

Children in Care Pupil Premium Plus Guidelines Financial Year 2026- 2027

I. Introduction

The guidelines for Pupil Premium for Children in Care have been informed by two key Department for Education (DfE) documents:

1. DfE Pupil premium conditions of grant

Throughout these guidelines, the Pupil Premium for CiC will be referred to as Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to distinguish it from other forms of Pupil Premium allocations.

The changes are as follows:

- PP+ funding to support children and young people in care at school increased per pupil to make the notional figure £2,630 per child.
- Children and young people are eligible to receive PP+ from the first day that they enter care.
- The overall grant allocated to each LA is calculated on a per capita basis. This is based on the census of the previous year. However, it does not have to be distributed on a per capita basis, given that children and young people in care have differing levels of need at different stages of being in care.
- The grant must be managed by the Virtual School Headteacher and used to improve outcomes and “narrow the gap” as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher and Social Worker.
- As a result, PEPs are monitored even more closely by Designated Teachers, the Virtual School team, Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

As a result of the above changes, the allocation of PP+ is now a completely “needs driven model”, managed through high quality PEPs

2. Pupil Premium Plus Guidelines

2.1. Overall principles underpinning the needs driven model

- The Virtual School Headteacher is responsible for the use of PP+ to improve outcomes for all children in the care of Gloucestershire County Council, wherever they live.

- The funding will be provided according to the needs of the child and there is no set amount. In Gloucestershire there is a completely needs driven model for allocating PP+.
 - At the time at which they first come into care, the allocation of PP+ will be on a needs driven basis as agreed at the PEP meeting.
 - In the case of a child who leaves the care system and then returns within the same financial year, the allocation of PP+ will be on a needs driven basis as agreed at the PEP meeting.
- None of the grant will be used to pay for Virtual School management or administration.
- The impact of these PP+ interventions will be reviewed by Virtual School Headteacher.
- Gloucestershire County Council and the Virtual School Headteacher are corporate parents, so the question '**would this be good enough for my child?**' is a central one in making decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of PP+.

2.2. How and why will the amount of Pupil Premium Plus vary?

- Children's needs vary and can 'spike.'
- For some children. £2,630 is only a fraction of the cost of the support they need e.g.:
- Children who come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are behind academically.
- Children who have to move into or out of county in an emergency.
- Children placed out of county in other LAs where the level of support from Virtual School Teams may not be the same and who therefore will lose out without additional help.
- Children where there is a significant and often delayed reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in hard to anticipate behavioural 'spikes.'

In view of this, there may be a significant difference in the amount of PP+ distributed.

Proposals to pool PP+ in a school to enhance services, providing its use is directly linked to the needs of children in care, via the PEP, are allowed.

A timetable of key dates will be published by Virtual School Headteacher in order to help Designated Teachers plan the strategic use of pooled funding.

This will be subject to review on an annual basis.

The impact of these PP+ interventions will be reviewed by Virtual School Headteacher.

2.3. Circumstances in which Pupil Premium Plus will not be provided.

- PP+ will not be used to double fund or replace funding which should already have been allocated to the school to support the child and specifically to fund services that should be provided via an EHCP or other statutory work e.g. statutory assessment or support from health.
- PP+ should not be paying for services which are universal for other children, PP+ should be providing the additionality to narrow the gap in progress.
- The interventions put in place do not require any funding.
- The school's own funding covers the cost of the school based interventions.
- The PEP action plan is not explicit about the learning outcomes to which PP+ may contribute.

The DfE guidance is clear that:

Any pupil premium held centrally **must not** be used to fund services that the local authority is responsible for funding, such as support for foster carers, school uniform or transport to get the child to school.

3. Management and accountability

The Headteacher of the Virtual School will be accountable to the Corporate Parenting Group and the Virtual School Management board for setting up a transparent and rigorous allocation process and ensuring maximised impact of the grant.

3.1. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- The PP+ can only be provided to meet the needs identified in a high-quality plan in the PEP with clear quantitative and qualitative targets for improvement, underpinned by well-targeted support. The PEP action plan must show the baseline data, target for improvement, expected outcomes and cost of support.
- The PP+ must be used to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:
- **Learning**

- ***Social Mental Emotional Health***
- ***Attendance***

National best practice recommends that PEPs should be updated termly i.e. 3 times per academic year.

Please note that PEP meetings can be held whenever there is a change of educational need, including a young person who may be missing from education.

The PEP can also be updated at the same time as IEP, ILP, PSP or EHCP reviews.

3.2. Allocation of funding to Schools and recoupment policy 2026 -2027

- PP+ will be based on a fully costed high quality PEP Action Plan.
- In September 2026, The Virtual School will be encouraging schools request PP+ for children in care for longer term targets and will ask schools where they are clear about the provisions needed for children who are likely to remain in care, that they request PP+ for the Autumn and Spring term in the Autumn term PEP. This also allows the school and the Virtual School to plan more effectively. The Spring term PEP and PP+ requests will then be focused on reviewing the funding where possible and also allows PP + requests to be predominately for new to care children or those who are in crisis and need extra interventions and support.
- A timetable of strategic dates for the completion of PEPs will be published by Virtual School Headteacher at the start of the 2026-2027 academic year in order that schools can proactively plan PEP meetings.
- Virtual School may recoup the funding:
 - if there is evidence that the funding is not being used to address the CiC's needs
 - if a child moves education placement in order to transfer the money to the new placement

4. Pupil Premium Plus for Children and Young People from other Local Authorities

- Different approaches will be adopted by different LAs, as the contexts vary so much, in terms of number of school aged CiC, the size of Virtual School team and the existing operational budget for the Virtual School team (both vary enormously between LAs)

Gloucestershire schools who have Children and Young People in Care from other Local Authorities on their roll must contact the Headteacher of the relevant Virtual School to request their Pupil Premium Plus policy, as nationally, all Headteachers of Virtual Schools are responsible for the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus for all school aged Children and Young People in the care of their authorities, even though the child/young person is educated in a Gloucestershire school. The name and contact details of other Virtual School Headteachers can be requested from virtualschooladmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Previously Looked After Children

4.1 Mainstream schools

For the purposes of these conditions of grant, mainstream school means infant, junior, primary, middle, secondary, high schools, special school and pupil referral units. It does not include general hospital schools or other alternative provision.

5. Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus.

1. The above principles apply for Post 16 PP+ grant. Funding for Post 16 is significantly less, and the Virtual School will expect to support learners in Year 12 and 13 through a nominal amount to be accessed through the PEP discussion about needs. There is **one claim** of PP+ per financial year per young person through the EPEP process and identifying need. The majority of funding claims will be made in the Autumn term 2026 when the academic year begins to support targets and outcomes that are set.
2. The overarching principles underpinning PP+ spends will be to support attendance and retainment in education and to secure academic progress and educational outcomes.
3. Funding for Post 16 will be offered to schools, colleges and settings for learners who are in education.
4. PPP+ will be spent on Post 16 Education and the budget will also be utilised for Post 16 additional tutoring or training which will lead to formal qualifications. The PPP+ grant is to ensure academic progress and attainment are supported.
5. There may be some exceptional situations where laptops for Year 13 care-leavers who will start university in 2026/27 may also be accessed via a PEP/ Education support and planning meeting. This applies to those who are going to university who have not had a laptop from PP+ in KS5.
6. For those in care who are NEET and need transition support in Year 12 and 13 as they wish to return to education, a PEP meeting will be required to support the planning process. The funding will be available on the start date that the education begins.

6. Previously looked-after children (PLAC)

For mainstream and special schools, the PP grant for financial year 2026 to 2027 will include children recorded in the October 2025 school census who were looked after by a local authority or other state care immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority or other state care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order). This includes children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales.

For PRUs and AP academies, PP grant for financial year 2026 to 2027 will include PLAC recorded in the January 2026 school census

6.1 Previously looked-after children (PLAC)

For PLAC, it is the responsibility of the setting to ensure that the PP grant is used on evidence-informed interventions, in line with the menu of approaches, to support the specific educational needs of PLAC attending the school. See the [using pupil premium](#) guidance for further information.