

Cambridgeshire Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Policy



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Introduction

Pupil Premium Plus funding (PP+) reflects the additional challenges faced by Children in Care and is intended to raise aspirations and improve educational outcomes. Schools must use it to meet the child's educational needs as outlined in their Personal Education Plan (PEP), taking in to account the views of the child, carers, and social workers. All spending must be linked to SMART targets in the PEP and funding requests are reviewed termly by the Virtual School.

For this policy the term 'school' should be taken to include all education providers. This policy references, and should be read in conjunction with, the relevant government guidance documents and national advice referenced in [linked documents](#) section.

Specific considerations for Children in Care

Challenges which may impact on the achievement of children and young people in care include:

- Trauma, attachment, separation and loss
- Placement moves
- School moves and fragmented or disrupted education
- The court process and uncertainty about the future
- Separation from siblings and worries about birth family
- Curriculum triggers e.g. birthdays and other celebrations, drugs education, mother's day
- [Transitions](#)
- Travel and distance from school
- Changes of social worker
- Peer and adult understanding of 'being in care'
- Risk of exploitation
- Intersectionality between protected characteristics ([click here to access a Barnado's report on double discrimination](#))

Allocations for children in Reception and of statutory school age

The DfE currently allocates to local authorities £2,630 of Pupil Premium Plus funding per child per annum. It is the responsibility of the Virtual School Head to determine the distribution of the grant.

In Cambridgeshire PP+ is distributed based on the child's needs as identified in the PEP. This could include:

- Raising aspirations and academic outcomes in all areas of the curriculum
- Promoting access, attendance, wellbeing and engagement in education
- Encouragement and support to aspire towards further education, higher education, employment or training
- Exposure to opportunities and experiences which promotes aspirations and skills development
- Access to enhanced careers advice and guidance and quality work experience
- Supporting effective [transitions](#) (planned endings and new beginnings)

Funding allocation is approved per term. It is not a long-term commitment; it should not be assumed that funding linked to a SMART target will automatically be approved in subsequent terms.

Allocations for children in Early Years provision

Children below statutory school age are eligible for Early Years PP+ funding, which currently amounts to £570 per year. This amount is distributed in three termly instalments and is paid by the local authority where the child is educated. Eligibility criteria are as follows:

- From 9 months of age, if the child is attending nursery **and** their foster carers qualify for nursery funding
- From the term after the child turns 2 years old, provided they are attending nursery.

Allocations for children in Post 16 provision

Cambridgeshire Virtual School has been allocated £116,835 for the academic year 2025-26 to support our cohort of post 16 children in care and care leavers.

For details of this please see the [Post-16](#) section of the Virtual School website.

For enquiries regarding this grant please email: virtualschool@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Retained funding

The Virtual School retains an amount of PP+ annually to fund provision that will benefit a group of, or all of, the authority's children in care. This will include activities such as:

- Employment of Virtual School staff
- Centrally delivered training
- Provision and resources for children not on a school roll
- Cluster projects supporting specific groups of children within or across schools

Recoupment and transfer of resource

The Virtual School may recoup the PP+:

- If there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the child's needs
- If the child moves education placement and the funding needs to be transferred to the new placement
- Equipment and resources purchased are the property of the child, in the event of the child moving school, equipment and resources should transfer with them.

Effective use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Effective learning interventions are underpinned by four principles:

1. Interventions should follow Bruce Perry's 'Three Rs: Regulate, Relate, Reason'. Support should first help the child to regulate their emotional state, then build trusting relationships and finally engage in reasoning and learning. This sequence ensures children are neurologically and emotionally ready to benefit from the intervention.
2. Provision should be bespoke, tailored to the child's individual needs and strengths, with very regular reviews of progress.

3. Informed by hard and soft data, with the selection of strategies based on evidence of what is most likely to work in meeting that individual need ([Teaching and Learning Toolkit | EEF](#) (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk))
4. Promote joined-up working. Where external agencies are involved, collaboration is key to helping children feel more secure and connected and avoiding gaps or duplication. Interventions should never be bolted on or approached as isolated or unconnected to the rest of the provision.

Other important considerations which should underpin practice and can themselves become key strategies, include:

- Prioritise early intervention, the child's voice and engagement with carers and social workers
- Use support staff strategically to increase teacher-led support ([Deployment of Teaching Assistants | EEF](#))
- Build staff capacity through training in trauma-informed and attachment aware approaches*

*We do not recommend the commissioning of treatment of child-focused therapies **without prior consultation with the child's social worker** and an appropriate trauma-informed mental health assessment, from a body such as LAC-CAMHS. In general, the most useful intervention for our children is leading with an Attachment Aware Trauma Informed (AATI) approach.

Where an external provider is commissioned to do work funded by PP+, schools should ensure that the provider is appropriately quality assured, and risk assessed.

Restrictions on the use of Pupil Premium Plus

PP+ provides additionality, it should not be used to fund universal provision, including the 'standard full time education provision'.

PP+ is not a means tested grant and should not be used to provide resources that a Local Authority provides through its allowance to foster carers or children's home fees, such as:

- School uniforms, including PE kits and standard equipment (carers are provided with an allowance)
- School lunches (carers are provided with an allowance)
- Transport to and from school or to any alternative provision / activities / work experience
- Out of school activities which are **not** linked to an aspiration or lead to accreditation (carers are paid an allowance to fund a child / young person's hobbies / activities)
- Out of school activities accessed for childcare purposes or additional EYFS hours

PP+ must not be used to double fund or replace funding which has already been allocated to the school to support the child. Specifically, it cannot be used to:

- Fund services that should be provided via an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Provide other statutory work e.g. statutory assessment or support from CIC health
- Cover interventions which have been funded from elsewhere

PP+ will not be paid if:

- The interventions offered by the school are universally available to all children in school and the school's own funding covers the cost of the interventions
- The PEP SMART targets do not meet requirements as set out by Cambridgeshire Virtual School (refer to Quality Assurance criteria and PEP exemplars to be found in the Documents section of the PEP)
- Interventions are not evidence based, for example: paying for additional adult support with no agreed outcome or focussed intervention.
- Interventions and targets are not time-limited and there is little attention to impact

Additional Pupil Premium Plus requests

For urgent requests outside normal PEP deadlines, the Designated Teacher should contact their Virtual School Advisor.

Trips and visits

PP+ cannot fund day trips. For residential trips, PP+ may fund up to one third of the cost, if the trip's benefits are clearly linked to SMART targets in the PEP. The remaining cost should be covered by carers, social care, school, or other sources.

IT equipment

- PP+ can fund laptops, tablets, and software only if the need is documented in the PEP and no other funding source is available.
- Equipment is the child's property and must transfer with them if they move schools or placements.
- Replacement should not occur more than once every 3 years.
- Appropriate safeguarding, licensing and maintenance should be undertaken in line with school policy. Where the child is not on a school roll, the social worker must sign an agreement and takes this responsibility.
- In the event of equipment being broken or lost, any subsequent spend will be subject to a risk assessment and a formal agreement.

Monitoring and accountability

The PEP is the formal opportunity to review SMART targets from the previous term: it should be informed by data, the voices of the child and professionals, and tools such as SDQs, Boxall Profile and FAGUS. Informal reviews should take place between PEPs, and adjustments to provision made to maximise impact.

Any underspend must be indicated within the PEP review. This will be accounted for in future allocations.

All spend and impact is reviewed as part of the Virtual School termly quality assurance process.

Requests over £1,000 per term or exceeding the £2,630 annual allocation must be submitted via the PEP and will be reviewed by the PP+ Panel.

The Virtual School Head is accountable for the local authority's distribution of PP+. The use and impact of spend is recorded in the Virtual School's annual report.

Other Local Authority Children in Care educated in Cambridgeshire

Children in Reception classes or of statutory school age attending Cambridgeshire schools, who are in the care of other local authorities will receive PP+ from the placing authority's Virtual School. The name and contact details of other Virtual School Heads can be requested from Cambridgeshire Virtual School.

Children Previously in Care

Children who have previously been in care and are now subject to a Special Guardianship Order, a Child Arrangement Order or have been adopted, are entitled to PP+. This will need to be claimed through the school's own October annual census, with the parents'/carers' permission once evidence of their status is seen. The PP+ grant for children who have previously been in care is managed by the child's school; it is outside the remit of the Virtual School and this policy.

There is a [model letter](#) for schools to send out to families of Children Previously in Care to promote awareness of PP+. It is recommended that schools send this out in September each year, in readiness for the October census.

Linked documents

1. Child premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2025 to 2026, available at: [Child premium: conditions of grant for the 2025 to 2026 financial year - GOV.UK](#)
2. Using child premium: guidance for school leaders – March 2025, available at: [Using child premium guidance for school leaders](#)
3. Guidance: Child Premium Overview - available at: [Child premium: overview - GOV.UK](#)
4. Using your child premium funding effectively, available at: [The EEF Guide to the Child Premium | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
5. Guidance: Child premium virtual school heads' responsibilities, available at: [Child premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities - GOV.UK](#)
6. [Child premium 2025 to 2026: technical note - GOV.UK](#)