

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26 SHROPSHIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL



Voices of Tomorrow 'take-over' of Corporate Parenting Board



Introduction

1.0

This is the Annual Report for Shropshire Virtual School (SVS) 2025-26.

At Shropshire Virtual School, we pride ourselves on living by our co-produced Core Values with them running through the veins of our team. Our aim is to be giving the right support in the right place and at the right time, using voices from our young people and colleagues to develop and evolve. We promote excellent opportunities and champion our pupils' achievements - and as part of the Corporate Parent we always take the approach of considering whether something is 'good enough for our own child.'

This year the LGA PEER REVIEW and OFSTED (Thematic SEND) recognised the work of the Shropshire Virtual School:

- "The remit and leadership of the Virtual School is a real strength that supports the Inclusion agenda"
- "Voices of Tomorrow (Child in Care Council) is a recognised strength and is amplifying voices of these children in Shropshire."
- How SVS contributes to "A developing and well-received graduated response and SEND Support offer"
- and a "Strong inclusion ethos reflected in reduced permanent exclusions"



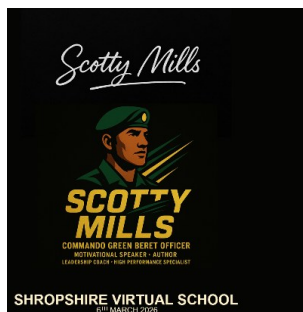
The Virtual School started its journey towards achieving the NNSP accreditation in August 2025, this is the **National Nurturing School Programme** in alliance with NurtureUK. Our aim is to submit our application by April 2027.

It is a graduated approach using evidence-based approaches to tackle social, emotional & mental health challenges and improve outcomes in attainment, attendance, well-being and behaviour. It is also an opportunity for young people to co-produce how the VS develops and for us to develop our work with partners/stakeholders in line with the six nurture principles.

Context for our Virtual School

1.1

This has been a key academic year for how the Virtual School has worked increasingly closely with our partner Education Access Service under the leadership of the VS Head Teacher. Whole Service Development sessions have brought colleagues together with shared values and ambitions - and the benefits of this alignment are now visible and impactful.



On March 6th SVS brought Scotty Mills to present his keynote followed by a workshop on the values and behaviour we need to drive the transformation agenda with Achieve & Thrive, Families First Partnership and the Children's Bill.



A key development in the SVS team this year is how the role of the Senior Education Advice and Support Officer has been expanded from one to three

colleagues - this is to support EASOs with complex cases, help welfare/well-being and project development. One of our Senior EASOs has had her work published as a research paper, it is titled 'The effectiveness of attachment and trauma informed approaches in primary education: a critical synthesis of the Literature'. She shared the findings at the recent SVS Network for Designated Teachers.



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The Virtual School has a **Governing Body** that meets termly and acts as a 'critical friend' with support and challenge. In addition to the Head Teacher, members include representatives from:

Shropshire Virtual School Governing Body Chaired by Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education	
Education and Inclusion Lead for Inclusion at a MAT Senior LA Education colleague	Early Years Manager of an Early Years setting
Care CLA Service Manager Service Manager for Adults Social Care (South)	SVS Member of the Virtual School team Participation LA Participation Worker
Parent/Carer Voice Carer (parent) Governor — currently being recruited	

1.2 Shropshire Virtual School (SVS) continues to have robust **partnerships** with our regional West Midlands VS Heads and has increased links nationally.

SVS: Regional and National Influence Sharing practice, shaping priorities and creating opportunities across the West Midlands and beyond				
National Voice March 2026 workshop at NAVSH <i>Sharing SVS practice with Virtual School Heads nationally</i>	Regional Showcase Presented at the WM VS Conference <i>Showcasing the Jaz-prentices programme for young people</i>	System Leadership Deputy Heads chair WM focus groups <i>Including attendance</i>	Strategic Influence SVS Head Teacher is a Trustee for the West Midlands Children in Care Foundation	Participation and Enrichment Regional collaboration <i>Arts and sports events that promote engagement and belonging</i>
Together, these roles position Shropshire Virtual School as an active regional partner: amplifying young people's voices, influencing practice and widening opportunities across the West Midlands.				

1.3 Shropshire Virtual School plays an integral role in Corporate Parenting. In the Autumn of 2026, SVS shared with the Corporate Parenting Board how our young people have designed and shaped their new Children in Care Council – which they have called Voices of Tomorrow.



Voice of CLA
20-20sept2020:



There was also a video from Jaz Ampaw-Farr to promote the new Jaz-prentice Programme and encourage Corporate Parents to be involved with [A Message for Shropshire Everyday Hero Corporate Parents](#)



In Spring of 2026 our young people 'took over' the Corporate Parenting Board! They wowed the Board with their speeches and the messages they wanted to people to reflect on had huge impact. They spoke on matters such as inclusion, LGBTQIA+ and language used by practitioners:



That language makes me feel like an object, not a person...

When you are finding a home for a child, please do not call it a placement—call it a home...

I want time afterwards to discuss why I was moved to another home, and time to say goodbye to friends / foster family.

When I left that day, I had to carry some of my belongings in **black bin bags**.

Bin bags are associated with rubbish, so I don't want my things to be called rubbish.

I never EVER want any child to be brought to a home with bin bags.

Words matter. Actions matter.

Let's make care feel like home.



I'm telling you all of this because young people like me don't need to be punished—we need to be understood.

We need someone who sees past the behaviour and notices the person underneath...

someone who checks in, who listens, who doesn't give up on us. Everything changes when someone believes in you.



These are not small problems — they affect how we feel every single day.

What we share today isn't just our experience, it's a call for change that will make his life better for every young person in care.

Our young people put questions to the Board, challenging their thinking and calling them to action. As a result, there has been activity across Children's Services to ensure the work 'home' instead of 'placement' is used. Additionally, Madlug bags have been bought so that young people will not have to use bin bags to move from one home to another. One young person's speech has been used in SVS's attachment and trauma responsive schools training pack. Their presentation and speeches can be seen here:



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Shropshire Profile

1.4 At the end of July 2026 Shropshire Virtual School were supporting 700 Children who are Looked After from year -2 to 13 (the year in which they turn 18)

Shropshire Virtual School cohort profile — July 2026

Children in care supported from Year -2 to Year 13

Month	EYFS	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	Total statutory school years	KS5	Total CIC Years -2 to 13
July	77	67	164	146	111	521	135	700

There has been a **+5.26% change in the numbers** of looked after children from year -2 to 13 through this academic year. (Year -2 refers to two years before Reception). In comparison to last academic year there has been a +1.5% change in Key stage 5 and a +1.6% change in statutory school year numbers and a drop in Early Years from 98 to 77 children.

1.5

Vulnerability profile: CLA in statutory school years and Early Years

Key SEND, placement and access-to-education headlines at the end of the academic year

35%

EHCP / IDP

183 children in Years -2 to 11, including 4 Welsh IDPs. This has risen from 28.4%.

133

Identified SEND

A further 133 children have identified SEND; 30 are currently in EHCNA, reflecting earlier identification work with schools.

54%

of pupils with an EHCP are at Specialist or Independent schools

36%

Out of authority

The proportion of CLA attending out-of-authority schools remains stable. SVS works with partners to secure swift school places following moves.



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Out-of-authority EHCP / IDP placements 58 children

with an EHCP or Welsh IDP attend an out-of-authority school; 33 of these are in specialist or independent settings. Swift access to education remains critical where children move a significant distance from home and our new escalation process supports this.

7 → 5
PRU monthly average

Average PRU attendance has reduced from 7 in 2024–25 to 5 in 2025–26.

8
UASYP

Eight children in this cohort are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People.

The data indicates that SVS continues to support demand reduction for high-cost specialist placements with 44% being on roll at mainstream schools

1.6

Vulnerability profile: CLA in Key Stage 5

Key SEND, placement and living-arrangement headlines at the end of the academic year

19%
EHCP

29 young people have an EHCP, this is in line with last academic year. A further 15 have identified SEN.

40%

Provider out of area

This is a significant decrease from 61% last academic year.

44%
UASYP

68 young people are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People, this is in line with last year.

66%

Living outside Shropshire

103 young people live outside Shropshire, reinforcing the need for strong transition and provider links.

Pupil Achievements

1.7 Our young people have achieved great things this year, here are just a few examples that we have celebrated...

On March 10th our group of Jaz-prentices delivered a workshop at the **National Conference for Virtual School Heads** on their innovative Roadshow. **One of our young people (K) supported Jaz Ampaw-Farr with her keynote on the main stage** and co-presented the Workshop with the VS

Head Teacher. K also spoke very successfully at the SVS Network to Senior Leaders across Shropshire. She was able to explain the aims of the programme and what she had learned. She has now been asked to present on stage about the messages she is passionate about to support driving change in the care and education systems – this will be at a significant event in **BAFTA London** this October where Jaz Ampaw-Farr will premiere her film and show a film about the Jaz-prentices journey!

ZP in KS5 - in her summer PEP she was working towards the goal of studying Law and getting her dream job as a Barrister. She is currently working at grade A across all subjects, doing an EPQ project to further her skills in preparing for university, has been elected the student rep at college and was chosen as one of 40 successful candidates from a pool of 1000 to take part in a three-week summer school for law.

RF in KS2 - progressed from being a non-writer on entering care to becoming an enthusiastic writer with excellent attainment in reading and mathematics, including a standardised score of 130 in Maths. School described his progress as “transformational”



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AH in KS4 - Won a national competition to design a flag which was selected to be taken to Antarctica and photographed there by a scientist.

DC in KS4 (EHCP) - Received exceptional feedback during work experience at the Co-op and was offered the possibility of a future apprenticeship due to his reliability, creativity and willingness to learn.

ED in KS5 - despite living with a Neurological Disorder (FND), E completed a Level 3 Animal Management course, won "Most Improved Student" in her cohort, graduated confidently and is progressing to a Foundation Degree in Canine Studies.

1.8 On Saturday 26th September the school will come together for our **Annual Celebration** to recognise the achievements of our young people at a special event for the young people and their carer/family members. At the event they will get the chance to walk on the red carpet with medals, certificates and prizes being awarded along the way. Our young people in voices of Tomorrow have **co-produced** the event with SVS, influencing which activities were provided plus the food and drink - and this year they focused on increasing activities for young people in the secondary age phase as well as designing and making some of the activities themselves such as a human fruit machine!

Over 160 children have been nominated with categories ranging from Contribution to Community, Friendship, Helping at Home to Academic Success and Attendance. As Corporate Parents we are all proud of each and every one of them.



SVS also contributed to the **Care Leavers and Key Stage 5 Celebration Festival** in the summer break. It was excellent to see our young people come together for food, drink and music.

Educational Progress and Achievement

1.9 The NCER Intelligence Overview report identified Shropshire Virtual School's verified performance for 24-25 as follows:

NCER Intelligence Overview: verified strengths and improvement areas
Indicators where Shropshire Virtual School performed **above national average and improved** in

+14.7%

**End of Key Stage 2
Reading**

Performance was +14.7% above the national average, highlighting a significant strength in reading outcomes.

+5.3%

Attainment 8

Key Stage 4 performance was +5.3% above national, showing continued impact on secondary attainment.

-2.8%

Persistent absence

Persistent absence was lower than national, supporting the wider focus on attendance and engagement.



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KS4 English and Maths Above national average and improved outcomes were identified for English and Maths at grades 4+ and 5+.	-4.15% Suspension rate Suspension rates, Repeat suspensions and Exclusions were below national	Improved Phonics and RWM Combined significant improvement in Phonics and Reading, Writing and Maths Combined for 2024–25.
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Results for summer 2025 were verified in Spring 2026. SVS use unverified data to forecast, plan and act swiftly in the new academic year rather than waiting for the Spring.

Verified Results for Summer 2025: achievement highlights Performance above national and regional benchmarks, alongside evidence of narrowing gaps		
69.2% Phonics 11.2% above national and 7.2% above regional, with Shropshire children achieving the expected standard.	66.7% KS2 Reading 14.7% above national and 12.7% above regional at the end of Key Stage 2.	+8.7% GCSE English and Maths 5–9 Shropshire CLA achieved 8.7% above national for English and Maths GCSEs at grades 5–9.
47.8% Good Level of Development Above national at 44% and in line with the regional benchmark.	53.3% KS2 Writing 8.3% above national and 5.3% above regional at expected standard.	+5.3% Attainment 8 Above national.
Gap narrowing: Reading and Writing The gap between Shropshire CLA and all Shropshire learners narrowed between 2023 and 2025: Reading gap reduced from 20.1% to 7.9% , and Writing gap reduced from 26.3% to 16.5% .		Gap narrowing: Key Stage 4 The English and Maths GCSE grades 5–9 gap 2023–25 narrowed from 33.9% to 20.2% , while Attainment 8 narrowed from 25.1 to 19.3 .
Broadly in line Shropshire CLA were broadly in line with national and regional benchmarks for Combined at the end of Key Stage 2.		Area to strengthen: KS2 Maths Maths at the end of Key Stage 2 was below national and regional benchmarks, and the gap widened by 1.4% between 2023 and 2025.

Summer 2026 outcomes for end of Key Stage 2 are unverified and are only indications at this stage. As a result, the Shropshire CLA data per indicator is not included given it cannot be published.

Unverified Outcomes, end of KS2 Summer 2026 Indications from Nexus data for SSD903, subject to change.			
GLD In line nationally Shropshire CLA are indicated to have achieved in line with CLA national data and broadly in line with the CLA regional benchmark.	Year 1 Phonics Are indicated to be 3% above the CLA national benchmark by 3.2% and above the CLA regional benchmark by 2.2%.	KS2 Strong SATs profile Indicate Shropshire CLA pupils exceeded national benchmarks in all five SATs measures and regional benchmarks in four .	Maths & Literacy are indicated to be above benchmarks. GLD outcomes exceeded both regional and national benchmarks in Mathematics and Literacy.

Reading

is indicated to be 1.7% above CLA national and slightly below the regional benchmark.

Writing

Is indicated to be **9.2%** above CLA national and 4.2% above CLA regional.

Maths

Is indicated to be **16.5%** above CLA national and 12.5% above CLA regional.

Combined

is indicated to be **+9.8%** above CLA national and 12.5% above CLA regional.

2.1 Key Stage 4 (SSD903):

Summer 2026 outcomes for end of Key Stage 2 are unverified and are only indications at this stage. The Shropshire CLA data per indicator is not included given it cannot be published.

The cohort profile indicates that 48% of the young people have an EHCP and 36% were on roll at a specialist provision. Further analysis on narrowing the gap and benchmarks will be undertaken once results are verified.

Some individual achievements of note are:

S achieved 10 GCSEs, including a grade 8 in English Literature and they will progress to study A levels.

J achieved 9 GCSEs and the EBACC with grade 6s in English Literature & Language, Geography, History and Biology. This is despite her moving to a new home quickly during the exam period.

S achieved 7 GCSEs including grade 4s in English and History.

They have had several moves of school and significant challenges around inclusion so this is an excellent outcome given the challenges they have overcome.

A achieved 8 GCSEs and the EBACC. They became looked after following mum passing away and other arrangements with family members falling through.

Shropshire Virtual School are there on GCSE Results day like other parents, speaking with young people, schools and carers to collect results – and this means we can celebrate with them in those important moments as well as advising on next steps or putting in timely support where needed.



2.2 Key Stage 5

There were some considerable successes for our students this summer. As Corporate Parents for our looked after young people we are very proud of their achievements this year and celebrate with them as families do.

Headlines:

- Five students A Levels and achieved grades which support their next steps. One student (KB) will be going to the University of Sussex to study Law and another is hoping to attend Birmingham City University.
- One young person achieved high grades of B B C. He was originally intending to study in Key Stage 5 at a lower level, but his GCSE grades were so strong that the Virtual School, his Social Worker and Carer encouraged him to aim high at sixth form and his hard work has paid off.
- Seven young people sat Level 3 qualifications. Outcomes were strong, with 100% of the students who sat a Level 3 qualification achieving grades which support their next steps. Notable results included two **Triple Distinctions** (which are the highest level results possible in their level 3 courses and equivalent to 3 strong A level grades) and further **Merit** and **Pass** achievements



- Six young people who are looked after and leaving year 13 are intending to head to University this year

For those young people leaving year 13 this summer, confirmations at the end of August were as follows:

- 52.1% have a college or training place (compared to 40% in 24/25)
- 2.8% have a place at a university (compared to 1% in 24/25).
- 8.5% are employed (compared to 7% in 24/25).

(These statistics are likely to change as enrolment starts in the autumn term)

2.3 Educational engagement

This last year has been one with considerable challenges around inclusion and attendance, there is a context nationally of rising repeat suspensions, falling attendance, a rise in needs around emotional based school avoidance and rising persistent absence. However, in Shropshire...

a notable achievement has been 0 permanent exclusions for Shropshire Looked After Children for five consecutive academic years.

Additionally, **19 permanent exclusions were prevented** last academic year compared to 12 the previous year – and this shows the extent of the challenge our young people and the Virtual School face. The impact of our work on reducing Permanent Exclusions has improved the long-term life chances for our young people.

Case Study - preventing a permanent exclusion

A secondary age child's behaviour had escalated significantly despite a range of interventions and strategies being implemented and the child was becoming increasingly distressed within the school environment.

- Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding was used to provide targeted tuition and access to an equestrian alternative provision, helping to better meet the young person's individual needs.
- The school initiated an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment to further explore the support required.
- Effective partnership working not only prevented a permanent exclusion but also secured a more appropriate and sustainable long-term educational placement better aligned with the young person's needs and future outcomes.

2.4 Attendance for the reportable cohort:

The DFE reports for attendance in the reporting year 2025 for the reportable cohort of CLA (children looked after) continuously in case for 12 months indicate a **positive overall trajectory** as follows:

LA	Overall Absence % 31 March 2021	Overall Absence % 31 March 2022	Overall Absence % 31 March 2023	Overall Absence % 31 March 2024	Overall Absence % 31 March 2025
Shropshire	8.40%	8.00%	6.90%	8.0%	7.6%
Herefordshire	10.90%	9.60%	7.90%	7.2%	6.5%
Devon	No data	9.80%	9.90%	9.2%	10.3%
Dorset	No data	9.10%	9.90%	10.5%	10.1%
National	9.10%	7.80%	9.80%	10.3%	Data not provided

The overall absence rate for Shropshire CLA in the reportable cohort was **7.6%**, which remains lower than



Devon and Dorset and demonstrates **sustained improvement over the 5 year period**. **Shropshire's persistent absence rate has also reduced substantially** and continues to be lower than Devon and Dorset

LA	Persistent absence % CLA 31 March 2021	Persistent absence % CLA 31 March 2022	Persistent absence % CLA 31 March 2023	Persistent absence % CLA 31 March 2024	Persistent absence % CLA 31 March 2025
Shropshire	29.7%	21.1%	16.7%	17.6%	17.3%
Herefordshire	37.3%	21.9%	20.3%	17.3%	13.2%
Devon	30.5%	25.2%	23.6%	22.3%	26.9%
Dorset	33.5%	22.5%	29.2%	23.0%	20.7%
National	30.4%	19.1%	24.3%	25.0%	Not available

Data source <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2025>

2.5 The end-of-year summary for 25-26 indicated the following outcomes for all Shropshire CLA:

	Shropshire CLA (*SVS ePEP Data)	Shropshire All Learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in School Stats)	National All Learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in School Stats)
Primary	95.02%	94.87%	94.69%
Secondary	85.93%	90.95%	91.43%
Combined	91.24%	92.95%	93.07%

- Combined attendance is only 1.7% below Shropshire All Learners.
- Primary attendance for Shropshire Looked After Children is **above** that for all learners in Shropshire and nationally.
- Secondary aged CLA attendance remains challenging and there is a reduction this year of 0.47%.
- Severe Absence (SA) has reduced to 4.4% but Persistent Absence (PA) has increased to 26.6%

A key step this year to reduce risk of Persistent Absence will be implementing **Inclusive Attendance practice of early identification of 10-19 days absence**. Additionally, an **AV1 robot** has been purchased for the academic year 26/27 to support our children who move far from their school or who have needs associated with EBSA.

A new approach to attendance tracking and escalation will be introduced with the SVS team focusing on the overlap in barriers e.g. how attendance and inclusion impacts attainment, rather than viewing in isolation. The Leadership Team will have weekly meetings where children facing barriers to education will be the focus of discussion and action – and will also utilise discussions from SEND Escalation meetings and Stable Homes Panel in order to identify our children most at risk.



2.6 Of note is the increase in unauthorised absence from 2.12% to 2.58%. **Leave of absence in term time** may be contributing towards this and so the new process being developed by the VS Head and CLA Service Manager will be key going forwards.

2.7 There was a monthly average of **only 5 students with No Recorded School (NRS)** over the year. (This data indicator was adversely impacted by 7 new arrivals in the last week of term of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who are statutory school age.)

Informal regional data indicates Shropshire to have one of the lowest rates of children without a school roll (not including children on an EOTAS package for their EHCP).

The most significant reasons for NRS were children with an EHCP moving out of county (as this takes time for the new LA EHCP team to consult with schools) and children arriving newly into care from being electively home educated. Also of note is that due to a strengthening of The School Attendance Regulation 9, the Virtual School are experiencing schools removing children from roll in line with new DFE expectations. This is a matter that the VS Head has challenged the DFE on and liaised with other VS Heads and Attendance colleagues nationally, additionally raising it as an escalation to the Shropshire Director of Childrens Services.

2.8 The **Suspensions** rate in Shropshire for looked after children was 48.2%. This rate reflects around 15% of pupils and an average of 3.2 suspensions per suspended pupil. This data recognises the complex challenges our young people face and barriers to education, which can sometimes impact on their behaviour in school. Analysis of data indicates typical profile of the pupils most at risk as:

- Secondary-aged experiencing persistent absence and more likely to have identified SEND needs.
- More likely to be on a reduced timetable and more vulnerable to suspension and exclusion.

A new piece of work with an Educational Psychologist is supporting development of a new process for SVS colleagues to use as a responsive and consistent practice model at risk of and first suspension.

2.9 There were 63 **Reduced Timetables** issued in total over the academic year, affecting 61 young people and 31.74% were in place for 1 term or less. Secondary mainstream settings accounted for the significant majority of RTT arrangements. The sustained nature of RTT numbers is an indication of **wider challenges in the county relating to inclusion** given that 72.5% of young people on RTT's had SEND - comprising of 58% with an EHCP, 9.6% were in EHCNA at the time and 4.8% were on SEND Support.

A new Local Authority wide approach for temporary part-time timetables will be launched in September. The Virtual School was involved in the co-production activity for revising process and practice and will be working closely with EAS / inclusion colleagues to support a targeted improvement journey across Shropshire.

3.0 For those young people leaving year 13 this summer, indicative data at the end of August are as follows: 52.1% have a college or training place; 2.8% have a place at a university; 8.5% are employed.



Based on the average monthly position for December, January and February, **16.0%** of Shropshire CLA in KS5 were NEET, while 84.0% were in education, employment or training (EET).

This is a significant improvement on 24/25 where the average figure was 23% ie 77% in EET.

At the end of the 2025–26 academic year, **82%** of KS5 young people were EET. Of those, **86.4%** were in further education and **13.7%** were in employment, training or an apprenticeship.

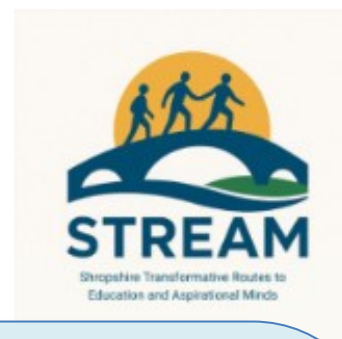
3.1 The SVS **STREAM project** (Shropshire Transformative Routes to Education and Aspirational Minds) programme was designed to specifically support our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP) to build confidence, develop/improve English language skills, improve their engagement in education and support progression onto an appropriate KS5 course.

The programme provides access to timetabled tuition by our UASYP Project Officer and is delivered in the form of live online lessons with some elements of self-study.

The Head Teacher of Virtual School delivered at a national round Table event on the success of this project.

This year the students achieved as follows:

- 100% of UASYP had access to STREAM enrolment upon becoming supported by SVS (27 young people in total).
- 87% of young people who accessed at least one STREAM session subsequently joined college or have a confirmed place for September 2026 - and 7% moved into employment.



CASE STUDY: When D first joined the STREAM programme her English was very limited; she relied on single words and was unable to form full sentences.

D was introduced to *Units of Sound*, a structured literacy programme that focuses on phonics and breaking words into manageable sound units to improve reading and spelling. She has continued to use this tool independently, further strengthening her literacy skills.

By the final week, D delivered an independent presentation on Sustainable Development Goals. Her confidence also grew noticeably - during Week 7, she attended a CLA review independently.

Over the course of eight weeks D demonstrated remarkable growth - she developed essential digital skills, learned how to create, save, and edit documents and PDFs, adjust fonts, and confidently send and receive emails. Her language skills improved significantly; she now uses full sentences in different tenses and can express herself clearly.

A pictorial confidence measuring tool has been used to support impact measures. At the start of the programme D rated her confidence mostly as 2s, but in the final weeks she consistently chose 4s and occasionally 5s indicating a significant boost in self-belief. D was accepted onto ESOL at a college 😊

3.2 The Virtual School has improved practice with fortnightly NEET to EET meetings and an embedded use of coding in-line with the RONI (Risk of NEET) Indicator tool. This means that barriers to education, employment and training can be more accurately identified and therefore more swiftly addressed. In 25-26, 11 young people were successfully supported into EET through this mechanism.

Examples include:



- SLJ, who successfully began studying A Levels with Nisai's Section 41 provision.
- LB, who secured and began a College Ready programme at Shrewsbury College following SVS support.

Key stage 5 colleagues were present on GCSE results day so that help was on hand for any student who needed a plan B, whether that be for doing better or worse than expected.

3.3 A **work experience** opportunity went ahead recently for one of our Looked After children (A), this was arranged jointly with her Social Worker and the young person spent time with SVS as well as other LA departments. Feedback from A was very positive, indicating how valuable it was and supported her to build on her confidence.

During her time with SVS A gained an overview of the Virtual School's work and met members of the team. She worked alongside our Participation Officer to complete a risk assessment for an event, designed a flyer for our Celebration Event and supported with organising Virtual School resources. She engaged really positively throughout the day, showing confidence, creativity and a willingness to get involved in a range of tasks.

An Educational Psychologist has been commissioned to undertake some data analysis round Key Stage 5, initiate discussions with key Post 16 providers to define their needs and work with our Deputy Head to evolve the School Development Plan strand for Key Stage 5. Going forwards there are likely to be separate and differentiated Network Meetings for Designated Members of Staff at Post 16 provisions and a refreshed training offer including Pathway to Adulthood.

3.4 Personal Education Plans

The PEP workstream is led by a Deputy Head, their PEP Monitoring activity takes the form of regular meetings with individual team members to focus on completion and quality, as well as targeted actions for partners and schools. The School Target for PEPs was 95% in both completion and quality - this target is met or exceeded in the Combined outcome for both indicators.

PEPs : Completion and Quality Average performance across the academic year by cohort		
Measure	Year -1 to Year 11	Key Stage 5
Completion Termly average	99.8%	96%
Quality Termly average	96.7%	93%
Combined cohorts - average per term: completion		99.1%
Combined cohorts - average per term: quality		96.1%

(Data is for children in year -1 and Reception age. The SVS Quality descriptors can be found here [Personal education plan \(PEP\) | Shropshire Council](#))

Improvements are also evidenced from 24/25 for Quality (Combined) and especially in Key stage 5 where there was a +7% uplift in quality with the embedding of the revised KS5 PEP, robust tracking/monitoring, challenge from EASOs and support from partners.



The NAVSH (National Association of Virtual School Heads) Annual Survey indicated that national data is as follows:

- Completion of PEP stands at 96.6% for statutory school years and 91% for post 16
- 70% of PEPs are rated as good quality

This puts Shropshire highly above national rates for completion and quality

A focus of the PEP strand in the School Development Plan for 25/26 has been improving completion and quality in PEPs for young people who have NEET (No education, employment or training) and UASYP (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young People).

- UASYP - completion increased from 97.4% in the Autumn term to **100% in both Spring and Summer terms**, while quality improved from **79.4% to 98%** by the end of the year.
- NEET - completion improved from 89.2% in the Autumn term to **100% in the Spring term**, before reducing slightly to **92% in Summer**. Quality also improved overall, increasing from **89.2% in Autumn to 92% in Summer**, reflecting the impact of targeted action around tracking and quality assurance.

Going forwards... multi-agency working groups have been co-developing revisions to the PEP to **align it to nurture principles and build on the voice of young people**.

Voices of Tomorrow (Shropshire's Children in Care Council) have been playing a key role in the development of their PEP too.

The DT Network Summer 2026 session reinforced this direction through activity and discussion, with a clear emphasis on ensuring the PEP moves beyond compliance to become a relational, developmentally informed plan that helps adults understand the child and increases even earlier identification and intervention.



Pupil Premium +

3.5 A new PP+ Policy was published for the 2025-26 financial year and is on our website at [Pupil Premium Plus | Shropshire Council](#). To drive the focus on supporting schools to successfully include our young people and provide opportunities such as cultural capital, transitions and academic achievement the Virtual School has created a PP+ support map [pupil-premium-plus-support-map-2023-24.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#). This continually evolves as we strive to source new opportunities for engagement and progress.

3.6 Each school is now sent a termly amount of £500 per term per child if there is a Good Quality PEP so they can plan for effective use of the Grant through the year. Additional requests to the VS can be made by a school at any time, just like a parent might want to for their own child. The rest of the Grant is retained and used for salaries, service level agreements with quality assured providers and training for example. A report is run at the end of the academic year to analyse the spend and plan future allocations. The PP+ Grant was fully spent in the financial year 2025-26 with no monies returned to the DFE.



A financial breakdown by category of spend for the financial year 2025-26 for retained PP+ (excluding staffing) is as follows:

An Impact Summary from some of our interventions is as follows:

Tuition

The Virtual School has Service Level Agreements with two national and quality assured providers. One SLA is purely online as a response to our young people's voice and the other provider has online and face-to-face options. Tuition ranges from core curriculum content intended to close gaps - to functional skills and GCSE or A level specific tutoring. The tutoring offer using PP+ has supported progress and attainment, which in turn supports attendance and engagement.

Chatter Matters

Chatter Matters is our new project to support foster carers to help children in the Early Years develop speech and language skills. At February half term there was a forest school activity to demonstrate learning opportunities in the outdoors.

Aspire and Seeds of Change

The Aspire Programme is a bespoke careers mentoring programme funded through PP+ to support our young people in Years 9 to 13. It is targeted at those students who are at risk of disengaging from education and those who have gaps in their access to careers advice because of their care experience. The Aspire annual report highlights the following:



75% **75%** **100%**

Developed a **clearer vision** for the future. Increased their **resilience** and ability to **overcome** obstacles Increased their **motivation** to be proactive.

Aspire received referrals for 19 young people this year, of whom 15 engaged at some level with the programme support. Improved understanding of future options, pathway planning, or career decision-making was identified as an outcome for 75% of those who engaged with the programme.

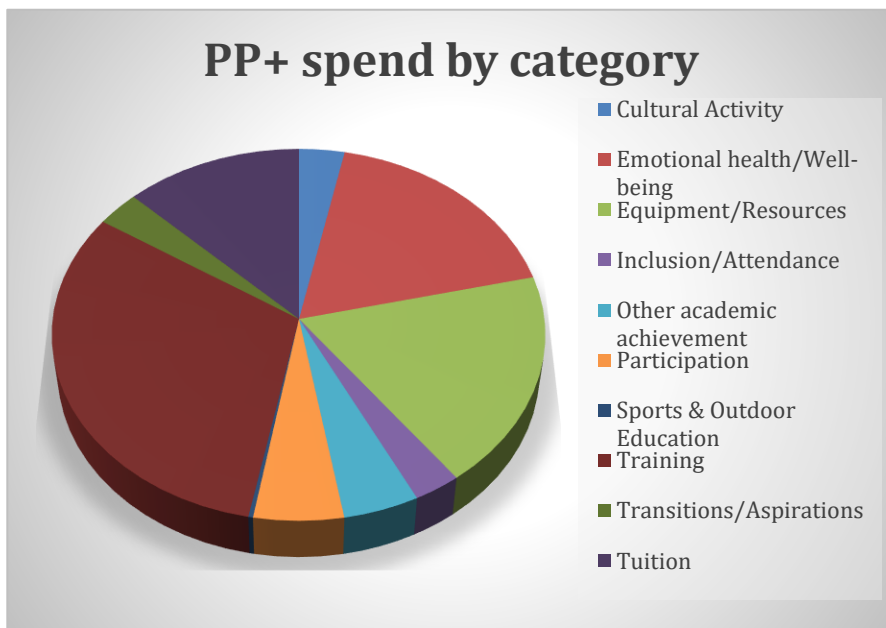
One young person said: ***"I am feeling positive, I know more about my career choice, I understand my patterns and habits. I feel I can aim higher."***

Educational Psychology Service

Shropshire Virtual School engages in multi-agency planning that contributes to co-ordinated support for children and young people and our Service Level Agreement with the Shropshire Educational Psychology Service strengthens this work by providing access to assessment, intervention and Attachment Level 1 training.

Attachment and Trauma-Informed Practice training was delivered by Dr Jennifer Heseltine three times over the course of the academic year. Qualitative and quantitative delegate feedback included the following:

"What I found particularly valuable...was the practical exposure it provided. Even though it was online, the training was structured in a way that allowed me to connect theory with the real-world. I appreciated the clear guidance, the interactive format, and the opportunity to build skills that I can now apply with more confidence in my role."



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Evaluation of impact data indicated **100%** of delegates would recommend this training to a colleague and **100%** rated the training as very good or good.

Precision Teaching Initial Project Work was a pilot project linked to increasing Literacy levels on behalf of the VS and included training a primary school alongside some follow-up work to help embed the learning within the culture of the school.

Time for you

Time for You is a consultation offer for schools for CLA, PLAC and Children with a Social Worker, this is supported by an Educational Psychologist. This continues to be a supportive resource to our schools and has enabled increased reflectivity and containment so that several exclusions could be prevented.

Consultation Category	Number of Sessions
Number of children who were CLA	45
Number of children who were PLAC	8
Number of children who were CWSW	0

Evaluation feedback showed unanimous satisfaction, with participants reporting increased confidence, practical strategies and a greater understanding of how to support pupils effectively.

"The practical strategies and supportive discussion gave me confidence in my next steps."

"The opportunity to reflect with a professional and explore different approaches was extremely helpful."

Smashlife

Smashlife is a service owned by care-experienced adults and delivers mentoring sessions to our students, they also delivered at the Celebration event for Inclusive Attendance event for schools.

Smash Life into Independence Project 2026 was delivered as a four-day, trauma-informed post-16 programme for eight young people in care or preparing to leave care. Developed and delivered by Smash Life in collaboration with SVS, the programme used lived experience and experiential learning to support young people to build confidence, develop everyday independence skills and prepare for the next stage of adulthood. The project focused on key areas that are essential for successful transition including

- Budgeting and cooking
- emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships
- employment and interview preparation
- housing awareness and car mechanics



One young person said they are now “feeling confident about my future” and “feeling close to other people”

Several young people recorded improvements in their Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale scores, with the largest individual improvement being 14 points.

- **100%** felt more confident applying for college or employment;
- **100%** made new friends ; **100%** stepped outside of their comfort zones.
- **88%** felt confident attending a job interview ; felt confident budgeting and cooking a meal.
- **88%** felt more confident developing and maintaining healthy relationships ; had a greater understanding of their rights and entitlements as care leavers.



Case study: mentoring support through Smashlife

A relational, bespoke approach to improving attendance, engagement and future aspiration

Starting point

L needed a trusted person to talk to. He was often late to school but found it difficult to articulate why, making it challenging for adults to identify the right support.

Barriers to engagement

He could become unsettled when other children in the home received phone calls or moved out, and he went missing frequently. Coming into school was difficult, requiring a bespoke education package to support attendance and engagement.

Support provided

Through mentoring from Smashlife and a bespoke package of education, L was supported to build trust, talk about his experiences and strengthen his engagement with learning.

Progress and aspiration

L has made very good progress. He now talks about wanting to work in care homes when he is older and he wants to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community.

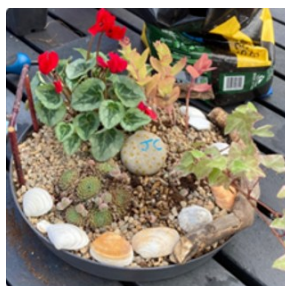
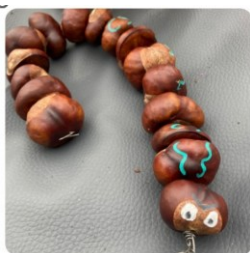
L now wants to work in children's care homes when older as "I would understand why children did the things they did."

Bloomin' Lovely

This social, emotional and mental health intervention is provided by a Horticultural Therapist. Five young people have been supported in 43 sessions which develop sensory and therapeutic experiences, their feedback includes:

- *C put the worms in their new home and added a layer of soil on top to keep them safe, "so they are not scared".*
- *H compared plants to humans and said "they're just like us really aren't they? They need the same things as us, like water and food and to be looked after".*
- *When we planted up a pepper into a bigger plant pot, the pepper fell on its side and 'looked sad'. L straightened up the plant and said to it, "don't worry I often feel like that when I'm tired too"*
- *"I love how this feels on my hands" (mixing playdoh with lavender)*

Examples of children's work:



A goals-based approach to measuring progress is used and some of the targets included achievement in the following areas. Goals Reached:

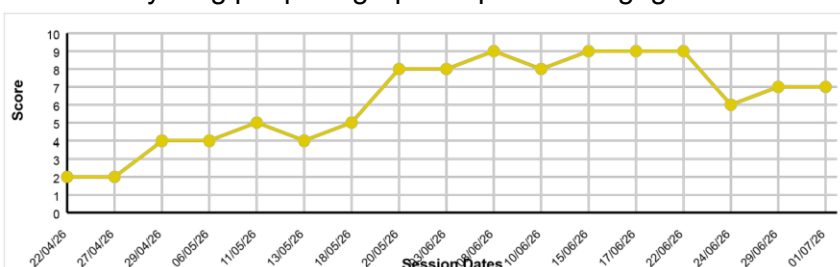


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- *Engaging with an adult and sustaining focus; positive attachment; making a difference in school and having positive links to adult*
- *Increased sense of safety within school and decrease in episodes of distress and dysregulation*
- *Helped increase his confidence and self-esteem; helped to increase his independence*
- *Encouraged to share things about himself to a trusted adult.*
- *Managing emotions and developing resilience in the classroom*
- *Building of self-confidence and self-esteem to promote independent working without constant need for support from adults*

Lifeshed

This is a personalised mentoring service for children and young people. Interventions were delivered to 13 young people this year. An Emotional Regulation Mentoring Programme approach is used to set specific small step targets and measure progress from baseline to the end of the intervention. For example one of our young people's graph for positive engagement with others showed a marked improvement over time:



Despite

facing several significant challenges, he has showed growing involvement and trust in adults.

“Overall, L has had an outstanding term – his resilience, kindness, humour and quiet determination have been inspiring...he continues to grow in confidence, emotional awareness and independence”



3.7

The Virtual School has used PP+ and other Grants to develop a comprehensive training offer:

In summary SVS have rolled out:

- **Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups to 144 practitioners**
- **Boxall Profile Tool training to 153 practitioners**
- **Emotion Coaching to 90 practitioners**
- **Attachment and trauma training to 27 schools**

SVS Belonging Project with 3-18 Trust Schools:

This was designed and delivered in partnership with the Trust schools and focused on

- training and support to **strengthen inclusive, relational and trauma-informed practice**
- encouraged staff to reflect on the importance of **belonging in improving attendance, engagement and wellbeing**
- sharing practical strategies to help children and young people (especially those with vulnerabilities) feel valued, connected and supported within their school communities.

“I have received such incredible feedback about..the training and... wanted to reach out to you to say a huge thank you...I am really looking forward to using this as the catalyst to improving cultures and belonging across our schools.”

Quote from Sadie Howson, Director of Inclusion



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National Nurturing Schools Award achieved by Greenacres School!

SVS have been supporting Greenacres Primary School through the Hearts and Minds project and they have now achieved their Award following a highly positive assessment.

Their report highlights a significant transformation in the school's culture, with nurture, inclusion and relational practice embedded across all aspects of school life. Pupils, families and staff consistently described the school as safe, welcoming, supportive and community focused.

"It's transformational, and I don't use that word lightly." (Executive Headteacher)

"I really trust the teachers – they help with what I need." (Pupil)

"We've seen a positive ripple effect; one conversation with a child can impact a whole community" (Staff)

Emotion coaching

Partnership working by SVS with Broseley Primary has led to building a strong commitment of nurture practice beyond the school itself. Building on the success of their Trauma informed journey with SVS they have begun supporting another school to share learning, expertise and practical strategies to help embed a culture of inclusion and belonging. The Head Teacher has also taken a leading role in extending the use of Emotion coaching with parents/carers

"A positive story to come out of the Emotion Coaching Train the Trainer...I have spent a gorgeous afternoon at Greenfields Primary facilitating Emotion Coaching training, first with TAs/lunchtime supervisors, and then with the teaching team. It was borne from a discussion after the workshop I did with you at the conference.. I just wanted to share as an example of your team equipping us with the resources that we need to make a positive difference in collaborating as schools together."

Claire Killick, Head Teacher

SVS Impact through Nurture

The Nurture Schools Summary of Findings highlights the positive impact of Nurture training across seven primary schools, focusing on improvements in pupil attendance, behaviour and attainment. Most schools used Boxall profiling to identify children for Nurture provision, targeting those struggling in mainstream settings.



- Staff wellbeing improved, with teams feeling better equipped to manage behaviour and recognising the importance of consistency and a whole-school approach.
- Nurture rooms are described as calm and purposeful, featuring supportive environments and resources like weighted blankets and zones of regulation.
- Parental involvement was strong, with families reporting better communication and positive changes at home.
- Behaviour management saw notable improvements, including reduced exclusions and behaviour logs, and children were described as happier and more ready to learn.

Training for multi- agency partners:

The Virtual School delivered a varied training programme for social care colleagues, governors, designated teachers, parents and carers as well as schools. For example:

- The Become Charity – The journey to higher education, Understanding transitions
- Dr Elle Tomlinson – Emotion Coaching for Carers / Emotion Coaching for Social Workers and Early Help practitioners



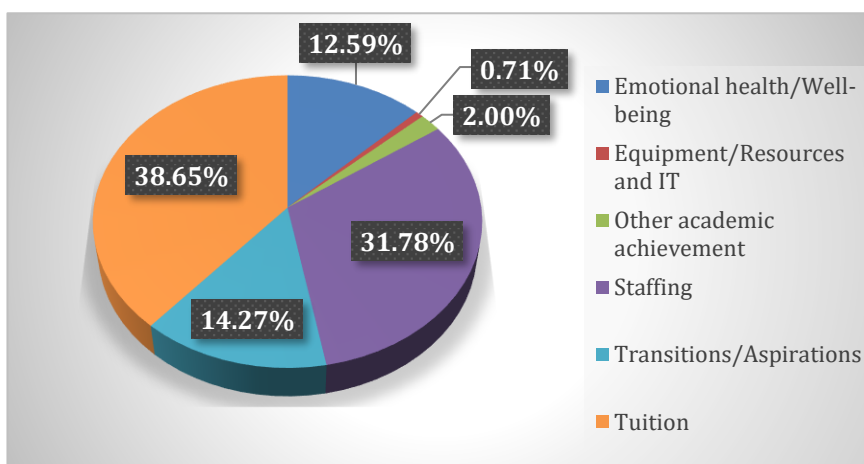
- Practice Week – delivering on various topics including Attendance and Emotion Coaching
- Multi-agency PEP training
- Designated Teacher Networks and New to Role
- Governor for Looked after children

Our training offer can be found here - <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/childrens-social-care-and-health/looked-after-children/shropshire-virtual-school/training/>

SVS are ambitious about developing a new county wide offer for Shropshire schools/settings for the whole school approach incorporated in the National Nurturing Schools Award with the aim of supporting graduated inclusive and trauma informed approaches.

3.8 The Post 16 PP+ Grant is to improve the outcomes of Looked After young people in Key Stage 5. The terms and conditions outline how it must be spent on well-evidenced interventions by supporting our young people towards achieving their full potential, particularly in reference to **attainment, attendance and retention**. The DFE specifies that the Grant should be spent in line with achieving duties outlined in the Guidance [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-and-previously-looked-after-children) (www.gov.uk) and that an effective spend should enable the young people to have sustained involvement in education, employment or training.

Our Post 16 PP+ offer can be found here [Key stage five | Shropshire Council](#) and includes personalised mentoring, a pathway to independence project, support from Shropshire Educational Psychology team, the Pathway project for tuition, Training, a Celebration event, the STREAM re-engagement programme for UASYP and an EASO post to support with PEP completion and quality.



3.9

Pupil Voice and Participation

The Virtual School plays an integral role in the Impact Board and the Participation Strategy.

Jaz-prentices is an innovative new programme for our young people to step into the spotlight and harness the power of their voice. Our group of young people have committed to meeting regularly through this academic year to take part in a suite of coaching activities to develop their confidence with public speaking.

The Jaz-prentices firstly delivered an event to Corporate Parents and then went on to present to the whole school team at Lakelands Academy. We were very proud of how they spoke about their school experiences with the aim of promoting inclusive practice as part of a focus on 'how you can help me to belong and succeed'. Facilitated and supported by Jaz Ampaw-Farr (care experienced international speaker) they did an experiential activity with volunteers from the audience, led table discussions with questions they had prepared and the adults made pledges to them on postcards.





What difference did we make?

"The young people were phenomenal. The courage, confidence and openness they displayed was incredible and it was wonderful to see them using their lived experience as a power of good to support other young people."

"Our staff are still buzzing about the event this morning so I think we can be confident of the impact it has had."

"The Jaz-prentices were absolutely fantastic. Their performance was truly inspiring, and it left a lasting impression on everyone present."

Pledges and promises

"make sure I spend time to be available to the yp I work with **whether they say they are fine or otherwise**"

"ensure our yp feel that **their side of the story** is heard"

"I will remember it's the **small things that make a difference**"

"I will talk to all our Managers"

"I promise to demonstrate kindness at every opportunity, **even when it is challenged**"

I promise I will always try to **see beneath the water** and look at the whole iceberg"



"To take 8 minutes a day with someone who is struggling"

"connect first!"

"Check **late students** are ok"

"Ask pupils how they are – **not just checking on their learning**"

"Focus on the **'why'** not the what when things break down in my classroom"

"Have faith in what I do!"

Our second Jaz-prentices Roadshow took place at a secondary school in the second week of June, our group presented and interacted with about 70 school staff, supported by the SVS team. Impact was indicated by the words attending teachers wrote in the Pledges to our children, for example:

"I pledge to be curious rather than judgemental about any behaviours shown by students - always remembering to ask 'why' and 'are you ok'"

"I promise for you to be a safe place for you to come to and I will always listen"

Our Jaz-prentices graduated in July and a family focused celebration took place with carers and people who were important to them. Jaz Ampaw-Farr helped to dress our young people into their hats and gowns – and there photos with hats in the ai of course! Each Jaz-prentice spoke about their learning through the year and their ambitions. They received graduation certificates, gift bags and there was much enjoyment of cake!



One of our Jaz-prentices (KC) presented to the Designated Teacher Network on June 4th. She spoke positively and confidently about her journey of learning in the last year - through the coaching from Jaz Ampaw-Farr and the sessions with SVS, to the school Roadshow and presenting on a national stage. She is excited about the potential to present at the film premiere in London and continues to present the messages she is passionate about to support driving change in the care and education systems.



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4.0 Voices of Tomorrow (VOT) is our CLA Council - and they have played a key role in their first year (also see section 1.3).

- The group have started to think together about Nurture and what this means to them so it can influence development for SVS as part of the National Nurturing Schools Programme.
- Fundraising activities are being planned
- Planning for this year's Celebration event is in place with our children in the Voices of Tomorrow group taking part in a co-production session in half term to focus on design of the day and activities they want to include.

They have also engaged in activities to help them gel, such as a pasta making activity, led by the 'Hungry Guy' chef who has worked with Jamie Oliver.

Following on from their 'take-over' of Corporate Parenting Board, there is activity across Children's Services to ensure the work 'home' instead of 'placement' is used. BeeU have also been asked to use this term in their documentations and language. Additionally, Madlug bags have been bought so that young people will not have to use bin bags to move from one home to another. One young person's speech has been used in SVS's attachment and trauma responsive schools training pack.

On 30th January, our young people were part of the recruitment process for a new Education Advice and Support Officer interviewing the candidates and asking follow-up questions.



Our VOT group took part in a visit to London with the Youth Service to support their understanding of how their voices can be heard, including in Parliament. The itinerary also included visits with the Local Government Association and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, giving young people valuable insight into how decisions are made and how they can influence change.

The trip also provided an incredible opportunity for our young people to experience some of the capital's culture and most iconic landmarks including the Natural History Museum, Covent Garden and a West End performance of The Lion King.

On 30th January, young people were part of the recruitment process for a new Education Advice and Support Officer interviewing the candidates and asking follow-up questions.

4.1 Participation activities are on offer routinely and support our school team to get to know our children and develop a sense of belonging with our Virtual School as well as promote achievements, aspirations and progression. Recent participation activities for our children and young people have included:

- A theatre workshop at 'Wicked'
- An activity day for UASYP taking part in the STREAM re-engagement programme to increase a sense of belonging in the group
- Graffiti art workshop for secondary aged pupils
- A Forest School activity day with Smashlife in their woodlands for Key stage 3 pupils, building on team work and leadership skills
- Cricket day



Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

Shropshire VS have continued to work with Together for Children across the region, collaborating closely with our partners in Stoke, Staffs and Telford & Wrekin. Our articles are regularly included in their Newsletters for parents. There is a dedicated member of the SVS team linked to PLAC (including Kinship) and for Children with a Social Worker - and advice is routinely given to parents, schools and practitioners. At the Designated Teacher Networks, the VS delivered specific input on guidance and the support / advice offer available for schools.

A total of 175 referrals for advice were received during the year – this is an increase from 132 in the previous year. The majority were relating to Previously Looked After Children with 139 referrals. Schools were the largest source of referrals (55), followed by social workers (40) and parents/carers (33). The data highlights the strong level of engagement from education settings and partner agencies in seeking advice and support.

The most common themes (apart from Other) were Inclusion, EHCPs, Attendance and PP+/Funding. This reflects the breadth of support provided by the service, with a particular focus on helping schools and families address inclusion needs, navigate statutory processes and secure appropriate support for children and young people.

Referral analysis	PLAC	Kinship	Children with a Social Worker	Totals
Total number of referrals	139	8	28	175
Referral from school	48	6	1	55
Referral from parent/carers	30	1	2	33
Referral from SW	22	1	17	40
Other	39	0	8	47

Themes	PLAC	Kinship	Children with a Social Worker	Totals
Attendance	11	1	9	21
Attainment & Progress	1	1	0	2
EHCP	19	0	3	22
Inclusion	34	1	5	40
PP+/Funding	19	0	1	20
SEND	7	0	1	8
Other	44	5	8	57

4.3 To improve access to support for families, we have developed a network of local PLAC and Kinship in three designated schools across the county to host joint parent sessions, creating opportunities for parents and carers to connect, share experiences and access specialist advice. In addition, we are currently offering access to the CATCH online platform, providing parents and carers with practical resources, guidance and strategies to help support their children's emotional wellbeing, learning and development. Together, these initiatives are helping to build stronger partnerships between families, schools and services, ensuring children receive the right support to thrive. Our offer can be seen in our 'CONNECT' pages on the Virtual School website [Connect | Shropshire Council](#)



The introduction of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill places a stronger focus on identifying and supporting children in kinship care and ensuring that they can access the help they need to thrive. In response, Shropshire Virtual School has continued to develop its support for kinship families through advice, guidance, training and targeted interventions. Our plan is also to recruit an EASO to support with these Extended Duties as they become Statutory.

4.4 Our Working Together pilot has developed into a multi-disciplinary approach to swift resolution and priority oversight for children with a safeguarding vulnerability without suitable education. The **DFE recorded a video of the SVS Head Teacher sharing this approach and it has been included in their Toolkit for Schools.**

4.5 The Virtual School has also continued to promote trauma-informed and nurturing approaches through training and support for schools and families.

Collaboration with 8 Empower Trust Schools

SVS continue to develop our training offer with the Hearts and Minds Programme (attachment/trauma, emotion coaching and relational practice) and this includes new work across the Empower Trust's eight primary schools. Early feedback is as follows:



- *“Impact is already showing in conversations between adults and children, not just at times of dysregulation but in prevention.”*
- *“It targeted the mindset of some of our hardest to reach staff and is helping to modify their approaches.”*
- *“LSA’s (Learning Support Assistants) came away wanting to work with teachers on the Five to Thrive model. We have worked together to create profiles of key children with this as the basis.”*

As part of this project, the schools have developed parent workshops, so far attended by 54 parents, with 52 reporting that they had gained a useful strategy to use at home. One participating school also became a finalist for the NAPCE Pastoral Team of the Year, partly linked to its Emotion Coaching ethos.

A Year 4 pupil case study shows the impact of a consistent Emotion Coaching approach within a nurture provision. Staff helped the pupil recognise and label their emotions, understand the link between feelings and behaviour and develop strategies through reflection, problem-solving and restorative conversations. The pupil showed clear improvements in engagement with learning, emotional security, cooperation, relationships and acceptance of adult support, while Boxall Profile measures indicated stronger emotional regulation and resilience.

Pupil feedback is also positive. Children said adults speak to them kindly, calmly and respectfully when they were dysregulated, listened to their individual needs, and helped them use practical regulation strategies such as breathing exercises and understanding the “chimp brain”.

Feedback from Karen Matthews Inclusion Lead for Empower Trust :

“I just wanted to send you a big thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with you both on the Hearts and Minds Project. The buzz among our emotion coaches is wonderful and speaking to Mark last night I can see how much this is going to have such an impact on our trust schools and impact the lives of so many children.”

4.6 **SVS nominated 12 Shropshire schools for the ARC Award** this year in recognition of the progress made in our Hearts and Minds programme (attachment & trauma, emotion coaching and relational/inclusive practice). We have been working with Mitch Allsopp (Head Teacher) at the Grove School in Market Drayton for the last 2 years through the Hearts and Minds project.



Shropshire have the winning Secondary School of the year for the West Midlands Region!



Shropshire also have 4 schools who have Highly Recommended across primary, secondary and specialist.

All these schools will be celebrated for their improving relational attachment/trauma and inclusive practice at a multi-agency event in the first half of the Autumn term.

4.7 The SVS Head Teacher and Deputy Head presented at the **SEND Leadership Event on 5th June** with a focus on the SVS Hearts & Minds project, including how 11 primary schools, 2 secondaries and 1 specialist school have been receiving support to develop Relational practice and policies.

This Autumn our Emotion Coaching offer will expand into **Early Years settings**. This training is already fully booked which is very encouraging given our ambition is to make Shropshire an Emotion Coaching County. The Head Teacher and Deputy Head also delivered a presentation on our journey at the Emotion Coaching UK event.

The recent Designated Teacher Network introduced a new professional development opportunity called **Time to Reflect**, this is for Shropshire Teaching Assistants / Pastoral practitioners in schools who are supporting our children across CLA, PLAC, Kinship and Children with a Social Worker.

The Educational Psychologist is creating this as a bespoke offer and a co-production activity took place to focus on their views about design and delivery. Activities will focus on attachment & trauma-informed practice, emotion coaching and preparation for adulthood. This aims to further strengthen the system's capacity to support vulnerable learners and improve consistency of relational practice around transition and progression.

4.8

Nationally, concerns continue around attendance and inclusion statistics for Children with a Social Worker – and the Extended Duties for Virtual Schools will become statutory with the Children's Bill and support a focus on these groups of young people.

In Shropshire our **outcomes for children on a CIN and CP Plan are excellent with lower absence and lower persistent absence for CIN** than our statistical neighbours.

Over the three-year period, Shropshire has consistently achieved lower absence rates than its statistical neighbours for both CIN and CPP cohorts; Persistent absence for **Children in Need (CIN)** in Shropshire remained stable at **37.2%** and continued to be significantly lower than all comparator authorities.



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LA	Overall absence % CIN 31st March 2023	Overall absence % CIN 31st March 2024	Overall absence % CIN 31st March 2025	Overall absence % CPP 31st March 2023	Overall absence % CPP 31st March 2024	Overall absence % CPP 31st March 2025
Shropshire	13.9%	13.8%	15.3%	17.3%	19.8%	16.1%
Herefordshire	20.1%	20.4%	19.7%	17.0%	21.5%	18.1%
Devon	20.3%	23.1%	21.8%	23.6%	24.6%	22.6%
Dorset	22.2%	23.4%	23.1%	23.0%	23.6%	29.4%
National	16.4%	17.8%	N/A	21.7%	22.3%	N/A

LA	Persistent absence % CIN 31st March 2023	Persistent absence % CIN 31st March 2024	Persistent absence % CIN 31st March 2025	Persistent absence % CPP 31st March 2023	Persistent absence % CPP 31st March 2024	Persistent absence % CPP 31st March 2025
Shropshire	39.6%	37.1%	37.2%	52.7%	51.4%	59.3%
Herefordshire	57.3%	50.4%	51.6%	53.8%	55.8%	36.1%
Devon	53.0%	54.9%	55.4%	62.4%	61.4%	55.3%
Dorset	57.0%	55.2%	56.2%	63.4%	54.5%	69.7%
National	44.4%	47.9%	N/A	57.5%	57.5%	N/A

Data source <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2025>

For **children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP)**, persistent absence increased from **51.4% to 59.3%**. Whilst this remains lower than Dorset (69.7%), it is higher than Herefordshire (36.1%) and Devon (55.3%). Persistent absence amongst children subject to a Child Protection Plan therefore remains an important area for continued multi-agency focus.

SVS has been a key driver of the **Inclusive Attendance programme in Shropshire** in partnership with the Education Access Service. Schools taking part are being equipped with evidence-based strategies and whole-school approaches to address barriers to attendance and improve engagement. Twenty-five schools achieved Bronze Accreditation during the year and will progress to Silver Accreditation in 2026/27. Early feedback demonstrates increased confidence and positive changes in practice, with schools reporting improvements in their approach to supporting vulnerable pupils – for example **a +1.9% improvement in attendance for children on Free School Meals**.

As the impact of these changes becomes established, we aim to target corresponding improvements in attendance outcomes. A further cohort of schools will be invited to join the programme this coming year, broadening its reach and reinforcing a shared commitment to inclusive attendance across Shropshire.



4.9 Our **Designated Safeguarding Lead Supervision Project** is delivered in partnership with our Safeguarding colleagues in Learning and Skills. An external provider was commissioned to deliver the supervision and data indicates a significant positive impact on participating schools.

Key Benefits Reported by participants

- ✓ Improved confidence in safeguarding decision-making.
- ✓ Increased professional resilience and emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ Safe space to reflect on challenging cases and workload pressures.
- ✓ Greater confidence that decisions were appropriate and child-focused.
- ✓ Development of a supportive network of DSLs across schools.

What Participants Valued

- ✓ Emotional support and professional reassurance.
- ✓ Opportunities to share experiences with peers
- ✓ Support in managing complex safeguarding cases
- ✓ Structured reflection and professional learning.

Due to the success of the pilot, the Safeguarding Supervision Project will continue for a second year. The existing cohort will receive ongoing support to embed and sustain the benefits of supervision, while a new cohort of 16 schools will join the programme. This expansion reflects the positive impact of the project and will enable more DSLs to access high-quality supervision, professional reflection and peer support

5.0 A selection of compliments for Shropshire Virtual School from 2025-26

"It was a truly wonderful event and a real privilege to be part of it. The care, thought and effort that went into every aspect of the day was clear to see, and it created a fantastic opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievements, talents and potential of some of our most remarkable children and young people. What stood out most was the pride, confidence and happiness on the faces of the young people and those supporting them. These moments matter enormously. They help our children know that they are valued, believed in and celebrated for who they are and what they achieve. I know events like this take a huge amount of work behind the scenes, often over many months, and I wanted to make sure you all know how much your commitment and dedication is appreciated. The Virtual School continues to make a real difference to the lives of our children and young people, and Saturday was a powerful reminder of the impact of your work."

Tanya Miles, CEO for Shropshire – about the Celebration Event in September 2026.

"I have received such incredible feedback about both the training and Alex and wanted to reach out to you to say a huge thank you for investing in our trust and schools with this. I am really looking forward to using this as the catalyst to improving cultures and belonging across our schools. Thank you again for your continued support"

Sadie Howson, Director of Inclusion 3-18 trust about the SVS Hearts & Minds programme

"We have had tremendous support from Shropshire VS – especially in helping us advocate for a Previously Looked After Child through secondary application. So, thank you everyone for everything you do every day"

Beth Rowe the Deputy Head at St Giles:

"The training has improved my understanding of the health journey for looked after children and how health, education and social care work together to support children with SEND. I will be more proactive in monitoring developmental milestones, attending health appointments, contributing to reviews, and ensuring the child's voice is reflected when planning their care."

(Foster Carer, speaking about training for carers delivered by Katherine Jones and Jo Betts in SVS)



"The training we have received and the advice given by the Virtual School has had a massive impact on our school community. We have a high number of children with a social worker at our Academy and we are proud that our staff have the skills to implement an attachment and trauma informed approach to supporting our most vulnerable learners to thrive."

Mel Wright, Asst Principal Holy Trinity C of E Primary School

"Just to say how moving and inspirational I found Jaz's presentation this afternoon. Thanks so much for organising. It was a terrific event. A headteacher colleague who I was sat next to and have known for a long time commented on how much the Virtual School has been transformed under your watch. 😊"

John Rowe, Governor of SVS and Head of Education Quality & Safeguarding

"I have, once again, loved working so closely with you all. Your support, expertise and passion makes all the difference in these young people's futures."

Sarah Longhurst, Asst Head and SENDCo Mary Webb School

"Just wanted to say how amazing (the training) was last week... it was spot on!!! All those attending said that they could have listened..for hours and it was some of the best training they'd ever had."

Andy Parkhurst, Deputy Head Lakelands School talking about training as part of the SVS Hearts and Minds programme

"Claire is wonderful, very knowledgeable and efficient. I requested advice and support for one of my SGO YP yesterday, she has spoken to school and plan of support in place. Your Team is just great"

Amy Morgan, Senior Social Worker, Special Guardianship Support

"Huge well done Jo to the school and to the team for developing and working so hard on this. I think this is such important work to support children to achieve their best, we saw that first hand at Jaz-prentices last week so huge congratulations"

Natasha Moody, Shropshire Council about supporting the Grove to be Regional Secondary Winner in the ARC Timpson Award

"I just wanted to take a moment to highlight some excellent work from Alex. We had a new young person come into care just before Easter and (school was) unstable, with school initially offering only a two-hour provision each day. Alex has been relentless in advocating for C, working closely with the school and SEN team to secure a full, but appropriately tailored alternative timetable. The progress made in such a short period has been significant. I attended C's reunification meeting, where it was acknowledged how much had been achieved in those first few weeks. It was clear that Alex has been a driving force behind this. Erika (Ower) has called me as well after the meeting to say what a good job Alex has done...Thank you, Alex – your dedication is clear to see and you consistently put the young person at the centre of everything you do."

Compliment for Alex Wheeler, SVS EASO from a Social Worker:

"I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge Lindsey's professionalism and enthusiasm in supporting E's education. I was particularly grateful for the time and care she took to listen and engage with my perspective as E's mother... who simply wants to see her daughter re-engage with education and reach her potential. I genuinely felt heard during today's meeting, which meant a great deal to me. Lindsey demonstrated both warmth and a clear depth of knowledge, and she was also very kind and supportive in her interactions with E. Overall, I felt today's meeting was one of the most constructive i have been part of to date within the wider discussions around E's care planning and education."

A birth parent commenting on support from Lindsay Armstrong, Deputy Head in SVS

"GREAT session with Elle and H this morning – they were both super...appreciate you and your team so much for holding me up during times like this"

A Head Teacher about support from SVS and the Educational Psychologist Dr Elle Tomlinson



Summary re the School Development Plan for 2025-27

5.1 There was good progress on the actions in the School Development Plan. The Virtual School did:

- further develop the voice of our young people – eg School Council have led a ‘take-over’ of Corporate Parenting Board and been to Parliament; Jaz-prentices have presented at schools and a national conference
- roll out the Inclusive Attendance conference and programme in collaboration with EAS to support 25 pilot schools achieving Bronze accreditation.
- expand our Emotion Coaching programme – with roll out to 90 practitioners across county, a whole trust of 8 primaries and workshops for parents/carers and social workers.
- keep exclusions of looked after children to 0 – and prevent 19 exclusions
- stay on track with our work towards achieving the NNSP (National Nurturing Schools Programme) and are aiming to submit in December 2026
- develop our support for PLAC and Kinship with the new ‘Connect’ offer
- roll out a Precision Teaching project in pilot schools with support from the Educational Psychology Service
- improve the quality of our NEET and UASYP PEPs
- support our children to achieve above national and regional benchmarks in many indicators
- support the co-production of the new CAMHS offer for Shropshire children
- reduce the average NEET figure to 16% and increase participation opportunities in KS5 with a focus on independence skills
- work with our partners in EAS and SEND to create a new EBSA pathway for Shropshire
- evolve the Working Together approach to support strategic practice and granular support for children with a social worker, support risk reduction and increase access to suitable education

5.2 **For the second year of our two-year School Development Plan 2025-27 the following ambitions will have a key focus and we will aim to:**

- celebrate the achievements of our schools (eg in the ARC Timpson awards) by holding a multi-agency event on belonging, relational practice and nurture
- celebrate the achievements of our Jaz-prentices at the BAFTA event and continue to strengthen VOT and its impact
- launch our new co-produced PEP in line with nurture principles
- develop a new graduated approach within the school to support escalations and the nurture principles
- revise the SVS Attendance Policy in line with new Guidance
- launch our new process and guidance for Leave of Absence in Term time for CLA
- reduce the suspensions rate and persistent absence for CLA and those on Child Protection Plans
- improve secondary attendance and reduce leave of absence in term time
- support the drive across county to improve practice around temporary part-time timetables and reduce the length of Reduced Timetables for CLA, especially those with SEND
- evolve the Working Together multi-agency approach
- further develop tools and resources to support attainment & progress, especially in literacy and numeracy
- be ambitious in our development of the Hearts & Minds project and supporting schools/trusts with Belonging strategies
- support the SEND inspection and with planning for Transformation in Shropshire.
- start the new NEET to EET project for students with an EHCP
- embed our new approach to earlier planning for careers and adulthood through VS Links focusing on this from year 8
- develop our links with post 16 providers and expand the training/network offer for them – and



- explore ways of encouraging our students into engagement with pathway to university programmes
- develop the use of Power BI tools to support reporting and strategic decision making
- support the next stage of co-production for the new CAMHS pathway for Shropshire Looked after Children and work with partners to ensure robust data supports tracking and monitoring of referrals.
- Collaborate with EAS on the roll out of Inclusive Attendance – for a new Silver cohort and a Bronze including EYFS and Post 16 providers
- Extend the DSL supervision project into phase 2
- Launch Time to Reflect – our new CPD course for school practitioners delivered by an Educational Psychologist
- Achieve the National Nurturing School Award

Report by Jo Kelly, Head Teacher, Shropshire Virtual School
Date: 7th September 2026



Shropshire Virtual School



Jo Kelly - Head of Virtual School
and Access to Education



Lindsay Armstrong
Deputy Head



Jo Betts
Deputy Head



Amy Foulger
Lead Education Officer



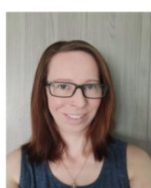
Katherine E Jones
Senior EASO



Samantha Childe
Senior EASO



Claire Wright
Senior EASO



Gemma Trestain-Miles
EASO



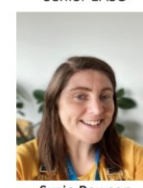
Heather Hobman
EASO



Holly Morris
EASO



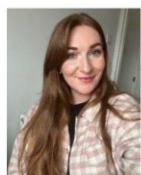
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Alexandra Wheeler
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Lydia Williams
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Kate French
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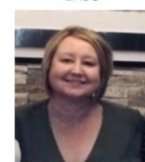
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