

Children & Young People in Care Pupil Premium Plus Policy Financial Year 2026/27



For:

Social Workers

Foster Carers

Designated Teachers

Virtual School

West Berkshire
Council
March 2026



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

Pupil Premium Plus Policy & Procedures

1. Introduction

The following policy takes into account the [Pupil Premium 2024 to 2025 Conditions of Grant](#) and additional advice published in: "[Pupil Premium: Virtual School Heads' Responsibilities](#)" (9 July 2014).

Throughout this policy, the Pupil Premium for children in care will be referred to as Pupil Premium Plus (abbreviated to PPP) to distinguish it from other forms of Pupil Premium allocations.

Virtual School Headteachers continue to be responsible for making sure there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium Plus funding to benefit children in care as described in their personal education plan (PEP).

LAs may not carry forward funding held centrally. Centrally held Pupil Premium Plus that has not been spent, or allocated to the child's education setting, by 31 March 2026 will be recovered by the DfE.

PPP does not have to be distributed on an even basis, given that children and young people in care have differing levels of need at different stages of being in care. The grant must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve outcomes and "narrow the gap".

Children adopted from care or who have left care:

Children who left care, following an Adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO) are entitled to Pupil Premium Plus payments totalling £2,690 per year. However, this funding comes from the government to the school and does not pass through the Virtual School. For this funding to come to schools, they must ensure that children are given the correct status on their Pupil Census returns. These payments are therefore outside the remit of this policy.

2. The Virtual School's Use of Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

Overall principles underpinning our needs led model:

The Virtual School Headteacher is responsible for the use of Pupil Premium Plus to improve outcomes for children in care, wherever they live.

In West Berkshire, we take a needs-led approach to the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus; we acknowledge that different children will present with different needs, and at different times. Therefore, our use of funding must give us the flexibility to meet the needs of our children as and when they arise.

The Pupil Premium Plus grant for the 2026-27 financial year is £2,690 per child. Our needs-led model requires us to split our funding into two categories: Retained funding for centralised resources; and core funding for schools. These categories are detailed as follows:

Retained Funding:

The Virtual School Headteacher also retains a level of funding in order to provide specialist support to schools on a needs-led basis. This requires the Virtual School to buy-in to parallel services from the council, or linked agencies. In 2025-26, funding retained by the Virtual School will be used for the following activities and purposes:

Team	Purpose
Exclusion Reduction	Educational Psychology Service
Emotion-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Reduction	Emotional Health Academy
Attendance Monitoring & Support	Capita
Literacy and Numeracy Assessments	Cognition and Learning Team
PEP Co-ordination and school support	Virtual School Co-ordinators
Literacy and Numeracy activities	Letterbox Club Imagination Library SumDog

Core Funding to schools:

The Virtual School will offer a commitment of up to £1500 core funding to every statutory school aged child in mainstream education. This will be requested and approved through PEP meetings, is contingent upon schools engaging with the PEP process to the best of their abilities, and must be linked directly to improving educational outcomes for the child (which is covered in more detail below). In exceptional circumstances, the Virtual School headteacher may need to use their discretion to adjust the core funding to schools. The funding will be released at the following intervals (based on the financial year):

	Amount	Closing Date
Summer PEP	Up to £500	July 2025
Autumn PEP	Up to £1000 (to cover both the Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026 Terms)	December 2025
Spring PEP	N/A	N/A

Linking Core Funding to the Personal Education Plan (PEP):

The Pupil Premium Plus will only be provided to meet the needs identified in the PEP and will be tracked in the PEP with clear, precise quantitative (and exceptionally qualitative) targets for improvement. These needs should have a clear link to the child's education and should be linked to evidence-based approach, such as those detailed in the [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) Toolkit for Teaching and Learning](#).

The Pupil Premium Plus must be used to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:

- Academic achievement and progress
- Wider achievement (eg in an area in which the child is gifted and talented)
- Promoting good attendance
- Inclusion (by reducing internal and external exclusion)
- Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider

The PEP must show the precise target for improvement, expected outcomes and cost of the support. Subsequent PEP meetings should also evidence the impact that any funded support has had upon the child's educational outcomes.

A guide to how schools should use their Pupil Premium Plus can be found in section 3 of this document.

How and why will the amount of Pupil Premium Plus vary?

Children's needs vary and can 'spike' at different times, therefore our needs-led approach requires us to use funding flexibly to meet the precise needs of children in a timely way once these needs are made clear to us. In view of this, there will be variance in the amount of Pupil Premium Plus distributed to each child. Equally, some children and young people already have additional funding in place through EHCP (or other local inclusion) funding, which should meet their educational support needs.

In situations where core funding is not enough to meet a child's identified needs, this can be discussed at the PEP Meeting and additional funding requests can be submitted on an Appendix 3 Form (commonly referred to as an App 3 Request). This request should be submitted by the school, to the child's Virtual School Consultant, and should be costed accurately to help avoid delays in the decision-making process. Any such requests should be short-term and sustainable, as detailed in Section 3.

The Virtual School Headteacher will look at these on a case-by-case basis and make individual decisions accordingly. The Virtual School Headteacher will respond to App 3 requests in one of the following ways:

- Approval (the Virtual School agrees to the full amount of funding requested)
- Partial Approval (The Virtual School agrees to support funding, but at a lower amount than requested)
- No approval (The Virtual School will not release any additional funds)

Requests are more likely to be accepted if the recipient is at high risk: they may be out of school and requiring 1:1 tuition; at risk of permanent exclusion; at risk of exploitation; or the services funded by the child's school and those funded by the Virtual School (EHA, EPS, TTTS, etc) have already been exhausted.

In-Year School Moves:

For learners who start mid-way through the year (and are not part of the local authority's census) the Virtual School will use centrally held PPP to ensure that they receive the core funding commitment.

Where children move schools outside of 'standard transitions', the child's Virtual School Consultant may agree to an additional £500 of funding to support the child's first term in their new school, without this needing to be approved by the Virtual School Head. However, the planned expenditure of this additional funding – and the amount agreed – will need to be clearly set out within the PEP document, still linked to the criteria above.

3. Scope and Conditions of PPP Use For Education Settings

Schools' Use of Delegated Funding

As is the case for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), any funding from the Virtual School should be considered a top-up to the [notional, delegated funding within a mainstream school's existing budget](#). This delegated funding is assumed to be £6000 per child per year, pro-rated to £1000 per child, per school term.

Offering Sustainable Support

The Virtual School Headteacher is responsible for the sustainable use of our Pupil Premium Plus funding. As a result, funding must be used proportionately and fairly, while still on a needs-led basis; to overspend in one area could be detrimental to the emerging needs of others. Therefore, each PPP request needs to be considered on its own merits but should also be for a time-limited agreement. The Virtual School cannot provide long-term funding for high-cost interventions and would reasonably assume that, should such intervention be needed, schools make a request for an EHCP assessment, which will better meet the longer-term needs of a child.

Staffing Costs

In some circumstances, Pupil Premium Plus may be used towards staffing costs, if the staffing in question directly meets the specific needs of our children (such as providing 1:1 TA support or tuition). However, our funding may only cover the core salary costs of a staff member; it must not be used to fund additional employee costs (for example, National Insurance or Pension contributions).

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP):

Pupil Premium Plus cannot be used to fund activities and support that would normally be funded by a school or through an Education, Health and Care Plan. It is expected that children and young people in high-cost specialist provisions will have their needs fully met and do not require additional funding. In such cases PPP can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, for example in the interim where a substantial change in need is identified through the annual review process.

Children Moving Out of Area

Where a child moves out of area, the Virtual School retains responsibility for the child's education. It may therefore be appropriate for the Virtual School to approve funding expenditure that ensures children are able to access an education package without delay or drift, while they go through a significant change.

There is a particular challenge in circumstances where the child also has an EHCP. In such circumstances, the Virtual School Headteacher may offer funding support, however this must be a short-term, 'bridging' arrangement to support children while their EHCP is transferred. Any such arrangement should not last for longer than one school term, by which point the Virtual School would reasonably expect the receiving Local Authority to have adopted the child's EHCP. These arrangements are still also expected to follow the guidance contained within this policy, including the need for appropriate safeguarding and diligence checks to be carried out before tutors are provided.

Third-Party Educational Provision:

Any core funding request that includes alternative provision provided by a third party (eg tuition agency) will only be approved if the appropriate checks and measures have been completed. These are listed on the PEP form and can be requested from the Virtual School. Where such services are facilitated and arranged by the child's school, the school retains responsibility for undertaking appropriate checks on providers and maintaining ongoing checks with providers. Payments for Alternative Provision are made to schools on a reimbursement basis; schools would pay the providers, and our funds would be paid to the school to reimburse them.

Requests from private providers:

We will provide extra funding to independent education providers only in exceptional circumstances because these placements are already funded at a high level by central budgets.

Approval of Pupil Premium Plus Requests

The vast majority of Pupil Premium Plus requests will be approved, however applications that should be funded by other parties (for example, Children's Services, the school, the appropriate SEND department, or the carer) are likely to be declined. It is at the discretion of the Virtual School Headteacher to apply the guidance below on a case-by-case basis; there may be extenuating circumstances that impact the decision to approve (or not approve) requests.

Proposals to pool Pupil Premium Plus in a school to enhance services are allowed, providing its use is directly linked to children in care's needs via the PEP. However, pooled funding should not result in interventions being denied because funding has 'run out'.

The table below should prove helpful in identifying the best ways to allocate funding:

Applications that will be approved:	Applications that won't be approved:
1:1 Tuition	Transport Costs
1:1 Teaching Assistant Support	School Uniform
ELSA support	School Equipment
Literacy and Numeracy Interventions	1:1 Teaching Assistants used by the whole class
Revision Guides	School Trips which are funded through the foster carer allowance
Books to encourage reading or that build on the work done in the classroom	Extracurricular activities which are funded through the foster carer allowance (eg cubs, scouts, girl guides, youth club, theatre club, football club, etc.)
Settling to Learn Interventions, eg 'Draw and Talk'	Therapy (eg Art Therapy, Play Therapy, Psychotherapy) <i>These need to go through Children's Services to ensure the right person is appointed and the intervention is monitored through the Care Plan</i>
Music Lessons through Berkshire Maestros or an independent provider who has undergone appropriate safeguarding checks	School interventions that could be accessed anyway, eg homework club, revision classes
Mentoring for learning or behaviour	Provision that should be covered by an Education, Health and Care Plan where a child has one.
A laptop and relevant software, including web-safety.	
Alternative providers as a means of reducing the risk of exclusion (where the costs would not be covered by an EHCP)	
Alternative settings to provide access to examinations (eg after a sudden change in home placements)	

Please note that national and international studies have shown that one to one tuition has a disproportionately positive impact for children in care.

16+ Funding

Whereas Pupil Premium Plus is a per-pupil payment to the Virtual School, funding for young people in care aged 16-18 (ie those in sixth-form, attending college or in apprenticeships) is instead a lump-sum grant. This grant is confirmed to the Virtual School each year, for the current financial year.

As the nature of 16+ funding differs significantly from the Pupil Premium Plus grant, our expenditure thereof also needs to differ. This is best summarised as supporting access to further education, as opposed to providing intervention to support statutory education.

Requests for support should come to the Virtual School via a child's VS Consultant at a PEP meeting, with a clear rationale for how any expenditure would support a young person in accessing further education. Requests that are likely to be approved would come under one of the following, provided they wouldn't ordinarily be covered by any other allowances:

- ESOL (English as a Second Language) tuition, provided by our in-house tutor
- Providing a laptop or device for a young person to access online learning
- Support for bicycle costs to support travel to and from settings
- Course-specific resources (ie precise resources, without which a young person would not be able access their core learning on a course). An example of this could be protective equipment for equestrian courses.
- One-off or short-term reintegration and reengagement activities (which could include short-term tuition to ensure readiness for next steps)
- Funding for additional qualifications (eg Functional Skills assessments) that would ensure access requirements for any courses are met.

Recoupment policy

We will not recoup Pupil Premium Plus where a child moves during the term, providing the school can evidence that they have spent the termly allocation on the pupil. We will also provide the new school with sufficient funding to secure a successful transition.

We reserve the right to recoup funding if there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the child's needs.

4. Management and accountability

The Virtual School Headteacher will be accountable to the Corporate Parenting Panel and the DfE for setting up a transparent and rigorous allocation process and ensuring maximised impact of the grant. If any of the grant is unspent at the end of the financial year, it must be returned to the DofE and cannot be carried forward into the next financial year.

5..Pupil Premium Plus for Children and Young People from other Local Authorities

Different approaches will be adopted by different Local Authorities; this is to be expected given their local contexts vary so much. Different authorities will likely have different numbers of school-aged children in care, different Virtual School Team structures and different operational budgets for their Virtual Schools.

West Berkshire schools with children looked after by other local authorities must contact the Headteacher of the relevant Virtual School (ie within the local authority that cares for the child) to request their Pupil Premium Plus policy. This is not necessarily the same local authority that the school is in. Virtual School Headteachers are responsible for the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus for the children in their cohort, regardless of where a child is being educated.

6..The Early Years Pupil Premium

Children looked after by the LA, aged 9 months or older and accessing funded entitlement hours, will attract EYPP funding of up to 15 hours per week if they have:

- been in local-authority care for 1 day or more in England or Wales
- been adopted from care in England or Wales
- left Local Authority care under an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order. For children in care, the local authority who has responsibility for the child will need to identify eligible children through the Virtual School Headteacher. This includes children in care placed out of authority. The Virtual School Headteacher is not responsible for children looked after by other authorities who are placed in their authority and attend education settings there.

Local authorities should only fund providers for the EYPP based on the number of hours of early education a child receives. An important principle of the EYPP is that the funding follows the child; if a child moves to a different provider during the year, local authorities should determine the allocation of EYPP that is proportionate to the number of hours of early education that a child takes up at the new provider. Moving between providers should not result in loss of funding by providers as this should be calculated on actual number of hours.

In West Berkshire, it has been agreed that the EYPP will be distributed by the Early Years Service Team. Applications are made through the Early Years Funding Portal. The provider will need to see supporting evidence of the child's eligibility – usually a copy of a court order or confirmation from the child's social worker. For further information or advice please email: Earlyyears-service@westberks.gov.uk

Virtual School Enquiries

This can also be used outside of term time and is accessed by a range of Virtual School staff virtualschool@westberks.gov.uk

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We are committed to being accessible to everyone.
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