



Warwickshire Virtual School

Pupil Premium Plus Policy for Children in Care 2026–27

Key Points

- Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for Children in Care is managed strategically by the Virtual School Headteacher to improve educational outcomes for Warwickshire Children in Care.
- Children in Care from age 3 are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium Plus when attending eligible early years provision which allocated by the settings Local Authority Early Years team.
- PP+ is not a personal budget, per-child entitlement or automatic school allocation.
- Conditions of Grant stipulate that PP+ is allocated to maintained schools and academies only.
- Maintained schools and academies may request £0, £400, £800 or £1500 through the termly Personal Education Plan (PEP). Requests for £1500 are for exceptional circumstances only.
- Funding must link to identified educational needs, PEP targets, intended impact and measurable outcomes.
- PP+ does not replace provision that should be funded through the school's core budget, notional SEND budget, EHCP funding, other statutory routes, or parental/carer responsibilities.
- PP+ will only be considered for children in special schools or with an EHCP where the support is clearly additional to school, SEND, EHCP, high needs or commissioned placement provision.
- PP+ will not fund equipment such as laptops, transport, school meals, uniform, childcare, routine curriculum access, or ordinary school costs.
- Children in Care should access classroom-based learning, their usual timetable and a broad, ambitious curriculum. PP+ should support inclusion, not normalise reduced access to lessons or provision away from peers

1. Purpose and statutory context

Children in Care are one of the groups of pupils who attract Pupil Premium Plus funding, with the purpose of improving educational outcomes and closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The Department for Education term is looked-after children; Warwickshire uses the term Children in Care.

Pupil Premium Plus for Children in Care should not be understood in the same way as Pupil Premium linked to Free School Meals. PP+ recognises that Children in Care may face additional barriers to education as a result of their lived experiences, including instability, loss, trauma, disrupted schooling or changes in placement. The purpose of PP+ is to improve educational outcomes by funding additional, targeted support identified through the PEP. It is not intended to meet general household costs, routine school costs, deprivation-related costs, or items that should be provided through school, carers, social care or other statutory routes.

For Children in Care, Pupil Premium Plus is allocated to the local authority and managed by the Virtual School Headteacher. It must be used to support the educational needs of Children in Care, including needs identified through the Personal Education Plan, but this does not make PP+ a personal budget, a fixed per-child entitlement, or an automatic allocation through the PEP process.

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance, the Pupil Premium conditions of grant for the financial year, and the national arrangements for Virtual School Headteachers' management of Pupil Premium Plus for looked-after children. Warwickshire Virtual School will review this policy annually to ensure it remains aligned with the current conditions of grant, statutory guidance and any updated national requirements.

2. Core principles

- PP+ is a strategic grant managed by Warwickshire Virtual School. It is not a personal budget for an individual child and there is no entitlement to a fixed amount per child.
- Allocations are needs-led, evidence-informed and linked to the child's PEP targets, educational outcomes and planned impact. Support must be additional to the provision ordinarily expected from the school.
- Requests must be made through the PEP as the child's statutory education planning process. Schools are professionally accountable for ensuring that requests are appropriate, evidence-informed, linked to identified need, and supported by a clear plan for delivery, intended outcomes and review of impact.
- PP+ should add value. It must not be used to top up school budgets, replace funding, staffing, support or provision that should ordinarily be provided by the

school, setting, commissioned provider, SEND system, health services, social care, carers or any other statutory route.

- Interventions funded through PP+ must be time limited, purposeful and reviewed for impact at the next PEP.
- Children in Care should have access to high-quality teaching, their usual classroom, their lessons and a broad, ambitious curriculum. PP+ should support inclusion and progress, not reduce expectations or create long-term dependency on separate provision.

3. Eligibility and allocation arrangements

PP+ may be allocated to maintained schools and academies only, for statutory school age children in the care of Warwickshire, where the Virtual School is satisfied that the proposed use is appropriate, additional and linked to educational outcomes. Schools request funding through the termly PEP process. Independent schools, non-maintained settings, boarding provision and other commissioned placements are not part of the standard termly PP+ allocation process.

This reflects the current Conditions of Grant position for direct PP+ allocations. Out-of-county maintained schools and academies may request PP+ through the termly PEP process in the same way as Warwickshire maintained schools and academies, where the proposed use meets this policy. Independent schools, non-maintained boarding schools and other commissioned placements are not part of the standard termly PP+ allocation process.

Schools may request £0, £400, £800 or £1500 for a term. A request must explain the identified need, the intervention or support proposed, the intended impact, how impact will be measured, and how the support is additional to the provision ordinarily expected from the school.

Funding is paid termly in arrears when the Virtual School Education Adviser is satisfied that the request is appropriate and that the PEP provides a clear account of planned provision, intended outcomes and impact from previous allocations.

4. Exceptional requests for £1500

Requests for £1500 are for exceptional circumstances only and must be supported by a clear rationale, evidence of need, a time-limited plan and measurable outcomes.

Repeated requests for £1500 for the same need will not normally be approved. Where a high level of need persists, this indicates that the child's needs are not being fully met through the current plan and that the appropriate support route should be reviewed,

such as the graduated response, EHC needs assessment, EHCP review, mental health support, medical advice, social care or other specialist provision.

PP+ is not an ongoing substitute for provision that should be secured through school, SEND, health, social care or commissioned placement arrangements.

5. How Children in Care benefit from PP+

Warwickshire Virtual School retains and uses a proportion of PP+ strategically to support improved educational outcomes for Children in Care as a cohort, in line with the Conditions of Grant and statutory guidance. This means that a child may benefit from PP+ even where funding is not allocated directly to their school through the termly PEP process.

Strategic use of PP+ may include wider opportunities, enrichment activities, music tuition, educational experiences, training, targeted projects, or other support commissioned directly by the Virtual School where this is considered appropriate and beneficial to children's educational outcomes.

This may include children who attend special schools, have an EHCP, attend non-maintained settings, or are placed in commissioned or boarding placements. In these circumstances, a child may still benefit from PP+ through strategic Virtual School activity, even where PP+ is not allocated directly to the school or setting through the termly PEP process.

6. Special schools and EHCPs

Warwickshire Virtual School does not ordinarily allocate PP+ to special schools or for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This is because the child's special educational provision should be secured through school funding, notional SEND funding, high needs funding, EHCP funding and/or commissioned placement arrangements.

There may still be occasions where PP+ could be considered for Children in Care in special schools or with an EHCP, for example where an opportunity arises that is clearly linked to aspiration, engagement, enrichment, wider learning or educational outcomes, and is not already provided through the child's EHCP, placement or existing support arrangements. Any request should be clearly linked to PEP targets, time limited, focused on educational impact, and additional to the provision already in place for the child.

7. Appropriate use of PP+

PP+ should be used to improve educational outcomes, close gaps in attainment and progress, support inclusion, and help the child access learning successfully. Support should be based on a clear needs analysis and should complement, not replace, high-quality teaching and the school's ordinarily available provision.

Examples of potentially appropriate use include:

- Time-limited one-to-one or small group tuition in English or mathematics where this is additional to the school's usual intervention offer.
- Evidence-informed catch-up or keep-up interventions linked to PEP targets.
- Staff training where this builds capacity to meet the needs of Children in Care and improves educational outcomes.
- Expert assessment or advice, where this is not already available through school, SEND or other statutory routes.
- Short-term mentoring, counselling or therapeutic support where there is a clear link to educational engagement, attendance, attainment or progress.
- Contribution towards a residential trip or educational opportunity where the request is proportionate, clearly linked to educational outcomes and not part of routine curriculum access.

8. Inappropriate use of PP+

PP+ is not intended to replace funding that should otherwise be provided from the school's budget, commissioned placement funding, SEND funding, health funding, social care funding, or by carers.

PP+ is not a route for funding ongoing provision. Where a child requires continuing or substantial support, this should be secured through the appropriate school, SEND, health, social care, commissioned placement or local authority route. Persistent need should lead to review of the plan and funding route, not repeated PP+ requests.

Requests for things in the list below will automatically be declined:

- Support specified in an EHCP or required to meet the child's SEND.
- Provision that forms part of a special school, resource base or commissioned placement offer.
- Interventions that are part of the school's core offer, ordinarily available provision or usual graduated response.
- Access to existing arrangements such as homework club, nurture provision, pastoral support or intervention groups that the child would ordinarily access.

- Routine curriculum access, including curriculum trips, curriculum materials, ingredients, stationery, equipment or resources.
- Routine equipment, resources, materials or interventions that form part of the provision ordinarily expected from schools, ordinarily available provision, the graduated response, SEND responsibilities or commissioned placement arrangements.
- Reduced class sizes or general staffing costs.
- School uniform, school meals, transport, childcare, holiday clubs or regular clubs that are not linked to a specific educational outcome.
- Open-ended or repeated interventions without evidence of impact, review and an exit plan.
- Ongoing provision that should be secured through the school, SEND, health, social care, commissioned placement or local authority route.

9. Equipment and digital access

Schools are expected to ensure that children can access the equipment required for learning in school, including any reasonable adjustments or assistive technology required through the school's ordinary responsibilities, SEND arrangements or EHCP provision. Where a digital access issue arises at home, schools and professionals should consider the appropriate route for resolving this, including carers, social care, school resources, SEND or other available schemes.

PP+ may only be considered for additional equipment where it is clearly linked to an identified educational need, is not routinely expected for curriculum access, is not available through another route, and has a clear intended impact recorded in the PEP.

10. Alternative provision and access to lessons

Alternative provision is educational provision and remains the responsibility of the school or relevant commissioning body. Where a school considers alternative provision necessary, the school remains responsible for the quality, suitability, safeguarding, attendance, curriculum, reintegration planning and funding of that provision.

PP+ may only be considered as a limited contribution towards short-term, part-time alternative provision where this is clearly additional, linked to PEP targets, forms part of a planned reintegration pathway, and where the school is funding the main cost of the provision. PP+ must not be used to fund full-time, long-term or open-ended alternative provision, or to replace the school's responsibility to secure suitable education.

The use of alternative provision does not, in itself, justify a request for £1500; any request for the highest level of funding must meet the exceptional request criteria set out in Section 4.

Children in Care should ordinarily be in school, in their classrooms and accessing their timetabled lessons alongside their peers. PP+ should be used to improve access to learning, strengthen inclusion, support engagement and promote progress within the child's usual school offer. It should not be used to fund reduced access to lessons, a narrowed curriculum, or provision away from peers unless this is a short-term, clearly planned intervention with a reintegration plan and measurable outcomes.

There may be occasions where schools use reduced timetables, classroom withdrawal or alternative provision as part of a lawful, short-term plan to support a child, manage risk or maintain access to education. However, PP+ should not be used to fund arrangements that are primarily a response to unmet SEND, behaviour, staffing pressures, lack of relational or inclusive practice, or the school's capacity to provide appropriate support. Where these issues arise, the school and professional network should review the child's plan, support, responsibilities and funding route.

11. Therapeutic support

Where requesting PP+ for therapeutic intervention, schools must demonstrate why the proposed short-term intervention cannot reasonably be provided through another funding route and why PP+ has been identified as the mechanism for addressing the identified need.

Where a therapeutic intervention is proposed through the PEP process, the PEP should evidence that appropriate discussions have taken place with relevant professionals and carers supporting the child, including consideration of whether the need should be addressed through health, social care, SEND or other existing support arrangements.

Therapeutic intervention funded through PP+ is not a substitute for long-term therapeutic support.

12. Monitoring, evaluation and impact

The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that PP+ requests are appropriate, accurately recorded in the PEP, and evaluated for impact. The next PEP must explain what was provided, whether it took place as planned, what difference it made, and what evidence supports that judgement.

Impact measures may include progress in reading, writing or mathematics; standardised assessment; attendance; engagement in lessons; SDQ, Boxall or Thrive measures; accreditation gained; increased participation in school life; pupil voice; improved readiness to learn; or other relevant measures linked to the PEP target.

Where impact is not evident, or where the provision has not taken place as agreed, the Virtual School may withhold, reduce or reallocate funding. This will be considered in

partnership with the school and other professionals, with the child's educational outcomes remaining the central focus.