

# The irtual School

## STUDENT VOICE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

**Policy cover sheet:**

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<b>Responsible Director/HOS:</b>	Jane Featherstone, Head Teacher
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1.0	October 2017	Daniel Gillingham	New document

## Student Voice and Participation Policy

### Summary and Context

***Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. (UNCTC; Article 12 (respect for the views of the child))***

**Listening to and involving children and young people is paramount.** The Department for Education (DfE) has issued statutory guidance, which applies to all local authorities (and maintained schools) who are required to have regard to it when considering how best to provide opportunities for pupils to be consulted on matters affecting them or contribute to decision-making in the school.

The DfE legislation is underpinned by the general principles of the [United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#).

The Virtual School is committed to involving students in its decision-making and operational management processes. The Virtual School firmly believes that embracing student views and offering an opportunity for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant impact on developing the Virtual School's quality improvement processes and increasing student success. When involved in Children in Care Council / Virtual School Student Council, student participation and representation bring to life the British value of democracy.

*NB: Within this policy, children in care may also be referred to as 'student', 'pupil', or 'children and young people'.*

## Overview

The Virtual School is committed to involving students in its decision-making and operational management processes. The Virtual School firmly believes that embracing student views and offering an opportunity for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant impact on developing the Virtual School's quality improvement processes and increasing student success. When involved in Children in Care Council / Virtual School Student Council, student participation and representation bring to life the British value of democracy.

There are several benefits of effective student voice to the Virtual School and to the children and young people.

To children and young people:

- ✓ Improved participation, achievement and progression
- ✓ Better feedback on the students' experience informs quality improvements
- ✓ Students become empowered, more self confident and motivated
- ✓ When involved in Children in Care Council / Virtual School Student Council, students learn the British value of democracy
- ✓ Services and facilities are improved to better meet the needs of students
- ✓ Identification and sharing of good practice
- ✓ Promotion of an environment of mutual respect

To the Virtual School:

- ✓ Improved participation, achievement and progression
- ✓ Students who are more expert and independent
- ✓ Better quality information about the students' perspective so improvements can be made
- ✓ Better decisions about resource allocation and investment (pupil premium plus).

## *Giving the child a voice*

As part of the core duties of the Virtual School Head (VSH), the VSH should ensure that there are arrangements in place to:

- ✓ Promote a culture that takes account of the child's views according to age and understanding in identifying and meeting their educational needs
- ✓ Help others, especially Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), social workers, carers and schools, understand the importance of listening to and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings about education and the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process and how the VSH can help facilitate that process.

### *Creating a culture of student involvement*

Vital to the success of a meaningful student voice policy are the skills of staff and the readiness of staff to engage in the process. The Virtual School's vision for student involvement includes the developing of a culture where staff listen actively to the views of students and students listen actively to the views of staff. In this way meaningful dialogue can take place.

### **Personal Education Plan (PEPs)**

The Personal Education Plan is the vehicle in which we use to monitor the education of children in care and embedded within the process and plan is the views of children and young people.

- ✓ All looked after children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part.
- ✓ All of those involved in the process of developing the PEP should use it to support the **personalised learning** of the child.
- ✓ The PEP (pre-school to age 18) is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked after children to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the identified educational needs of the child, raises aspirations and builds life chances.
- ✓ The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looks after the child and the school. Social workers, carers, VSHs, designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together. **All of those involved in the PEP process at all stages should involve the child (according to understanding and ability)** and, where appropriate, the child's parent and/or relevant family member.

Capturing the views of children and young people for the PEP is normally down to the Designated Teacher (DT) in the child's school or someone within the school who knows the child well. In many cases, the Virtual School case-holder, and/or staff member at the school will ascertain the views of the child at the PEP meeting if the child chooses to attend.

We understand, respect and encourage all children to be individual and as such we do not have a set way to ascertain the views of the child. We like to encourage the child to attend and be a part of the meeting so that they are included in any decisions that are made in respect to their education, but for some this is often very difficult. As such, we endeavour to make sure that views are captured before the meeting so the child's views are taken into consideration at the meeting and how the views are captured is down to the individual.

Some ways in which the views are captured include:

- ✓ Using the ePEP platform set questions
- ✓ Using other templates such as 'My Profile'
- ✓ Wigit Communicate to Print templates
- ✓ Drawings
- ✓ Videos
- ✓ Sound bites
- ✓ Through attending the meeting and verbal communication.

The list is not exhausted and we encourage any tool or method, and welcome any suggestions.

In the main, we like to know from the child, the following information which helps to ensure we are taking a personalised approach:

- ✓ What is going well?
- ✓ What could be better?
- ✓ What support they think they need?
- ✓ Future aspirations?

For children and young people aged 14+, we also encourage and ensure that there is a plan for post 16 and link with the appropriate team to ensure that they are supported.

### ***Other Education meetings***

In addition to the PEP, some children and young people will have other education meetings where their views are also captured. These meetings include Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) meetings, My Plan and My Plan+ Reviews and Child Protection (CP) conferences. Whilst we try and dovetail these meetings to ensure that there is no duplication, we may use these views to save the child having to be consulted again, and/or keep a record of these views and add them as additional documents on the PEP.

### ***Statutory Visits and Child in Care Reviews***

Another way in which we get the views of the child is through the social workers statutory visit. As part of the statutory visit, social workers will engage the child and the carers about education and get an update in respect of this. Sometimes, ideas, concerns and support can arise from these. This is also the case from Child in Care reviews where education is monitored by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

### ***Children in Care Council***

Children in Care Council's provide children and young people with opportunities to have a say on the issues that matter to them as a looked after child and to be heard by the people who make decisions about their lives.

The DfE statutory guidance stipulates that one of the high level responsibilities of promoting the education of looked after children is that “...*the authority’s Children in Care Council (CiCC) regularly addresses the educational experiences raised by looked after children and is able to respond effectively to such issues*” (page 5).

In Gloucestershire, the Children in Care Council is labelled Voice Gloucestershire and is co-ordinated by the Participation Team and supported by the Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People.

In order for the CiCC to be effective and to hear as many voices as possible, all teams that work with and support children in care support the CiCC. We have model where there is a Participation Lead in each area/service who are responsible for coordinating the activities in their respective areas and also to report on activity at regular Participation Leads meetings.

The Virtual School Senior Leader responsible for student voice and therefore the link to and for the Children in Care Council is Daniel Gillingham (Wider Outcomes Lead).

How this works in practice for the Virtual School is that there is an Ambassador linked to the Virtual School to help support the CiCC activity and to feedback any issues that arise and what is happening in respect of student voice to the relevant meetings such as Corporate Parenting Group (CPG)

The Virtual School has a Student Voice Action Plan which can be found in the appendices, where you will also see the model of the Children in Care Council.

### **General Feedback**

The Virtual School provides additional support through its Wider Outcomes Programme and Targeted Intervention. These include student conferences, reading schemes such as Letterbox, Imagination Library and Reading Eggs, Cookery School, Virtual School Awards and other projects that arise from the needs at the time. To ensure we get feedback and evaluate the impact of the project/scheme, we will use evaluation forms and feedback forms to get feedback.

### **Service Feedback**

If a child, young person, carer or professional would like to feedback on the services provided by the Virtual School, they can do so by various ways. These include verbal feedback to a member of the team, directly by phone, email or letter to the Virtual School Head Teacher or using the Gloucestershire County Council corporate compliment and complaints process. If a complaint or feedback leads to a change of practice, policy, guidance or service change, we will cascade this change and inform, as appropriate and through appropriate methods, the relevant partners.

## References and Further Reading

British Youth Council: [www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk)

Hear by Right standard framework, developed by NYA: [www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right](http://www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right)

Participation Works, education resources: [www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/education](http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/education)

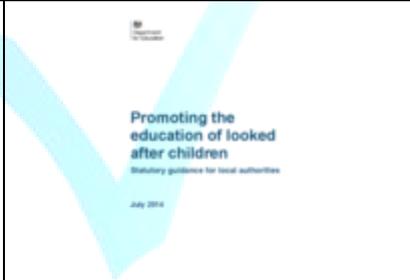
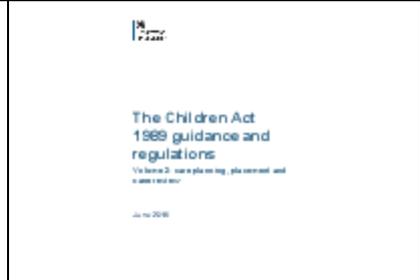
National Youth Agency (NYA): [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

UNICEF: [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): [www.unicef.org.uk/crc](http://www.unicef.org.uk/crc)

## Statutory Guidance

 <p><b><u><a href="#">Listening to and involving children and young people</a></u></b></p> <p>Ref: DFE-00011-2014</p>	 <p><b><u><a href="#">Promoting the education of looked after children</a></u></b></p> <p>Ref: DFE-00520-2014</p>	 <p><b><u><a href="#">Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review</a></u></b></p> <p>Ref: DFE-00169-2015</p>
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## Student Voice and Participation Action Plan – Academic Year 17/18

Activity Card 1	
<b>Target</b>	Children and young people will actively engage in their PEP and contribute their views.
<b>Action(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Various templates to be designed to capture child's voice</li> <li>2. VS to support schools to identify new ways to get child's voice</li> <li>3. Schools to be creative in approaches to get child's voice</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Person</b>	DG / SF / Learning Mentors
<b>By When</b>	Ongoing
<b>Resources / Costs</b>	Staff time to develop tools
<b>Success criteria</b>	At least 80% of children will have contributed their views in or at PEPs
<b>Monitoring</b>	Termly through the quality assurance framework
<b>Evaluation (Impact) (July 2018)</b>	

Activity Card 2	
<b>Target</b>	The Virtual School will have a clear framework on how it embeds student/voice in its work
<b>Action</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DG to write a policy/protocol and for this to be ratified by appropriate person/body</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Person</b>	DG
<b>By When</b>	November 2017 and ongoing
<b>Resources / Costs</b>	None
<b>Success criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ There will be a clear policy that states how we capture student voice</li> <li>✓ Staff will actively gain the views of the child</li> <li>✓ PEPs will reflect an increase in children being involved in their reviews.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	Annual for policy review Termly through QA Framework
<b>Evaluation (Impact) (July 2018)</b>	

Activity Card 3	
<b>Target</b>	Children and young people will be supported to have greater influence in the service planning and delivery of the Virtual School
<b>Action</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A school council to be established</li> <li>2. Agendas and minutes to be kept</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Person</b>	DG
<b>By When</b>	By December 2017 for CYP to be identified Ongoing
<b>Resources / Costs</b>	Staff time, vouchers for CYP as incentive/rewards
<b>Success criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Virtual School will have a 'critical' friend through the School Council</li> <li>✓ The voice of the child will be embedded through the Virtual School in a strategic way</li> </ul>

	✓ You said.....we did' statements
<b>Monitoring</b>	Termly / annually
<b>Evaluation (Impact) (July 2018)</b>	

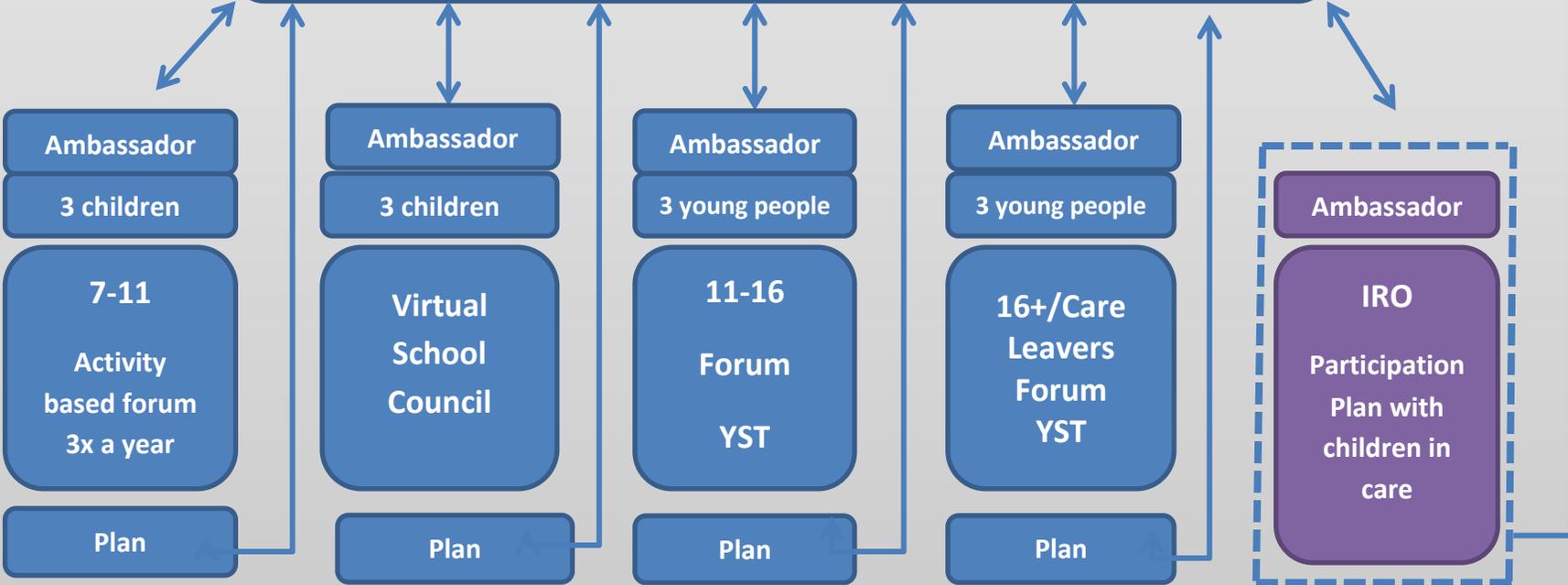
<b>Activity Card 4</b>	
<b>Target</b>	Children and young people will have 'wider outcomes' opportunities
<b>Action</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CYP will have opportunities to participate in activities that interest them</li> <li>2. The Virtual School will provide additional activities as and when the need is there (i.e. cookery school)</li> <li>3. Activities are evaluated and make impact to individuals</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Person</b>	DG / All Virtual School staff
<b>By When</b>	Ongoing
<b>Resources / Costs</b>	Pupil Premium – various based on activity
<b>Success criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Children and Young People will be taking part in activities that support emotional health and well being, social skills, creative and arts based, extended curriculum</li> <li>✓ We will know through PEPs and project evaluations how this has benefitted individuals</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	Through PEP reviews (termly) PEP QA (termly)
<b>Evaluation (Impact) (July 2018)</b>	

<b>Activity Card 5</b>	
<b>Target</b>	The Children in Care Council model will have representation from the Virtual School to ensure that education is always 'on the agenda'
<b>Action</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Virtual School will have a Lead to support the CiCC model</li> <li>2. The VS Lead will report on activity</li> <li>3. The VS Lead will attend quarterly meetings</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Person</b>	DG
<b>By When</b>	Ongoing
<b>Resources / Costs</b>	Staff time
<b>Success criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The CiCC model will be supported</li> <li>✓ Education will be discussed as a theme as an ongoing basis</li> <li>✓ Corporate Parents will have a better understanding and knowledge of education for children in care</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	Quarterly Minutes/reports from the CiCC meets CPG
<b>Evaluation (Impact) (July 2018)</b>	

# Ambassadors

## Children in Care Council

CinCC meet CPG (x2 a year)  
Core membership would be a minimum of between 12 and 18 young people



**COMMUNICATION** for young people to hear about opportunities to engage and to give their views  
(use of social media)

**INFORMATION** for children in care – Voice Mag, Guide, Pledge, Our Rights, Twitter, website, You said.....we did'