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# Suspension & Exclusions

# Summary of Expectations

**Surrey Virtual School**

**September 2023**

**(updated August 2024)**

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| Title | Suspension & Exclusions Summary of Expectations |
| Purpose |  |
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**Introduction**

The Virtual School has a statutory remit to promote the education of specific vulnerable cohorts of children and young people. Children that are looked-after (including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASYP)), Previously Looked After (PLAC), those who have a Social Worker or who are in Kinship care have all had adverse childhood experiences that can impact on their behaviour, and in many cases their mental health. It is important to remember this when considering how best to support the child or young person with their learning and the design and application of the school’s behaviour policies. Please note that children in ‘kinship’ care may be distributed across all 4 groups of children in scope of the Virtual School

The role of the Virtual School in every Local Authority is to advise schools to support all children to avoid exclusion from school becoming necessary. In addition to this, Governing bodies, Head Teachers and Designated Teachers must have regard to the Department of Education’s [guidance on Suspension and Permanent Exclusions](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66be0d92c32366481ca4918a/Suspensions_and_permanent_exclusions_guidance.pdf) for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England. In line with that guidance, Head Teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any looked-after child.

For looked after children, this expectation is also underpinned by statutory [corporate parenting](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a93eb3ae5274a5b87c2fde4/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf) responsibilities. which extend to all who work in the local authority The critical question that local authorities should ask is: ‘would this be good enough for my child?’ LAs expect all relevant partners, including schools to assist them in applying corporate parenting principles in relation to the services they provide.

Exclusion for these vulnerable groups can often lead to a lifelong impact. The Department for Education states that being excluded from school sets children and young people up for worse health and well-being in later life.

In this document, the responsibilities and expectations of schools and education partners to work to avoid the need for exclusion for children and young people in our cohorts. Surrey Virtual School has varying legal responsibilities for the vulnerable groups that we champion.

For further guidance, please refer to:

1. [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)
2. [Promoting the education of children with a Social Worker and children in Kinship care arrangements: Virtual School Head role extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](http://Promoting the education of children with a Social Worker and children in Kinship care arrangements: Virtual School Head role extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk))

**Children Looked After (CLA)**

[*DfE data*](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2023) (2023) *shows that* the *percentage of pupils with one or more suspension has increased across all key social care groups and the overall pupil population, with figures at their highest for six years. Within the key social care groups, CLA for less than 12 months were the most likely to be suspended.*

Where a looked-after child is **at risk** of either suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher should contact the relevant authority’s Virtual School Headteacher as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion. Where relevant, the school should also engage with a child’s Social Worker, Foster carers, or Children’s home workers.

All looked-after children should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of the child’s care plan. This should be reviewed every term and any concerns about the pupil's behaviour should be recorded, as well as how the pupil is being supported to improve their behaviour and reduce the likelihood of exclusion

Governing bodies, Head Teachers and Designated Teachers must have regard to the Department for Education’s statutory guidance on Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England. In line with that guidance, Head Teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any looked-after child.  
  
Contact can be made via [virtual.school@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)**

Previously Looked After Children are more than twice as likely to be suspended than their peers as well as more likely to be excluded. Permanent exclusions of PLAC children accounted for five per cent of Surrey exclusions in the academic year 22/23.

Where a Child/Young Person (CYP) is a Previously Looked After Child (PLAC), the LA no longer have corporate parental responsibility. Education provision would be supported as any other CYP dependent on the criteria mentioned above, via SEND or Inclusion services as appropriate. Surrey Virtual School (SVS) may advocate for the CYP but have no formal responsibility or case management responsibilities.   
SVS should be notified at [virtualschool.plac@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool.plac@surreycc.gov.uk) to enable advice and guidance.

*Where previously looked-after children face the risk of being suspended or permanently excluded, the school should engage with the child’s parents and the school’s DT. The school may also seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support the pupil.*

[Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66be0d92c32366481ca4918a/Suspensions_and_permanent_exclusions_guidance.pdf)

**Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) and those in Kinship Care.**

Children with a Social Worker are between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers. This group are also over 10 times more likely to attend state-funded alternative provision settings than all other pupils.

The Surrey Virtual School have [extended duties](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker/promoting-the-education-of-children-with-a-social-worker-and-children-in-kinship-care-arrangements-virtual-school-head-role-extension) to promote the education of children with a Social Worker and children in kinship care arrangements. The role is strategic and Virtual Schools do not case hold.

**\* When we refer to plans in this document, we are referring to:**

* PEP (Personal Education Plan) - Statutory plan for Children Looked After
* EPPLAC (Education Plan for Post Looked After Children) – Surrey Virtual School recommendation for PLAC
* CiN or CP plan (Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) – Statutory plans for CWSW

## Suspensions & Exclusions of Virtual School cohorts

Carers/Parents should:

* Promote the value of education and have high expectations
* Communicate promptly with the education setting and Social Worker about the child’s well-being - particularly following a return from a school holiday, e.g. by checking in with staff during that first week back to ensure the child has settled back into the school routine.
* Encourage and support children to follow guidelines for behaviour and conduct in their setting
* Raise any concerns about presenting behaviours directly with the Designated Teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead, for example, specific trigger points where a child may need additional support
* Use meetings where plans\* are drawn up/discussed to identify strategies that the adults supporting the child can use and targets for the child
* Work with children to understand any reasons they may have for changes in behaviour

Education settings should:

* Be aware of challenges faced by our specific vulnerable cohorts of children and young people, particularly the impact of attachment, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences
* Consider the impact that past and current experiences can have on presenting behaviour
* Make every effort to enable young people to continue attending school, mindful that this provides an important point of safety and stability for many children
* Differentiate approach to maladaptive behaviour
* Work with children to ensure that they feel safe, happy and understood
* Avoid using punitive approaches wherever possible, using a trauma informed, relational and restorative approach as an alternative
* Monitor children showing persistent stress related and maladaptive behaviour OR behaviours that are telling us they are not coping
* Proactively engage with parents/carers, Surrey Virtual School and Social Workers
* Invite Surrey Virtual School and Social Workers to restorative meetings
* Identify and address the needs of children to reduce their risk of suspension and exclusion
* Use meetings where plans\* are drawn up/discussed to identify strategies, targets and immediate suitable provision

School Governors should:

* Be aware of challenges faced by our specific vulnerable cohorts of children and young people, particularly the impact of attachment, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences
* Consider the impact that past and current experiences can have on behaviour
* Proactively challenge Headteachers on the use of punitive approaches to behaviour management
* Ensure schools access appropriate training and development to ensure **all** staff are aware of the possible impacts of attachment and trauma on learning and presenting behaviours
* Encourage Headteachers to consider a child’s looked after, PLAC and CIN/CP status when issuing suspensions and exclusions, mindful that these children are often overrepresented in suspensions and exclusions
* Monitor the school’s exclusion data to track the use of exclusions for vulnerable groups, comparing with DfE data for these groups nationally

Social Workers and/or Independent Reviewing Officers (for CLA) should:

* Promote the value of education and have high expectations for children
* Communicate with the education setting about the child’s well-being
* Encourage children, (and parents/carers) to follow the guidelines for behaviour and conduct in their setting
* Raise any concerns about behaviour management directly with the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead
* Use meetings where plans\* are drawn up/discussed to identify strategies and targets
* Work with children to understand any reasons they may have for changes in behaviour
* Refer to specific practical guidance for these conversations in the following resources

[Corporate Parenting - At a Glance ‘Promoting the Education of CWSW in their plans’.pdf - All Documents](https://orbispartnerships.sharepoint.com/sites/corporate_parenting/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fcorporate%5Fparenting%2FDocuments%2FResources%20for%20social%20workers%2FAt%20a%20Glance%20%E2%80%98Promoting%20the%20Education%20of%20CWSW%20in%20their%20plans%E2%80%99%2Epdf&viewid=bfea95a1%2D7d9e%2D4345%2D915b%2D07bb8a815f90&parent=%2Fsites%2Fcorporate%5Fparenting%2FDocuments%2FResources%20for%20social%20workers) (the summary)[Corporate Parenting - At a Glance ‘Promoting the Education of CWSW in their plans’.pdf - All Documents](https://orbispartnerships.sharepoint.com/sites/corporate_parenting/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fcorporate%5Fparenting%2FDocuments%2FResources%20for%20social%20workers%2FAt%20a%20Glance%20%E2%80%98Promoting%20the%20Education%20of%20CWSW%20in%20their%20plans%E2%80%99%2Epdf&viewid=bfea95a1%2D7d9e%2D4345%2D915b%2D07bb8a815f90&parent=%2Fsites%2Fcorporate%5Fparenting%2FDocuments%2FResources%20for%20social%20workers) (the full doc)

* Surrey Virtual School will:Promote the value of education and have high expectations for children
* Provide and deliver CPD opportunities in restorative practice and attachment and trauma awareness for all staff in the school setting
* Work closely with settings and Social Workers to address any changes in behaviour
* Explore additional support strategies alongside settings and Social Workers
* Review suspension and exclusion data monthly across all groups
* Challenge and support settings to explore alternatives to suspensions/ exclusions
* For children placed outside of Surrey, liaise with relevant Virtual School Heads and other Local Authority services in the area, as needed
* Use meetings where plans\* are drawn up/discussed to identify strategies and targets
* Consider any change needed to a child’s education provision where the setting is not meeting a child’s needs
* Report on the suspension and exclusion trends of Surrey’ Looked After Children and those with a Social Worker
* For Looked After Children, attend the Governing board meeting alongside the child’s Social Worker to help the Governing board understand the pupil’s background and circumstances or consult with the Social Worker to amend the CiN/CP plan or EPLAC

Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Services should:

* Support settings to adopt more inclusive practice, including through the Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice service (STIPS) and use of restorative approaches
* Provide support for any appeals against exclusions
* Offer support through the Surrey Virtual School linked Educational Psychology service to identify individual and whole-school strategies for restorative practice

Education and Lifelong Learning will

* Ensure that the needs of children in scope of this summary are carefully considered in all activities undertaken and commissioned to support inclusive practice in education settings and school improvement
* That a shared understanding of the wide reaching impacts of suspensions and permanent exclusions for these children informs development of policy and practice in these key and related areas.

**Process for Suspensions of Children in Care**

**A diagram of a flowchart

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**Considerations for Children with a Social Worker**

* Schools should consider an evaluation of their whole school approach to supporting inclusion through belonging and relational approaches to support pupils with ACEs. Is the school’s behaviour policy sufficiently flexible to respond to the specific needs of this cohort? Schools can access CPD sessions and programme through the SVS the SES Hub [Surrey Virtual School Training & CPD Brochure 2024/2025 Academic School Year! | Surrey Education Services (surreycc.gov.uk)](https://surreyeducationservices.surreycc.gov.uk/Article/162016)
* Have alternative solutions been explored?
* Schools and Social Workers can book a consultation with the Virtual School and seek advice and guidance using an online [consultation form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RbVh2UwQ0E6Fgh9XDwWVzdzkYGz-0GlPpa0m0KpjZs1URUZBQjJCWkdHVlBYTDkzRFRVVUZVMVFaMy4u) and emailing [cwswconsultations@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cwswconsultations@surreycc.gov.uk)
* Schools must take account of the legislative changes laid out in the DfE document - [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66be0d92c32366481ca4918a/Suspensions_and_permanent_exclusions_guidance.pdf).
* When headteachers suspend or permanently exclude a pupil they must, without delay, notify parents and the child’s SW and/or VSH. This should include the period of the suspension or permanent exclusion and the reason(s) for it.
* headteachers should notify the Social Worker and VSH (along with the parents, governing board and LA) when rescinding or withdrawing an exclusion.
* Ensure there is a process for the above
* Both the Social Worker and/or VSH, must be informed when a governing board meeting is taking place, in order to share information.
* Social Workers and VSHs, must be allowed to join a governing board meeting or IRP via the use of remote access; Where it is not possible to have in person representation by Social Workers or VSH, written statements should be provided as far as possible.
* It is likely that pupils with a Social Worker have experienced or are experiencing adversity or difficulties. Social Workers can provide important information that helps the governing board understand the experiences of a pupil and their welfare. Social Workers should, as far as possible, attend the governing board meeting to share information. This should include helping to identify how the pupil’s circumstances may have influenced the circumstances of the pupil’s suspension or permanent exclusion and ensuring that safeguarding needs and risks and the child’s welfare are taken into account.
* Where a Social Worker is present, the panel must have regard to any representation made by the Social Worker of how the pupil’s experiences, needs, safeguarding risks and/or welfare may be relevant to the pupil’s permanent exclusion. Where a VSH is present, the panel must have regard to any representation made by the VSH of how any of the child's background, education and safeguarding needs were considered by the headteacher in the lead up to the permanent exclusion or relevant to the pupil’s permanent exclusion