulation, motivation, sense of self and language development and provides guidance on evidence-based strategies and approaches.
- Given that the use of the funding is most effectively used to target specific areas of need for individual children, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of the interventions and strategies that schools have used successfully. For example, circle of friends, peer mentoring or multi-sensory work may be more appropriate than specialist subject 1:1 tutoring for some children.
- The Virtual School audits at least 30% of PEPs every term with a particular focus on effective needs analysis, target setting and the impact of funding and uses the outcomes to inform and improve our training programme for Designated Teachers.
- The centrally retained pupil premium funding is managed directly by the Virtual School. The governance of the operational and strategic work of the Virtual School was provided by the Education and Inclusion Branch led by the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion within Hampshire local authority during 2022/23. The Virtual School Head is required to produce an annual report and regular updates to the Corporate Parenting Board which includes elected members and senior leaders across the Isle of Wight.
- The following provides a broad overview of the use and impact of the pupil premium plus held centrally on the Isle of Wight. This is organised into four main areas: a) the Virtual School team, b) training and capacity building, c) partnership working and d) additionality funding. Our work in these four areas makes a significant difference to the educational experiences and outcomes of the Island's children in care and the key adults in their lives.

#### **a) Virtual School**

- The Virtual School team is small relative to the size of the cohort of children in care on the Isle of Wight and so building and strengthening capacity is our predominant approach. Given this, the development of strong and credible relationships alongside ensuring that communication and key systems and processes work effectively across the wide network are important tasks for the Virtual School team. This work is driven forward by the dedicated partnership working of the Education Adviser and Officer with social care colleagues and schools, which provides the bedrock for the value and impact of our work.
- The Education Officer leads on individual cases for the Virtual School. They work closely with the adviser and social care colleagues to support timely admissions and to maintain school stability for individual children. There is a relentless focus on monitoring patterns of attendance, children at risk of fixed term exclusion and supporting children when they face difficulties in school or transitions. They work hard to reduce the amount of time any child spends out of education, particularly between care placements.
- The Virtual School management, for children in care, consists of the Executive VSH and Education Adviser. The Adviser leads on ensuring a full programme of training is delivered to support Designated Teachers throughout the year which focuses on their vital role in promoting education. The Adviser also leads on 'Corporate Parent' visits to schools, ensuring that designated teachers are supported, guided, and challenged so they can meet the individual needs of children in care.

#### **b) Training and capacity building**

- As stated, in the context of the Isle of Wight, the approach is one of building capacity across the local authority, and beyond, to meet the educational needs of children in care. As a result, there is a strong focus on providing the highest quality training for Designated Teachers (DTs). In January 2020 we renamed the 'Core Training for New DTs including how to use the PEP Toolkit' to emphasise the mandatory aspect of the requirement in the statutory guidance. The course is now titled 'Statutory Training for New DTs including how to use the PEP Toolkit'. The toolkit enables Designated Teachers to understand the causes of the behaviour of individual children, to accurately assess and plan for their needs and to develop high-quality personal education plans. We have been delivering training alongside Hampshire LA this year. We are keen to develop our methodology to evaluate the impact of our training on practice and delivery in this academic year. The IOW VS will be leading on our training calendar moving forward. This has already begun with 40 practitioners being trained in Lego Therapy during March and April 2024.

- The well-established Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools and Settings (ATAS) programme has now completed its final cohort of the Isle of Wight. Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) have run training for all schools who educate IOW looked after children on the Island who have completed the specialist training which is based on a 'Lead Team' model. The wide-ranging impact of the programme includes whole school implementation of emotion coaching to support co-regulation of children's behaviour 'in the moment,' and programmes of staff development around attachment and trauma initiated and led by Designated Teachers. A development series has run during 22/23 called Re-Ignite. This was led by KCA with the aim of supporting schools to embed practice in their school improvement plans and self-evaluations.

- An extensive range of training is available. Open access to resources has also been available via Moodle.

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/Hants-IOW-Training-brochure.pdf>

<https://virtuelschool.hants.gov.uk/>

### **c) Partnership working**

- The partnership with Island Futures continued through 2022/23. The proactive work of the team around the most vulnerable young people in years 10 and 11, as they transition into the post 16, has contributed to all young people receiving careers guidance and a transition plan to support their post-16 aspirations.

- The Virtual School has continued to collaborate with the Early Years Advisory Team. This team attend every early year's PEP and ensure the needs of our youngest children are met within their education settings. The aim of this work is to increase the number of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) year on year. We provided transition pack for all settings and parent/carers for children transitioning from pre-school to Year R in September 2023. This received very positive feedback and will be repeated in 2024.

- The Virtual School continues to work closely with Isle of Wight SEND to advocate for our young people to minimise drift and delay. This partnership was high priority this year as we managed the closure of the Island Learning Centre's primary provision. The Virtual School continue to support a number of schools who have welcomed our young people previously educated at the ILC.

- The Virtual School has worked closely with the HIEP service (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychology Service) this year. The service has provided bespoke consultations, support and training to professionals supporting our young people both on the Isle of Wight and out of county. The Virtual School has also responded to training needs identified by schools and

has, for example, facilitated specific training for ELSA's and will be delivering Lego Therapy training before the end of the academic year 23/24.

- The Virtual School has worked in partnership with the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) to provide our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people with a language assessment and profile of needs to support their transition into mainstream school. Our separated children (UASC) are supported, via commission, by a social care team based in Hampshire and an education adviser based in Hampshire VS. The Virtual School support of these young people will return fully to the Isle of Wight as of summer two term 2024.
- All Isle of Wight looked after children are part of Dolly's Books - a free book gifting scheme whereby children receive a high quality, age-appropriate book in the post, free of charge every month from birth to age five. We have also been awarded funding to support this across all children with a social worker and previously looked after children aged 0-5. We continue to work with Wightlink and Red Funnel to provide sponsored free travel for young people in care / care leavers who wish to study on the mainland at Post-16.

#### **d) Additionality Funding 2022 – 2023:**

- Primary and Secondary schools were invited to apply for Additionality Funding in February 2023. The requests needed to clearly identify need, a clear plan for the funding in response to the need and how this would be monitored, and impact evaluated. The Virtual School agreed to £63,917.94 of additionality funding in 2022/23. Each allocation was applied for, discussed and agreed based on need to ensure stability, progress and outcomes. Please also see the impact report for 23/24.
- Resources and access devices were supplied to children to ensure access to education provision or to enable home learning.

#### **5. Educational outcomes for children in care**

As has been outlined, schools on the Isle of Wight and the Virtual School are committed, and determined, to further improve the engagement, participation, and achievement in education for the Isle of Wight's children in care. We also recognise that it is important to focus on the educational experiences and individual journeys of children, as many have overcome significant challenges arising from complex trauma, emotional and mental health needs, and the wider impact of adverse childhood experiences.

- The effective use of pupil premium plus funding by both schools and the Virtual School is evidenced both in PEPs and in the improving picture of educational stability for our looked after children through the reduction of suspensions and exclusions or school placement moves.
- Attainment on the Isle of Wight continues to develop. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight School Improvement Service supported Isle of Wight schools to develop school practice across the Island during 22/23. 2023 results are mixed across the school phases. We are awaiting final published data; this will be shared in the VSH Annual Report in the Summer Term.
- Attendance data continued to be monitored daily by Welfare Call in 22/23. This was extended to include Early Years and Post-16 this year in order to ensure monitoring of vulnerable children and young people through Covid education provision closures. The IOW attendance for looked after children of statutory school age returned well after COVID compared with National but attendance rates have not yet returned to pre-COVID levels. In 2022/23 35,867 days of school were missed by looked after children of statutory school age. This equates to 14.9% overall absence. 9.8% was authorised and 5.2% unauthorised.

September 2023 saw the launch of the Virtual School's new electronic PEP system and attendance monitoring platform. ASSET will provide attendance data moving forward for our statutory school aged children.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

- This report sets out how the effective use of the pupil premium plus supports the local authority, carers, and schools to promote the educational needs of children in care.
- The Isle of Wight Virtual School is now managed within the newly formed Education, Inclusion and Access department of children's services. Changes to strengthen and develop the Isle of Wight's Virtual School are currently being developed and we would welcome School's Forums comments to support this development.
- We recommend that the School Forum notes the content of this report.

End.