



Walsall Virtual School

Pupil Premium Plus



Walsall Council



Introduction

This policy sets out how Walsall Virtual School will distribute and monitor Pupil Premium Plus for children in care.

This policy should be read with the following government guidance:

- DfE Pupil Premium 2025/26: conditions of grant Pupil Premium:
- Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders – March 2025
- Pupil Premium-Virtual School Heads' Responsibilities
- Early Years Pupil Premium: Guide for Local Authorities
- The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities
- Promoting the education of children in care and previously looked after children Statutory guidance for local authorities

The Pupil Premium Plus is grant funding from the DfE to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and to close the attainment gap with their peers.

For the financial year 2025/26 the Virtual School will receive £2630 of PP+ funding for eligible pupils from Year R to 11 who are in the care of Walsall Local Authority*

The Virtual School is also responsible for managing post 16 Pupil Premium funding.

Pupil Premium Plus funding for previously looked after children who have left care through adoption, a Special Guardianship Order, a Child Arrangement Order or a Residence Order is paid directly to schools not managed by the Virtual School.

*children in care for at least one day in the previous financial year



Eligibility

Eligible pupils who are looked after by Walsall are identified by the local authority on the DfE return SSDA903 in March of each year

Changes to how we distribute Pupil Premium Plus in 2024/25 are as follows:

- From April 2025 PP funding has increased by £60 to make a notional figure of £2630 per child
- Children and young people between the ages of four to sixteen years are eligible
- Children and young people are eligible to receive PP+ from the first day that they enter care
- The overall grant allocated to each LA is calculated on a per capita basis. This is based on the census of the previous year. However, it does not have to be distributed on a per capita 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 Head and used to improve outcomes and “narrow the gap” as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher and Social Worker.

Pupil Premium Plus Guidelines

- The Virtual School Head is responsible for the use of PP+ to improve outcomes for all children in the care of Walsall Council, wherever they live the funding will be provided according to the needs of the child.
- In Walsall, there is a completely needs driven model for allocating PP+.
 - At the time at which they first come into care the allocation of PP+ will be on a needs driven basis as agreed at the PEP meeting.
 - In the case of a child who leaves the care system and then returns within the same financial year the allocation of PP+ will be on a needs driven basis as agreed at the PEP meeting.
- The impact of these PP+ interventions will be reviewed by Virtual School Team.
- Walsall Council and the Virtual School Head are corporate parents, so the question ‘would this be good enough for my child?’ is a central one in making decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of PP+.

Pupil Premium funding- Improving educational outcomes

- Children's needs vary and can 'spike'
- For some children £2630 is only a fraction of the cost of the support they need e.g.
 - Children who come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are behind academically
 - Children who have to move into or out of county in an emergency
 - Children placed out of county in other LAs where the level of support from Virtual School Teams may not be the same and who therefore will lose out without additional help
 - Children where there is a significant and often delayed reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in hard to anticipate behavioural 'spikes'

The Conditions of Grant has been updated to support effective spending by schools. There is now a 'menu of approaches' set by the DfE, which has been informed by evidence of effective practice.

Since April 2024, Walsall Virtual School has requested that schools use their Pupil Premium Plus funding for children in care in line with 'the menu of approaches' this will ensure that funding for children in care is being spent on strategies and interventions that are well evidenced to directly improve educational outcomes.

The 'menu of approaches' has been developed in line with the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF's) 3-tiered approach to help schools allocate spending across the following 3 key areas:

High-quality teaching, such as staff professional development - CPD sessions which would give teachers a solid understanding of how early experiences of trauma, neglect, or multiple placement moves can impact a child's learning, behaviour, and relationships in school.

Targeted academic support- One to one or small group tutoring, targeted interventions to support language, literacy and numeracy development, and teaching assistant deployment and interventions that are additional to interventions identified through SEN Support or the child's EHCP .

Wider strategies, such as supporting pupils social, emotional and behavioural needs, supporting attendance and extracurricular activities

Schools are not required to allocate pupil premium to every approach on the menu, but any activity funded by the pupil premium must fall under one of the approaches listed above. All funding request that fall outside of the approaches will be declined.

The target page on our ePEP will be updated to include drop down boxes for each approach.

- In view of this, Pupil Premium Plus funds should be used to close the attainment and progress gap between children in care and their peers. The money should not be used to replace funds which would otherwise be provided from the main school budget, notional SEN funding, social services or by the foster carer. It is expected that discussions on the use of Pupil Premium should be in partnership with the designated teacher, social worker, foster carer, and where age appropriate the young person

Suggested uses of Pupil Premium funding to improve educational outcomes

- Classroom initiatives that personalise and differentiate the learning for the child/young person
- Classroom initiatives to improve precision teaching
- Extra activities designed to inspire, stretch, motivate and re-engage young people
- Staff development to further develop skills and knowledge. This includes training on Attachment Needs, Trauma, Resilience, ELSA, Emotion Coaching etc.
- Interventions to improve attendance and reduce exclusions
- Additional learning opportunities in school holidays, e.g. GCSE Revision Days or camps.
- Educational enrichment experiences linked to the curriculum such as music lessons, access to the arts, drama, cultural enrichment
- One-to-one tuition, e.g. in Maths and English
- Supporting transition, such as moving between schools, key stages or lessons
- Extra-curricular clubs that meet identified needs in the PEP.

Your Virtual School Officer can provide further advice and guidance on best practice.



The Virtual School will not normally support the use of Pupil Premium Plus for the following:

- Funding education provision, tutoring or mentoring that is part of the young person's statutory education entitlement. This includes mentoring by the school's internal mentor.
- Giving young people access to existing arrangements, e.g. Homework Club
- School trips, which are effectively part of the Curriculum - this includes trips abroad
- School equipment e.g. stationery, DT- food ingredients, laptops, revision guides etc.
- Contributing to the salaries of substantive staff (as interventions should be time-limited)
- Generic interventions which are not individual to each person's needs
- Reduced class sizes
- School Uniform
- School Meals
- Transport costs to school, events or clubs
- IT access which should be provided through home
- School rewards
- Extracurricular clubs outside of school that do not meet any identified needs in the PEP

Management and accountability

The Head of the Virtual School will be accountable to the Virtual School Management Board and the Corporate Parenting Board for setting up a transparent and rigorous allocation process and ensuring maximised impact of the grant.

- The PP+ can only be provided to meet the needs identified in a high quality Personal education Plan (PEP) with clear quantitative and qualitative targets for improvement, underpinned by well-targeted support.
- The PEP must show the baseline data, targets for improvement, expected outcomes and cost of support.

National best practice recommends that PEPs should be updated termly i.e. 3 times per academic year. Please note that PEP meetings can be held whenever there is a change of educational need, including a young person who may be missing from education. The PEP can also be updated at the same time as EHCP reviews.

Allocation of funding to schools removed

- There will be no termly payments made to schools
- There is no limit to the amount of funding that can be requested as long as it used to support a target identified in the child's PEP
- All PP+ must be requested through a fully costed high quality PEP and submitted to the Virtual School for approval
- Pupil Premium requests can be made at any time during the academic year. You do not need to wait for the PEP meeting to take place to request funding



Additional resources provided by the Virtual School funded through pupil premium

Walsall Virtual School invests a significant proportion of Pupil Premium Plus funding into a wide range of centrally commissioned resources, interventions, and enrichment activities for children in care. These include targeted academic support, extracurricular opportunities, and projects designed to raise aspirations and engagement. In addition, the Virtual School delivers high-quality training and professional development for designated teachers, school staff, and wider professionals to ensure that schools are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to meet the complex needs of children in care. To ensure transparency and track impact, the Virtual School will record the cost of all centrally funded support in each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP). For example, Educational Psychologist and Senior Mental Health Practitioner involvement is costed at £300 per half day session, and the cost of school training and enrichment activities will vary depending on the type and activity. .



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

- Different approaches will be adopted by different LAs, as the contexts vary so much, in terms of number of school-aged children in care, the size of Virtual School team and the existing operational budget for the Virtual School team (both vary enormously between LAs)
- Walsall schools who have children in care from other Local Authorities on their roll must contact the Head of the relevant Virtual School to request their Pupil Premium Plus policy, as nationally, all Heads of Virtual schools are responsible for the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus for all school aged Children and Young People in the care of their authorities, even though the child/young person is educated in a Walsall school.

Allocation of grant to Special/Alternative/PRU/Independent providers

- Pupil Premium Plus will only be paid to independent special schools in exceptional circumstances. This is because the provision required by pupils in these settings is agreed at the time of placement and already invoiced and paid in full by Walsall Council. Exceptional circumstances are identified through the young person's needs and identified support, evidenced as additional to what the provider would be reasonably expected to provide.

Early Years Pupil Premium (pre-school)

- All children in care aged three or four years who are accessing the free early education entitlement have been eligible to receive an allocation of up to £570.00, depending on the number of hours which the child attends a registered nursery or childminder.
- All early years Pupil Premium will need to be requested through the local authority where the child attends school. Any additional funding above the allocated £570.00 needs to be requested from the Virtual School who looks after the child. All early years pupil premium spend must be recorded in the child's PEP.

Pupil premium for previously looked-after children

- The Pupil Premium allocated for 2025 to 2026 will include pupils recorded in the October 2023 Census and alternative provision census who had been looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted, or placed on a special guardianship order or child arrangement order (previously known as a residence order).
- This group of children are collectively referred to as post-LAC in the conditions of grant. Schools will receive £2630 for each child recorded as 'post-LAC' in the census. This will be allocated directly to academies or via the local authority for maintained schools.
- The Virtual School Head does not have responsibility for the use of this funding but schools are advised to work with parents to agree the most effective use and how this can be monitored and reported.

Please note that PP+ is not a personal budget for individual children. The VSH manages the PP+ allocation for the benefit of their cohort of children in care and allocate according to children's needs.



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