

One minute guide

The Virtual School



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What is a Virtual School?

Virtual Schools are statutory services designed to champion the education of children who are looked after (DfE, 2018), referred to as Our Children. Rather than operating as physical schools, they act as dedicated strategic teams within local authorities. Their role is to work collaboratively with schools, carers, parents and social workers to create the conditions for children to thrive in their learning and to experience a positive, fulfilling education. The Nottinghamshire Virtual School tracks and supports every child and young person in the care of Nottinghamshire County Council, recognising their strengths, celebrating their achievements and identifying opportunities to make progress.

The core responsibility of the Virtual School is to support the local authority in fulfilling its statutory duties for the education of looked after children. In addition, the Virtual School plays an important strategic role in promoting strong educational outcomes for children in kinship care, previously looked after children and children known (or previously known) to social care—helping each child access the support, stability and opportunities they need to succeed.

The Virtual School

- has high aspirations for children to achieve their very best.
- supports children to prepare and succeed into adulthood, intervening when needed to promote positive educational outcomes.
- promotes and prioritises the development of the whole child including their social, emotional and mental health and promotes positive relationships and a sense of belonging.
- supports ways to improve school attendance.
- supports transitions and stability.
- provides training and support to professionals, with a particular regard to Designated Teachers who have a statutory role in schools and settings to support the educational journey of children and young people who are in care.
- develops resources and offers training (such as Emotion Coaching) to support parents, families and professionals.
- promotes relational, trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice.

Virtual School staff

Virtual School is made up of a senior leadership team (the Head, Deputy Head, Senior Educational Psychologist and Lead Achievement Officers) who support a team of Achievement Officers and Data Officers.

Each Achievement Officer takes responsibility for a group of schools and works to help children have effective and positive educational experiences and outcomes by:

- making sure children have high quality Personal Education Plans every term which include SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) targets, supported by clear interventions and support from adults.
- monitoring attendance, progress and attainment and working with the team around the child to identify and enable early intervention when needed.
- supporting and challenging designated teachers, enabling them to provide the best help and support for their children.
- actively consulting with adults around Our Children and supporting them to navigate educational processes.

Examples of experiences and interventions

The Virtual School encourages children to develop hobbies and attend out of school activities such as:

- Care to Dance, a dance group for children and young people who are care experienced to help them to feel a sense of belonging and freedom, while exploring the arts.
- Annual achievement event, an evening of celebration of those young people who have overcome significant challenges and made remarkable contributions.
- Multimodal Literacy Project, a project which combines technology and modes of communication. This enriching home-school programme engages learners through a range of experiences and high-quality texts to inspire reading and writing outcomes.
- Letterbox, a Book Trust initiative which provides children with five to six parcels of books across a year. The books are delivered to the child's house and this is available for children in nursery, year 1, year 3, year 5 and year 7.

Find out more

To keep up to date with Nottinghamshire Virtual School on social media [follow us on Twitter](#) or visit the website at [Nottinghamshire Virtual School | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

Key contacts:

- Virtual School general enquiries: 0115 977 4747 or email virtual.school@nottscc.gov.uk
- Previously looked after children advice and guidance: 0115 804 4677 or email virtualschooladvice@nottscc.gov.uk
- Children with a social worker advice and guidance: 0115 804 3275 or email virtualschool.cwasw@nottscc.gov.uk