

Bolton Virtual School

5 Minute Facts

What is it?

The Bolton Virtual School promotes the education of our 400 plus school aged looked after children. It is not a real school with buildings and classrooms but like a real school, it ensures that every looked after pupil is encouraged to learn and succeed.

It does this by running a system that ensures every pupil has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and that any issues identified whilst making the plan are responded to by their teachers, Social Workers or Virtual School staff. Like a good parent, the virtual school is always asking the question – can our children do better?

Changes to the Children and Young Person's Act (2008) due in 2017 will give virtual schools a new duty to promoting the education and training of all the children/young people in our care and also those who have previously been in our care. This will increase the responsibilities of the virtual school to monitor and intervene in the education of many more children and young people aged 0-25.

Why do we need it?

Because research tells us that for many complex reasons children in care (as a group) underperform educationally. This means that adults who have been looked after have worse social and economic outcomes than those that haven't.

The law is also clear on our responsibilities.

The Children and young person's act (2008) gives a duty to local authorities to promote the education of children and young people in their care. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires every local authority to appoint at least one person to discharge these duties. This person is the Head of the Virtual School.

What does the Virtual School look like in Bolton?

The education of the children we care for is ultimately the responsibility of the Corporate Parenting Board; however the Virtual School executive group brings together influential people from both the education and social care sectors. This executive group asks the question 'how well are we discharging our duty to promote the education of children in care? Members of the group are well placed to have influence over their own areas of work and help to remove any barriers that may be blocking progress for looked after pupils.

By using a system that ensures high quality PEP meetings, uses designated Looked After Children teachers (every school has to have one), learning mentors, commissioned teachers educational psychologists and out of school support, the 'head of the virtual school' can effectively improve educational outcomes for this group of children.

Key contact...

Head of the Virtual School
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