

Strategies to Promote Attendance

Supporting children struggling with school attendance



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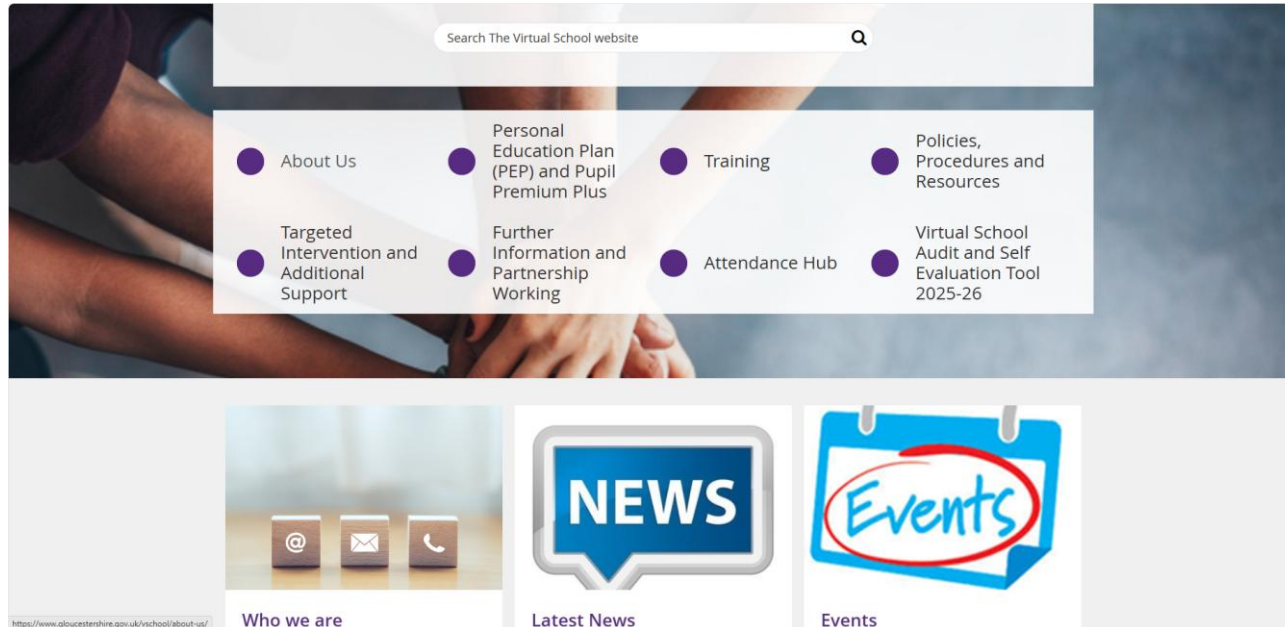
Quick quiz

- Number of children in care in Gloucestershire? 787
- Number of school age children in care in Gloucestershire? 475
- Number of school age children on a school roll? 452
- Number of children in care in schools out of county? 125
- Average attendance – primary 94.96%
- Average attendance – secondary 85.6%

Who has accessed the Virtual School website.....?

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<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool>



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Accountability



Integrity



Empowerment



Respect



Excellence



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Top tips and advice in tackling practical and emotional barriers.

CREATE ROUTINES

Morning and evening routines
Routines reduce stress and lateness, for example, consistent bedtimes and sleep, having breakfast and getting-ready habits.

Visual schedules
Younger children benefit from colourful charts or checklists to prepare for the day. Each step (e.g. wake up, brush hair) is ticked off for a sense of achievement. Praise offered for completing the routine.

Designated key adult
A teacher or mentor who greets the child daily can increase their sense of belonging.

Regular communication
Professionals and carers to meet regularly to review attendance.

Celebrating attendance
Praise & rewards for improvements (certificates, positive notes home) can help.

Safe space in school
Knowing they can check in with pastoral staff when feeling overwhelmed.

Safe space card
Child has a card/pass to go to named adult in school if they feel overwhelmed. Reduces anxiety about 'being stuck' and gives them control, making them less likely to refuse school.

Therapeutic support
Access to counselling, nurture groups, or educational psychologists can help with anxiety and trauma that drives school refusal.

Transport support
Practical help with taxis and bus passes or car sharing reduces missed days.

Engage in extracurricular activities
Clubs, sports or arts can motivate attendance.

Individualised support
Catch up support reduces frustration if they've missed previous lessons.

Positive reinforcement
Small daily rewards (choosing dinner, extra screen time) for getting to school.

Empathy & encouragement
Acknowledge feelings of worry or sadness but keep expectations clear that school is essential for all children for their education and a legal requirement to attend, unless there is a specific diagnosed issue for the child around anxiety, school phobia, school refusal or other wider issues to be explored and resolved.

Role modelling
Demonstrate own routines and commitment to responsibilities.

Worry box/monster
Child writes down or draws any school worries (bullying, lessons, separation) and outs them in a 'worry box' or feeds them into a 'worry monster' toy. Adult reads them together and problem solves one worry at a time. Shows that worries are taken seriously and helps reduce avoidance.

School success journal
Each day after school, child notes or draws one good thing about the day (friendship moment, fun activity, something learned). Can build positive associations; makes returning feel doable and worthwhile.

Attendance reward ladder
Visual chart at home where each day of attendance earns a sticker, moving them up a ladder towards a fun reward (baking, park trip, movie night).

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CREATE ROUTINES

STRENGTHEN SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

FOSTER CAREER STRATEGIES

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

RESOURCES

To explore feelings

- Q. What part of school feels hardest for you right now?
- Q. If you could change one thing about the school day, what would it be?
- Q. When you think about school, what does your body feel like inside?

To strengthen belonging

- Q. Who helps you feel safe or happy at school?
- Q. Which lesson or activity do you most enjoy? Why?
- Q. Who would you like to spend more time with at school?

To problem solve

- Q. What could we do together to make mornings easier?
- Q. If it's a bad day at school, what could help you get through it?
- Q. Who would you like to spend more time with at school?

To build hope and motivation

- Q. What's something you'd love to get better at this year?
- Q. What do you want to be proud of when you finish this year?
- Q. If you keep going to school, what good things might happen?

Ideas condensed from articles on "Young Minds" and "The Playful Psychologist" websites.

Young Minds

The Playful Psychologist

The Virtual School

Scan me!

Thank you to Laura Brady GGC Fostering lovely support workers for all the tools and tips on page 1

Fostering Gloucestershire County Council The Virtual School GGC

For more info about Fostering with GGC call 01242 52354 or visit gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering
To access information and guidance from the Virtual School visit gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschoo

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Top tips and advice – Steve C, Matt and Laura

Teamwork makes the dream work

- *Child / young person*
- *Foster carer*
- *Social Workers*
- *Family support worker*
- Teacher
- Teaching assistant
- SENCO
- CAMHS worker
- Virtual School mentor
- ETE worker



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Scenario for discussion in groups

Jenny is 5 years old and she has 2 brothers aged 3 and 8 years old. The 3 children live in a foster home. Jenny started school in September 2024 found the integration very difficult. Sadly, Jenny's dysregulated behaviour and emotional outbursts were such that following a period of school staff working with carers, Social Workers, pastoral team, CAMHS and Virtual School, the decision was made that the school could not fully meet her needs and her attendance ended in spring 2025.

Since the spring, Jenny has refused to go into school or take part in any offers of educational activities; her foster carers are supporting her at home. A family support worker has also supported Jenny with activities for 2 mornings per week in the community and at home. Jenny has recently stated that she wants to go back to school just like her older brother, but has significant anxiety about returning.

- You'll now be allocated a role in the team around Jenny.
- In your role, please discuss who you will speak to, how will you help to support Jenny, what needs to happen next, what tools or strategies could you use, manage expectations of Jenny (and others), contingency plans.....

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Voice of children and young people – JG, AS and MP

Years 10/11 – I just found it boring and exhausting, sitting still and concentrating was difficult and I didn't see the point in the subjects I was being taught. I wanted to learn about things I need in my life

I felt that I had a lot to say but was being told to be quiet and focus all the time.

I worry now that the way I am will mean I won't be able to hold down a job

I felt like I didn't belong and that I was different, it filled me with stress and anxiety and I felt misunderstood.

I knew that I had struggles with doing what I was told and having to conform, for me it was all about how I was being spoken to, if I was constantly being given sets of demands I would sometimes feel a strong urge to just do the opposite because I could.

I had no coping strategies built in and have just lived on feeling anxious

What Happens after Year 11?

Youth Support Team (YST)

- **YST** has a statutory duty to monitor Education, Training & Employment (ETE) status of 16–18-year-olds and data is reported to the DfE.
- Cohort includes 14,700 young people and **640 care leavers** (18–25)

Support for NEET Young People

- Step-by-step ETE progression planning
- Multi-agency coordination
- Careers guidance, CV/application/interview support
- Information on education, training, and employment
- Engagement with providers and employers

What can you expect for your young people?

ETE Workers will

- Contact the young person or key professional to provide a structured ETE progression plan.
- Arrange meetings in a suitable location and coordinate with other agencies.
- Explain the support available and complete a Work Star assessment with the young person and advocate on their behalf.
- Create and review a bespoke action plan and offer information, advice and guidance as needed.
- Engage with providers and employers.
- Ensure that all young people not in education, training or employment receive tailored guidance and planning.

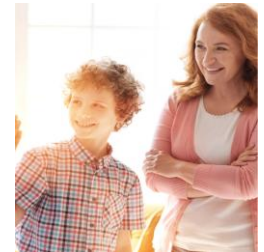
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Points to remember

- There is no magic wand.
- Communication between foster carers and all professionals working with the child is key.
- Listen to the child / young person!
- Use resources available to you on the Virtual School website.
- Drop in sessions for older children in care and care leavers at Barbican and the Hideaway (Both Shire Hall) and Grosvenor Hall (Cheltenham).

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And remember.....



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Any questions?

