

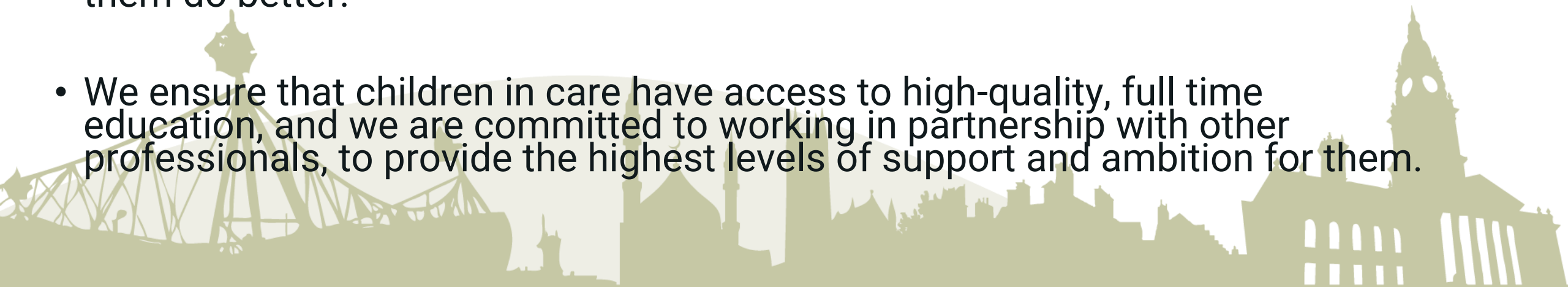
Bolton's Virtual School

Virtual School Headteacher- Lindsay Nelson

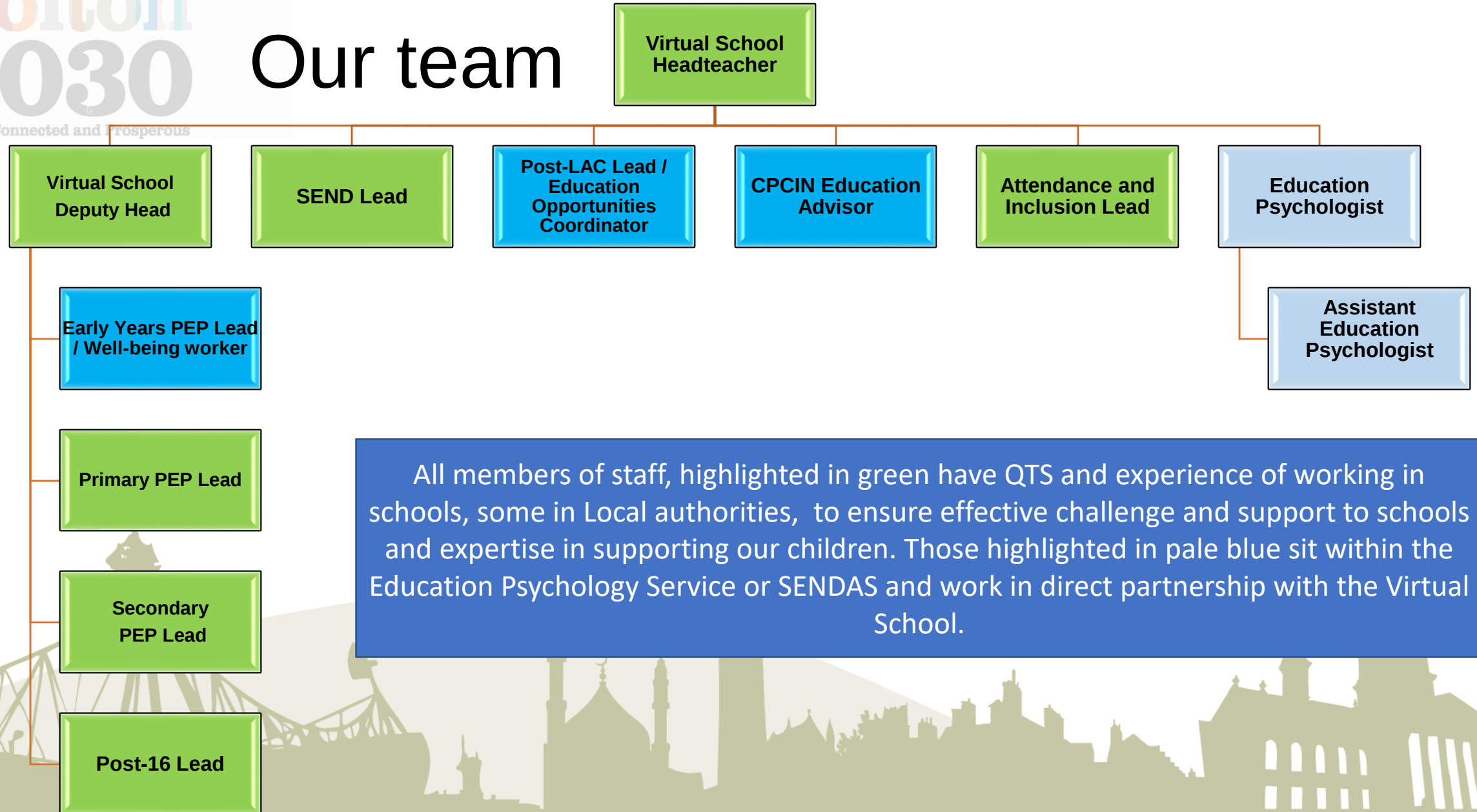


What is a Virtual School?

- A Virtual School is not a teaching institution, but a way of bringing together the information about children and young people who are cared for by a local authority as if they were in a single school.
- That way, their progress can be closely tracked and supported, and interventions can be targeted in a more strategic way. The school has a Headteacher - a statutory post within every local authority – who can support and challenge local authority departments, schools and other agencies to help them do better.
- We ensure that children in care have access to high-quality, full time education, and we are committed to working in partnership with other professionals, to provide the highest levels of support and ambition for them.



Our team



Contact Information

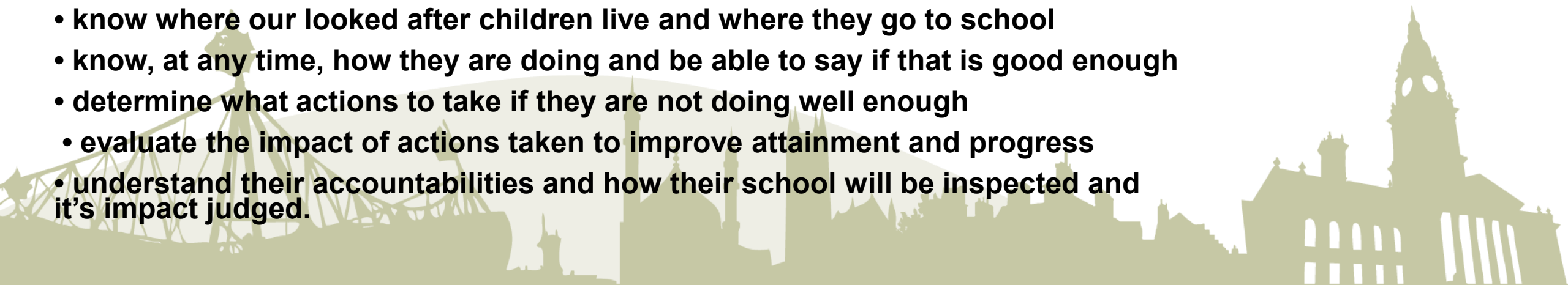
Job Title	Name	Email Address	Phone number
Virtual School Head	Lindsay Nelson	Lindsay.nelson2@bolton.gov.uk	07385 361924
Deputy Virtual School Head	Catherine Hobday	Catherine.Hobday@bolton.gov.uk	07385 422321
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Early Years Lead and well-being mentor	Vicky Lever	Vicky.lever@bolton.gov.uk	07766297991
Previously Looked After Lead & Education Opportunities Coordinator	Jane Westhead	Jane.westhead@bolton.gov.uk	07766297993
Education Advisor (CP/CIN)	Kelly Hibbert	Kelly.Hibbert@bolton.gov.uk	07385972906
Attendance and Inclusion Lead	Jenny Arif	Jenny.Arif@bolton.gov.uk	07385534319

Virtual School Head – Lindsay Nelson

I joined Bolton as Virtual School Head in December 2020, my role is to oversee the education of looked after and previously looked after children. I am a qualified secondary teacher with Senior Leadership experience. My specialism was originally Art and Textiles before specialising within inclusion and becoming Inclusion Manager in a busy Manchester City Centre Secondary school. Where I supported vulnerable pupils and families running the on-site Nurture Provision, trying to prevent exclusions where possible. In 2014 I left mainstream education and joined Trafford's Virtual School Team as Deputy Head, the last six years of my career have been focusing on the educational needs of looked after children and working closely with education provisions from Early Years to University to narrow the gap within attainment and ensuring Trafford's Virtual School team continued to have high aspirations for our cohort.

As Virtual School Head I am the strategic lead within Bolton ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for our looked after children, including those placed outside out of borough. There are six key operational areas I manage:

- **know who is on the roll of Bolton's Virtual School**
- **know where our looked after children live and where they go to school**
- **know, at any time, how they are doing and be able to say if that is good enough**
- **determine what actions to take if they are not doing well enough**
 - **evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve attainment and progress**
 - **understand their accountabilities and how their school will be inspected and it's impact judged.**



Deputy Head – Catherine Hobday

I am a qualified Secondary teacher with 10 years teaching and middle leadership experience in a Tameside school. My specialism was Science with additional pastoral leadership roles as a year group progress manager, transition lead and head of Key Stage 3. I left mainstream education in 2014 and took on a management role within a Private Early Years setting, before joining Oldham Council as a SEND Officer. I have since progressed to being Senior SEND Officer focussing on the borough's improvement journey towards the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND and EHCPs. As a result I have worked very closely with schools, SENDCOs, health colleagues and also with the Oldham Virtual School to ensure CLA with SEND receive the highest quality education and best possible outcomes.



- To support the Virtual School Head in the overall management and leadership of the Virtual School and delivering a range of services to promote the education of Looked and Previously Looked After Children.
- To be responsible for day-to-day leadership and management of PEP Caseworkers and Post-16 Advisor.
- To be responsible for the Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans.
- Catherine will deputise for the Virtual School Head as appropriate at strategic meetings and in management of the Virtual School team.

SEND Lead – Alexis Holt-Garner

I have worked in a variety of Special Education Needs schools as well as working as SENCO in a mainstream Secondary school. I am a fully qualified SENCO who has been working on the Senior Leadership Team in my current SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) school. I have written Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for Tameside Council and I have worked with students with differing needs, including those with Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties, Autism and students in mainstream with Dyslexia. I have created networks for SENCOs and Designated Teacher's to share best practice as well as support each other and I look forward to working with a variety of colleagues in Bolton to ensure high levels of support for looked after and previously looked after children.

- **To support the Virtual School Head in ensuring that Bolton Council fulfils its statutory duties in promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children.**
- **To provide guidance and support with arrangements associated with the identification, information gathering, assessment, provision, and review and monitoring for looked after and previously looked after children and young people with special educational needs.**
- **To take a lead in cases of looked after children who have EHC Plans or where plans are in process.**
- **To attend SEN Panel within Bolton and other Local Authorities to ensure efficient information sharing and seamless processes.**



Secondary PEP Caseworker – Gill Bentham

I have always worked in schools; firstly as an MFL teacher, then moved through the pastoral route to Head of Year, Deputy Headteacher and finally Safeguarding and Well-being Officer. I have always worked in Bolton and supported vulnerable students, including working with the Virtual School and some of the team already. I have experience of other virtual school's too with the Looked after children I have supported. I have lots of contacts in Bolton already and I am eager to get into schools and build a relationship with them so we can ensure our students are well supported and make the progress they need to get the best life chances they deserve.

- Gill will be responsible for the Secondary cohort of looked after children, ensuring that termly PEP meetings are scheduled, completed within timescales and the personal education plan is a robust, living and working document.
- Managing the Secondary cohort of looked after children and being responsible for promoting their educational achievements.



Education Advisor – (CP/CIN)- Kelly Hibbert

I commenced my role at Bolton Virtual school in November 2022, as Education Advisor for children with a social worker (CP/CIN). Previous to this, I worked at Turton school for over 15 years, where I was a Pastoral Manager, and Lead for Looked After Children. This has meant that I have worked closely with a number of Virtual Schools, completing PEPs and supporting many young people. As lead professional for a number of early helps, and a member of Turton's safeguarding team, I have regularly work within a multi-agency arena. I have excellent links with local agencies across Bolton, many of whom I am keen to link up with in my new role. I am passionate about working with young people and always adopt a child focused approach . I feel that everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, and together we can support children with a social worker to achieve, hold high aspirations, and have the bright future that they deserve

- **enhance partnerships between educational settings and the local authority so agencies can work together in a child focused manner.**
- **offer advice and signpost educational settings and other professionals to additional services, and ensure that they receive the support required to help their cohort of children with a social worker**
- **use data and analysis to understand and monitor needs including making links to local strategic priorities including attendance, suspension and permanent exclusion rates**
- **Sharing knowledge and expertise to strengthen how education settings and social care understand the impact of adversity on learning and educational outcomes of children.**



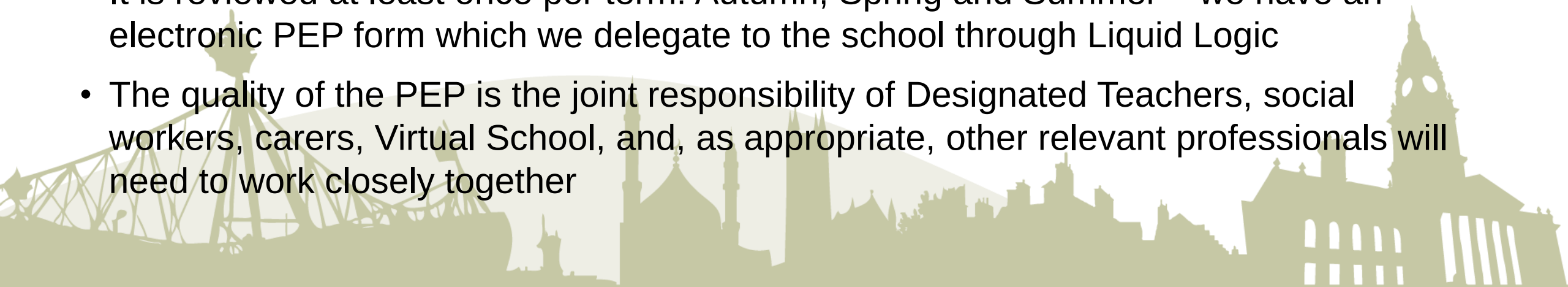
Attendance and Inclusion Lead – Jenny Arif



- *I joined the Virtual School in March 2023, my role is to oversee the attendance of all the children with a social worker. I am a qualified secondary teacher with Middle Leadership experience. I taught at a school in Rochdale for 9 years where my specialism was originally Religious Studies before specialising within special needs. I have experience teaching in inclusion units and alternative provision units in a mainstream setting. I am a fully qualified SENCO, I have written EHCPs and chaired professionals meetings for students with SEND. I have experience of supporting vulnerable pupils and their families. I have experience of working with agencies to provide the best support possible for vulnerable young people. I know from first hand experience that attendance is a key factor in ensuring young people have the best chance of success. I have a keen interest in Emotionally Based School Non Attendance and a taking a trauma informed approach when supporting young people.*
- Oversee accurate data for attendance of Children with a social worker and use data analysis to understand and monitor the needs of students in this cohort.
- Monitor and track exclusions for the cohort and offer support and guidance to try to prevent exclusions where possible.
- Offer advice and signpost educational settings and other professionals to additional services when attendance where school attendance is a barrier to success.
- Sharing knowledge and expertise to strengthen how education settings and social care understand the impact of poor attendance can have for children with a social worker

Personal Education Plan (PEPs)

- All looked after children must have a care plan, of which the Personal Education Plan is an integral part. It tells a story of the child's educational progress is current and continues to meet the child's educational needs.
- The Personal Education Plan maps out how your child is supported in education to meet the **SMART** targets they are working towards: **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound**
- It is reviewed at least once per term: Autumn, Spring and Summer – we have an electronic PEP form which we delegate to the school through Liquid Logic
- The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of Designated Teachers, social workers, carers, Virtual School, and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together



PEP - Delegation Portal

Process

1. The Virtual School team are responsible for the delegation of all PEP documents from Early Years to Post-16.
 - *Autumn PEPs will be delegated during the last week of the Summer holidays*
 - *Spring PEPs, the first week back after Christmas*
 - *Summer PEPs, the last week of the Easter holiday.*
1. Part 1 will be delegated to the allocated social worker - the majority of information will be pulled through liquid logic and it will need to be checked and updated by the social worker if there are any changes.
2. All other parts will be sent to the designated teacher to complete prior and following the PEP meeting.
3. Once the Virtual School have received the completed PEP document, it will be finalised and uploaded onto liquid logic.

How can Bolton's Virtual school support you?

- Attend PEP meetings
- Well-being mentor
- Tuition Education opportunities
- Liaise with professionals
- Support the process to gain an EHCP
- Provide alternative education packages
- Additional pupil premium funding in exceptional circumstances
- Provide Educational Psychology
- Career's guidance
- Advice and guidance on education on the education of previously looked after children, those at Child in Need or on a Child Protection Plan.

Completed Referral form to be sent to the Education Referral Meeting. The ERM panel sits on the first Thursday of each month. All referrals should be completed by school with agreement from the allocated social worker.

Ambitions for the Virtual School Head role extension

Children with a social worker

A

Make the disadvantage of children in need visible and strengthen relationships between education settings and local authorities to ensure all hold high ambitions for these children.

B

Promote engagement in education, including as a means of keeping children safe.

C

Level up outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so children reach their potential. Ensure education recovery activity reaches children in need.

The Children in Need review saw how **effective support for these children relies on this cohort being seen and professionals being able to work together** to help them achieve.

From **September 2021**, Virtual School Heads will be able to use their knowledge and expertise to champion children with a social worker and address the barriers to good educational outcomes.

Activities to promote the education of children with a social worker

We expect that some activities will be critical to championing children with a social worker, but there will not be a single delivery model. We want Virtual School Heads to develop and share good practice to support one another.

Enhance partnerships with education settings



Work with education settings to encourage anyone supporting children with a social worker to hold high **aspirations** for this cohort of children.



Convene education and LA leaders to develop shared goals and set direction for improving outcomes, including **addressing links with other strategic priorities** e.g. working with Violence Reduction Units to tackle serious violence



Clarify VSH role and communicate offer of support to education settings and others in LA so everyone has clear expectations of the VSH and what help is available.

2 Identify needs and intervene



Use data and analysis to understand and monitor local trends in accordance with strategic priorities, e.g. safeguarding trends, attendance rates



Promote evidence and good practice that prioritises consistency, high support and high standards for children with a social worker, and recognises the importance of stability and strong information sharing.



Share knowledge and training to strengthen how education settings and social are understand the impact of adversity on education (newsletters, webinars and workshops)

3 Support and advise key professionals



Engage and support key professionals and local services including social workers and school staff to promote improved outcomes for children.



Advise on evidence-based interventions and strengthen links with research organisations to participate in work that will build a stronger evidence base for what works for children.



Encourage schools and social care to be creative and thoughtful in communicating with children and families, including taking account of children's wishes a feelings.

Suspensions, attendance, school moves

- Inform the Virtual School team as soon as possible.
- Approval from HoS and Virtual School Head must be sought prior to any term-time absence.
- Approval from HoS and Virtual School Head must be sought prior to any school move, a PEP should be convened to discuss the possibility of schools moves to enable an appropriated transition plan to be put in place.



Suspensions and Exclusions

- Statutory guidance on school exclusion states that “Head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding permanently any pupil with a statement of SEN or a looked after child.”
- There hasn’t been a permanent exclusion of a looked after child in Bolton since January 2019.
- Inform the Virtual School team if a child is a risk or has been Suspended; PEP Lead, SEND Lead, Deputy Head or Virtual School Head
- Update the PEP document following any exclusion

