

Walsall Virtual School Newsletter

Summer 2024

Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the summer Walsall Virtual School newsletter!

In this newsletter please find updates on Virtual School projects, training dates for this term and other information we think you will find useful.

As always, if you have any thoughts, questions or ideas, do not hesitate to contact us at walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk



Virtual School Summer Term Projects and Updates

Nurture UK

Nurture gets to the heart of a child's challenges and supports children and young people to build connections and resilience. It is a highly effective way of supporting improved behaviour and increased attendance in schools, leading to better attainment and reduced exclusions.



A nurturing school is a place where pupils benefit from an approach that supports children and young people with their specific needs, with the heart of the school focus being that learning is understood developmentally based on the Six Principles of Nurture and the use of the Boxall Profile ® Online.

As a Virtual School, we are taking part in the National Nurturing Schools programme and as part of this programme, based on the Six Principles of Nurture, we have developed 6 Pledges to children and young people.

Our Pledges are:

1. We will work with adults who support you to help them understand that everyone's learning journey is different
2. We will support you to feel safe to learn wherever you are
3. We will get to know you and your interests so we can help you succeed
4. We will use words you understand and listen to what you say
5. We understand you may communicate your feelings in different ways
6. We are with you every step of your learning journey and will support you in any changes you face.

We are keen to share our pledges with all our stakeholders and as we move forwards will share how we put these pledges into action.



Walsall Council



AV1 Robots

We are working with 'No Isolation' to use their AV1 Robots to support our children who are on the roll of a school but are not attending education due to illness. AV1 telepresence robots connect absent students to learning, ensure belonging, and support reintegration back to the classroom by having a robot in school to represent and connect the children learning from home. The AV1 robot, which children connect to via the AV1 app, gives them a live connection to school, so they can learn alongside their peers and maintain a sense of belonging. We will be able to use these robots to support our children from September 2024.



For more information on the AV1 robots visit [About AV1 \(noisolation.com\)](https://www.noisolation.com)

Attachment Aware Schools Project

Our Attachment Aware Schools project continues on a rolling programme. The aim of our project is to develop and embed attachment and trauma aware practice across the schools in Walsall.

The AASP is a two-year project where schools work towards achieving a bronze (12 months), silver (18 months) and gold (24 months) certificate of achievement.

Schools can further develop their practice and work towards achieving the platinum award 6 months after completing the gold award.

This term we are pleased to announce our first Academy Trust has joined the AASP. We welcome the Mercian Trust schools, Bloxwich Academy, Barr Beacon School, Smestow Academy and Wednesfield Academy.

We have also welcomed Blakehall Heath Junior school, King Charles Primary and Bentley West Primary onto the Project.

We are thrilled to have another school gain their Platinum Award. Well done New Invention Infants!

For more information about the Attachment Aware Schools Project, please visit Walsall Virtual School - [Attachment Aware Schools Project](https://www.walsallvirtualschool.gov.uk) or email walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

Attachment Aware Trauma Informed Practitioner Award

As part of our Attachment Aware Schools Project, we are excited to offer practitioner training to strengthen skills and knowledge, to support adults working with children and young people who have experienced trauma, neglect or loss.

This is a three-day practical course which is suited to professionals who are working with children, young people and families and want to develop skills and knowledge to provide a 'safe haven'. This course is tailored to individuals who work daily alongside and with children or young people, to strengthen inclusion, equity, and wellbeing in learning settings. It has been designed for designated teachers, staff who have been involved in the Walsall Attachment Aware Schools Project, ELSA trained staff, teaching assistants, mentors, coaches, teachers and others who have or want to focus on relationships, pedagogy, and theory, with practical strategies.

The course structure is over 3 days over the next academic year (Day 1: 02/10/2024, Day 2: 05/02/2025, Day 3: 07/05/2025) and each day will be in-person and run between 9.00am to 4.30pm.

If you would like any more information on this training please visit Walsall Virtual School - [Attachment Aware Trauma Informed Practitioner Status](https://www.walsallvirtualschool.gov.uk) or email walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

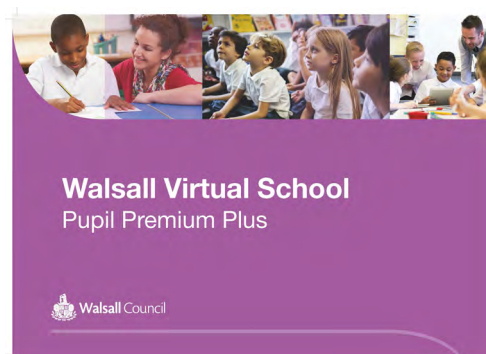


Pupil Premium Funding

We have recently updated our Pupil Premium Policy to request that schools use their Pupil Premium Plus funding for children in care in line with DfE's '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
- Targeted academic support, such as one to one or small group tutoring, targeted interventions to support language, literacy and numeracy development, targeted interventions for children with SEND and teaching assistant deployment and interventions.
- Wider strategies, such as supporting pupils social, emotion 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.
- Any funding request that fall outside of the approaches may be declined.
- The target page on our ePEP has been updated to include drop down boxes for each approach.



Children in Care and Care Leavers Awards

We are excited to announce our Children in Care and Care Leavers Awards Event will take place on Friday 30th August at Walsall Town Hall. The event will be in two parts - the award events for Primary Children will take place at 2pm-4.30pm and the secondary/post 16 awards event will take place from 7.00-10.00pm.

This event is a wonderful opportunity to recognise and celebrate the hard work and dedication of our children in care and care leavers, so we would like you to start nominating your children and young people for an award.

You will need to choose from one of the categories below.

- Academic Achievement: Children who have excelled in or made significant progress in their education.
- Personal Development: Children who have demonstrated personal growth, such as developing new skills or overcoming personal challenges.
- Community Involvement: Children who have made a positive impact in their community through volunteering or other forms of engagement.
- Leadership: Children who have demonstrated leadership qualities, such as taking initiative, being a positive role model, or inspiring others.
- Resilience: Children who have shown resilience in the face of adversity, such as overcoming difficult circumstances or bouncing back from setbacks.
- Creativity: Children who have demonstrated creativity in their artwork, writing, or other forms of self-expression.
- Participation: Children who have excelled in a particular activity or event



Please send us your nominations, along with a brief description of the student's achievements and why you believe they deserve to be recognised to walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk by Friday 19th July to ensure we get the certificates printed in time. No nominations will be accepted after this date.

Virtual School Projects, Activities and Trips

Vamos Theatre

Over the Easter holidays, we ran a project alongside Vamos Theatre to make a film about transitioning to a new school. 7 of our children worked with Vamos Theatre to write, film and star in 'Who Cares?'

The children have shared the film with Walsall Children's Services at our staff conference in June, and we're looking forward to sharing it with you very soon. See below for a sneak preview of what the children wore and their cheeky antics at the staff conference...



Forest School

We are excited to share that our new Forest School project for children in Years 3-6 is up and running. This half term we ran after school Forest School sessions at Watling Street Primary School for our Key Stage 2 children. They completed activities that had been planned to help children gain knowledge, behaviours and skills that will help build their cultural capital and self-esteem.



We look forward to extending the project further next year!

Silverstone Museum

During the May half term we took a group of children in years 7-9 to Silverstone Museum to explore Formula 1 racing! We were able to explore the 4000m2 exhibition, did a driving simulation, raced Scalextric cars and walked the track (at least some of it because it was raining!). It was a great STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) experience and rounded off with a great lunch at Pizza Hut!



Warwick Castle and Hatton Adventure Park

In the May half term holiday we also had a trip to Warwick Castle and Hatton Adventure Park for our Key Stage 2 children. At Warwick Castle, we were thrilled by live entertainment shows including 'The Falconers quest' and 'Wars of Roses Live' and terrified by The Dungeon! And then we had a lovely time at Hatton Adventure World exploring 'Dinosaurs Live', rides and animals!



What on Earth! and Storytime Magazines

If you have a child in years 2,3,4,7 or 8, you will have received an email asking you to complete an evaluation of the magazine subscriptions your child has received this year. It's really important that you complete these if you are able so that we can evaluate the impact and decide whether to continue the schemes next academic year.

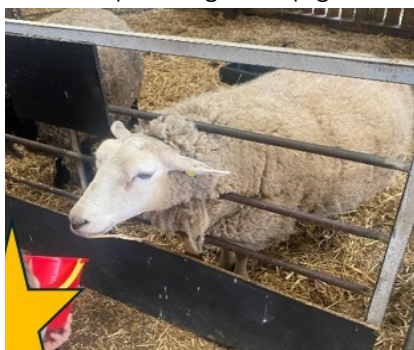
Please see the links below to complete the appropriate feedback for your child.

- Children in years 2, 3 and 4 have received monthly copies of Storytime magazine and an email with a Microsoft Forms evaluation has been sent to carers, so please complete that or click [here](#).
- Children in years 7 and 8 have received monthly copies of What on Earth!, a magazine created by Britannica and an email with a Microsoft Forms evaluation has been sent to carers, so please complete that or click [here](#).



EYFS Ash End Farm Trip

In April, the Virtual School Early Years team organised a visit to Ash End Farm for our children and families in early years. We had a very fun filled day, where we petted guinea pigs, fed sheep and ponies and enjoyed a ride on the bumpy tractor trail! We were lucky enough to hold baby chicks, and we were able to select our own eggs from the hen house. After a lovely picnic, we enjoyed exploring the park and had the opportunity to hold and learn about lots of bugs and critters. The children had such a fun day, and feedback from parents/ carers was really positive!



Upcoming Trips

We have 2 more trips this year. The first is the Year 6 residential to Hilston Park, which has a focus on transition to secondary school. And then we have a small number of tickets to the Ministry of Science show at the Wolverhampton Grand so have been contacting parents/carers and social workers of children who have expressed interested in science in their Personal Education Plans (PEPS).

Teacher's Tool Room

Training so far

This academic year our briefing sessions have been focussed on 'Language that Cares' for our Designated Teachers. The sessions focused on how we use language when talking to and about our young people and advice on how to write the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to the children, being mindful that these are documents the children should be at the centre of. We can see the impact of these sessions on how staff are writing the PEPs to the children so thank you for your work and effort in doing this. From September, we will be asking all schools to write the PEP to the child in order to meet the expected standard.

Slides from all 3 briefing sessions are available on our [website](#). If you need any further support, please don't hesitate to contact your schools Education Support Officer or walsallvirtuelschool@walsall.gov.uk

Training Calendar

We are in the process of adding the 2024/25 academic year training offer to our [website](#). To enable schools to book onto the autumn term training a full list has been added below. We will send out invites closer to each date but if you would like to book on any of the sessions, please contact us at walsallvirtuelschool@walsall.gov.uk

Title	Details	Delivered by	Dates	Location
Autumn Term DT Briefing Session	Early Years schools and settings 10.00am-11.00am Primary Schools 11.30-12.30pm Secondary Schools 1.30-2.30pm Post 16 providers 3.00-4.00pm	Virtual School Team	Thursday 25th September	Microsoft Teams
Introduction to Childhood Trauma and the Brain (primary schools)	This introductory session looks at the impact of childhood trauma on the brain and how these further impacts on learning. This session is aimed at designated teachers and safeguarding leads.	Emma Osborne – Senior Mental Health Practitioner	Tue 8th October 2024 11.00-1.00pm	Walsall Arena
Introduction into Using the Principles of PACE in Primary Schools	PACE is a therapeutic approach developed by psychologist Dr Dan Hughes. This introductory session looks at how the principles of PACE can be applied in primary schools. The session is aimed at staff who work directly with children and young people in school.	Emma Osborne – Senior Mental Health Practitioner	Tue 8th October 2024 1.30-3.30pm	Walsall Arena
Understanding the SDQ	The SDQ is used to measure a child's pro-social behaviour, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer difficulties. This training will provide better understanding of how the SDQ can be used to gain an insight into a child's SEMH Needs and how the Virtual School use the SDQ.	Dr Marnie Aston	Wednesday 6th November 2024 9.00am-12.00pm	Microsoft Teams
Introduction to Childhood Trauma and the Brain (secondary schools)	This introductory session looks at the impact of childhood trauma on the brain and how these further impacts on learning. This session is aimed at designated teachers and safeguarding leads.	Emma Osborne – Senior Mental Health Practitioner	Tue 26th Nov 2024 11.00am-1.00pm	Walsall Arena
Introduction into Using the Principles of PACE in Secondary Schools	PACE is a therapeutic approach developed by psychologist Dr Dan Hughes. This introductory session looks at how the principles of PACE can be applied in secondary schools. The session is aimed at staff who work directly with children and young people in school.	Emma Osborne – Senior Mental Health Practitioner	Tue 26th Nov 2024 1.30pm-3.30	Walsall Arena
Emotions in the early years	This one-day course will provide an overview of the different models of Emotion Coaching leaning into the original work of Gottman. There will be a focus on knowledge and skills needed for a coaching approach in the early years.	Dr Marnie Aston	27th Nov 9.30-3.30pm	Walsall Arena
FASD	Foetal Alcohol Awareness training will explain the concept of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, what it is and what might cause it. This course will talk about the signs and symptoms of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome as well as identifying the needs of the children diagnosed with it. Session 1 - 12th December, Session 2 -10th January	Dr Lisa Sabotig	12th December 2024 / 10th January 2024 1.00 - 3.30pm	Microsoft Teams

Carer Training

On 27th June, we ran training for carers at Manor Farm Community Association with a focus on learning about Walsall Virtual School and how we can support you and our children. We also looked at research and why it is says the roles of the parent/carers are so important and offered advice on how to support learning at home.

Feedback was really positive and we look forward to doing more of these sessions next year. If you would like to be a part of any of these, please contact us at walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

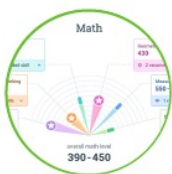
IXL

We have subscribed to the learning platform IXL, so all of our children and young people in Years 1-11 have access to the IXL English and maths programmes. IXL is personalised learning. With a comprehensive curriculum, individualised guidance and real-time analytics, IXL meets the unique needs of each learner.

The usernames are mostly the child's first name and initial of their last name, e.g. Joe Bloggs would be JoeB. The passwords are all walsallvs but you can log in and change this.

If you have any issues logging onto IXL, please contact your child's/school's Education Support Officer or email walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

Learning designed for your child



Real-Time Diagnostic

Find out what your child knows and next steps for growth with IXL's Real-Time Diagnostic



Unlimited Practice

Build a strong foundation of knowledge with unlimited practice in over 6,500 topics



Targeted Guidance

Discover personalised skill recommendations based on your child's practice



Mobile Apps

Take learning on the go with IXL's mobile apps



Awards & Certificates

Earn fun awards and certificates that celebrate hard work

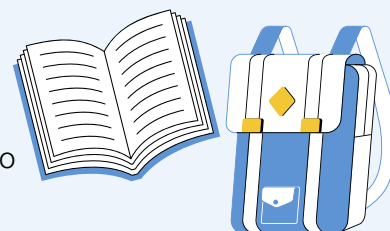
Secondary Transition – Year 6 to Year 7

If your young person is in Year 5 moving into Year 6 in September, it is time to start thinking about secondary school applications.

Parents/carers should complete an online application to the authority where the child resides by 31st October 2024. You will receive your offer by email on 1 March 2025. The emails are sent automatically over the course of the day.

The admissions system for children with EHC plans is different; you do not go through the normal admissions system. Our SEN team will support to ensure children in year 6 have their annual reviews of their EHCPs to then consult with secondary schools.

If you need any support with this, please contact us at walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk



Literacy Lounge

Magazine and Book Projects

As part of our Virtual School offer we have various magazine subscriptions and book projects. Please see below for the projects that started (or continued) in September:

- Children in years 1-8, have received monthly Book in a Bag packs this academic year. In the June pack we sent an evaluation form so please do take a photo and email that back to us.
- Children in years 2, 3 and 4 have received monthly copies of Storytime magazine and an email with a Microsoft Forms evaluation has been sent to carers, so please do complete that. This is the link - <https://forms.office.com/e/dWZKfxwdyG>
- Children in years 7 and 8 have received monthly copies of What on Earth!, a magazine created by Britannica and an email with a Microsoft Forms evaluation has been sent to carers, so please do complete that. This is the link - <https://forms.office.com/e/F3ZYzWa5mR>

The evaluations are really important to complete as they decide whether we continue the project next year.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting programme devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere. The programme continues to grow in the UK and across the world having reached it's 200 millionth book gifted in 2023.

Each month Dolly Parton's Imagination Library post high quality, age appropriate books to children from birth to age five. The books are specially wrapped and addressed to the child, and are delivered at no cost to the family.

In 2023 over 647,000 books were gifted in the UK with over 2,600 books to Walsall children aged between 0 and 5.

The books chosen for 2024 are:



The first book a child receives is **The Tale of Peter Rabbit** (customised version)
The month a child turns 5 they will receive **Just Imagine** (customised version)
Titles on this list are subject to change.

 GROUP 6 Children born in 2019	 GROUP 5 Children born in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clean Up The Beastly BunchWhen I Grow Up... DoctorThe Three WishesWild Wild WoodDog Loves Fairy TalesPumpkin Soup Drama LlamaThe ArtistBog BabyThe Greatest Show on Earth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funnybones: Bumps in the NightDo You Know? Level 1 - BBC Earth Animal FamiliesWe're Going to Find the MonsterGretel the Wonder MammothGrumpy MonkeyThe Truth About Yeti-corns5 Funny AnimalsDon't Say Elephant!Diggersaurus: Mission to MarsMy Magic FamilyHarriet the Strongest Girl in the WorldPoems Out Loud
 GROUP 4 Children born in 2021	 GROUP 3 Children born in 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">100 BirdsWho's Going to BedThe Little Red Hen (Ladybird First Favourites)Flora and Nora Hunt for TreasureGeoffrey Gets the JittersFlip, Flap, Find! Counting 1, 2, 3The Pirates on the BusCrash! Bang! Wallop!There's a Dragon in Your BookHey DuggeeThe Football BadgeAlfie Gets in FirstIf You're Happy and You Know It	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?Shark in the ParkBusy Day: AstronautFind Spot: The Rainy DayMeg & MogMagic Windows: My BodyPom Pom Gets the GrumpsLittle World: On the TrainMina and the Big BiteLittle Pop-Ups: Little Red Riding HoodLadybird First Favourite Nursery RhymesMy World, Your World
 GROUP 2 Children born in 2023	 GROUP 1 Children born in 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Peekaboo! FarmWhere is the Very Hungry Caterpillar?Rosie Dahl: ShapesSay Goodnight, Little KittenLadybird Photographic - 123Whose Nose?Baby Touch: RainbowBaby Touch: Nursery RhymesLadybird Photographic - My BodySpot Goes to the FarmMy First 100 WordsBaby Touch: Night-Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Baby Touch B&W FacesPeter Rabbit: Hello Peter!Moomin Baby: Words Tummy TimeConcertina BookBaby Touch: Toys: A Black-and-White BookAll About MeBaby Touch ColoursLadybird Photographic - Baby AnimalsHow to Feed Your Cheeky MonkeyWhose... Stripes?Baby Touch: I Love You



Penguin
Random House
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS

• Signifies a new book to the programme

Let's Talk!

Language is at the heart of everything, it is what is needed to thrive at home, school and in life in general. Sometimes it can be difficult to develop the skill of speaking and listening with our children and young people. In order to promote conversations, we are including a discussion box that might have a question, idea or picture to stimulate ideas and develop vocabulary.

This term we have a question for you to discuss and decide if you agree or disagree:



Agree

Should schools stay open all throughout the year?



Disagree

Discuss this debate question with your child or young person.

Discussion prompts and ideas

- Do you agree or disagree that schools should stay open and why?
- If you could choose to go to school all year round, would you go?
- How do you think parents, carers and teachers would feel about this question?
What do you think their answer would be?

You could have a debate with your young person and challenge their answers.

Some pointers for a healthy debate

- Speak confidently and slowly.
- Make eye contact.
- Use persuasive language and evidence towards why your argument is best.
- Research the topic and use facts and opinions from this as well as your own.
- You are allowed to challenge the other persons ideas, but in a respectful way.
- Finish with a conclusion or a strong statement about what you believe and why. Discuss this debate question with your child or young person.

