

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL

ANNUAL

REPORT

2025



SUTTON
VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Aim, Aspire, Achieve

Suspension bridge in Squamish, Canada

TO OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE,

What is Sutton Virtual School?

We are a team within Cognus Limited that helps support the education of children in care, previously looked-after children, children in kinship families, and children who have a social worker. We work with your carers, teachers, social workers and lots of other people to help you do your best in school and feel supported.

💡 What Went Well This Year

❤️ You got great support in school

- We checked that all children in care were in good schools that meet their needs.
- Your Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were updated every term so adults could plan the right support for you.
- Younger children and sixth-formers got extra help to settle into school, college or training.

✅ Good progress and achievements

- Many children did really well in reading, writing, maths and exams.
- More Year 13 students went into education, jobs or training (82%!)
- More young people went to university, including some doing Master's degrees.

😊 Better attendance and fewer exclusions

- Attendance improved for many of you.
- No children in care were permanently excluded – which is great!
- Schools worked with us when attendance was tricky.

💬 Your voice is being heard more


- A new Participation Officer has been appointed to make sure your ideas shape activities, events, and decisions.
- Children in Care Council will grow to include disabled young people and those living out of Borough.

🌈 Fun enrichment activities

You took part in:

- Summer Fun Day, London Mini Marathon, white-water rafting, panto trips, Skreens Park adventure days
- Canada trip 2025 funded by the Turing Scheme – with canoeing, forest hikes, ziplining and whale watching!

Everyone who went said it helped them grow self-confidence, make friends, feel calmer and happier.



Squamish, Canada observation platform

Amazing landscapes in Squamish



- 🧠 Extra learning and wellbeing help
 - Educational Psychologists supported children with learning needs.
 - More speech & language and occupational therapy was offered to help you communicate and succeed in school.
 - Foster carers got help to support attendance and routines at home.
 - Schools joined our Building Stronger Foundations programme, learning how trauma affects learning and how to help you feel safe and regulated in school.

- 🌟 Key Facts About Children in Care This Year
 - 225 children in care (on 31st March 2025)
 - 75% in mainstream schools
 - More children identified with SEND received support
 - Many children showed improved behaviour, better regulation, and fewer suspensions after schools completed our trauma-informed training

- 🔗 What We're Working On Next
 - Helping more children attend school regularly
 - Reducing suspensions even further
 - Giving extra help to children with social workers and those living with relatives
 - Making sure your voice shapes decisions
 - Preparing young people for work, training or university
 - Continuing the Canada programme for 2026 with £45,000 grant funding secured for next year's trip!

❤️ A Final Message

We are so proud of everything you achieved this year – your hard work, your courage, and the way you support each other.

Your education matters, and we're here to help you shine. 🌟

If you ever need support with school, college or training, just reach out – we're here for you.

KATE LEYSHON

HEADTEACHER, SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIORITIES

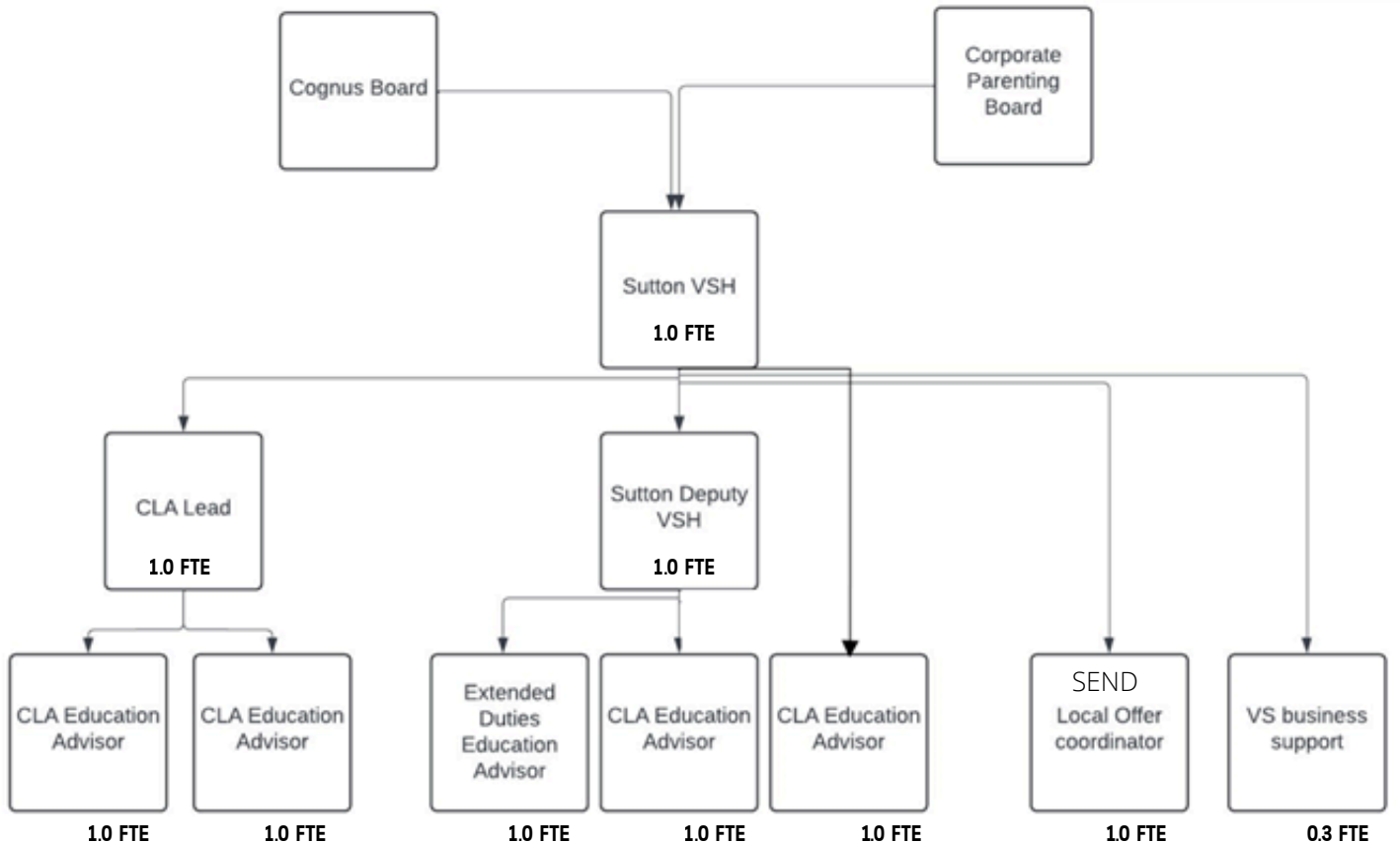
The key areas of responsibility for Sutton Virtual School are:

1	To promote the Education of Children Looked After (CLA)
1a	All Sutton CLA are accessing appropriate and high-quality education provision that meets their needs.
1b	All Sutton CLA have a high quality and up to date PEP, which is reviewed termly (i.e., three PEPs per year).
1c	Early Years CLA are supported appropriately through the Early Years PEP and Early Years Foundation Stage Premium
1d	Post 16 CLA are supported through their transition to Leaving Care and into gainful EET (education, employment, training) through access to termly PEPs, careers guidance and structured support
2	To carry out local authority Children Looked After education monitoring functions and statutory returns (including Ofsted)
2a	Robust procedures in place to monitor attendance, exclusions, attainment, and progress for all Sutton CLA, placed in and out of borough.
2b	Tracking of a range of data parameters to inform monthly reporting against Key Performance Indicators and analysis through interim and annual reports to the local authority, Cognus Board of Directors, the DfE and Ofsted.
2c	Regular monitoring of children who are 'Children Missing Education' or with alternative timetables
3	Ensuring that 100% of Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) is deployed in line with the conditions of the grant and for the benefit of CLA
3a	The PEP process demonstrates personalised PPP spend on targeted support to meet learner needs, enable progress, and improve attainment and impact is measured through subsequent review.
3b	Sutton Virtual School commissioning activity is evaluated annually; spot purchasing, and high value contracts are all conducted and monitored in line with safeguarding and commissioning requirements.
4	To promote the education of children with a social worker, children previously looked after and formal kinship arrangements.
4a	Provide strategic leadership to schools, social care, and other professionals to promote the education of Children with a Social Worker (Child in Need, Child Protection, Children with Disabilities)
4b	Provide advice and guidance to adoptive and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) parents, schools, and other professionals in relation to the education of Children Previously Looked After (PCLA).

Ziplining at Skreens Park



SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL STRUCTURE



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Sutton Virtual School continues to be committed to building strong working relationships with multi-agency partners. We continue to work collaboratively with many services including:

- Children's Social Care teams including CLA/LCT team and localities teams
- Cognus Educational Services eg Educational Psychology, SEND team, Inclusion, Assisted Travel
- Sutton schools and educational settings
- Sutton Foster Carers Association
- Sutton fostering and SGO service
- Sutton Therapeutic Hub
- CLA Nurses
- Youth Offending Team
- Advocacy and mentoring with MAPS
- Sutton Designated Teacher Network
- Sutton Designated Safeguarding Lead Network
- Sutton Headteacher networks (Secondary, Primary and Special Schools)
- Sutton Children in Care Council
- Pan London Virtual School Headteacher
- Pan London CWSW Networks
- National Association of Virtual School Headteachers (NAVSH)
- Adopt London South and Kinship
- London Marathon Events



Walking in Squamish, Canada

LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

There are increasing levels of special educational needs nationally, alongside sustained financial pressures across education, health, and social care, creating a significantly more complex operating environment for Virtual Schools. Over 1.7 million pupils in England now have SEND, representing 19.6% of all pupils, with notable rises in both EHCPs and pupils requiring SEN Support. At the same time, school and education budgets have faced real-terms reductions, placing greater strain on schools' capacity to provide timely, effective support and increasing reliance on Sutton Virtual School involvement.

Pressures within social care have also intensified, with national workforce surveys showing recruitment challenges for children's social workers, affecting assessment and multi-agency planning. Health partnerships are experiencing similar constraints, as recent reforms to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) have reduced capacity for joint casework and early health assessments. Together, these systemic pressures—rising SEND need, constrained education budgets, social worker shortages, and reduced health capacity—are contributing to larger, more complex caseloads within Sutton Virtual School.

Despite these challenges, Sutton Virtual School continues to adapt to the changing context, strengthening partnership working, refining internal processes, and absorbing increasing levels of workload to ensure children and young people receive the support they need.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EDUCATION ADVISOR

A typical day for a Sutton Virtual School Education Advisor is busy and demanding, involving coordination across multiple local authorities that each operate differently—with their own systems, admissions processes, SEND pathways, and communication styles. With caseloads usually between 60–70 children, the day often starts with checking attendance, placement changes, and any suspensions that came in overnight. This is quickly followed by reviewing upcoming EHCNA and EHCP deadlines, and tracking progress on school admissions or transport applications. Advisors move between these different local systems to keep each child's education stable and compliant. They gather information from schools, social workers, carers, educational psychologists, and therapists; chase missing paperwork; quality-assure PEPs; and prepare for multi-agency meetings.

Across the course of the day, an advisor may be leading or contributing to PEP meetings, multi-agency professionals meetings, placement-stability discussions, admissions conversations, or EHCP annual reviews. Each one requires a solid grasp of the child's needs, the school environment, the placement situation, and how responsibilities sit between the home and host authorities. They ensure PEP targets are SMART, that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used meaningfully, that EHCP provision is being delivered as planned, and that the child's voice is clearly heard. Advisors work closely with educational psychologists and therapists to align support and help schools embed trauma-informed practice. They problem-solve around barriers to attendance, work to prevent exclusions, organise tutoring or mentoring, and liaise with both host and home authorities to maintain continuity—particularly when a child moves placement at short notice.

The day usually ends with updating case records, and writing up summaries for professionals and carers. Alongside all the statutory work, advisors also run training for foster carers and professionals, enrichment activities, and deliver CPD. The role demands excellent information-governance, strong partnership working, and a high level of professional curiosity—all while keeping a sharp, consistent focus on the educational stability, progress, and wellbeing of children looked after, wherever they live and however complex their situation may be.



Fatima Whitbread teaching throwing at Summer athletics day



82%

Year 13 leavers with an employment, education or training destination

9%

Year 13 leavers taking up a university place

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Educational Psychology

The Educational Psychology team has provided essential support for our Children Looked After by delivering individual assessments to identify learning needs and strengths, contributing expert advice to Personal Education Plans, and promoting trauma-informed approaches in schools and care settings. They have worked collaboratively with foster carers, designated teachers, and social workers to implement strategies that enhance emotional regulation and academic progress. In addition, the team has offered training and guidance to build capacity across the network, ensuring that interventions are evidence-based and tailored to each child's unique circumstances.

PEP child-focused approach

Sutton Virtual School has launched our revised Personal Education Plan (ePEP) outline for the 2025/2026 Academic Year, designed to make the PEP process more streamlined, interactive, and child-focused. The new approach seeks to prioritise the voice of the child, ensuring their aspirations, experiences, and goals are central to planning and review. By improving accessibility for carers, schools, and professionals, the PEP aims to enhance collaboration and accountability while reducing administrative burden. This child-centred approach reflects our commitment to improving educational outcomes and wellbeing for children in care.

Residential Home Visits and Network

Sutton Virtual School has strengthened its links with local residential care homes by visiting several settings in person this term. During these visits, the team engaged with managers and key workers to discuss the support currently available and explore how we can best meet their needs going forward. Feedback gathered from these conversations informs our approach to delivering targeted support, including the introduction of regular Network Meetings to share best practice and address emerging challenges. This collaborative work aims to ensure that children in residential care receive consistent, high-quality educational support tailored to their individual circumstances.

Attendance support for foster carers

Sutton Virtual School provides foster carers with targeted attendance support to help children in care engage consistently with education. This includes monitoring attendance data, offering advice and practical strategies to overcome barriers such as transport or anxiety, and working collaboratively with schools and social workers to resolve issues. The team can arrange interventions, provide training and resources for carers, and ensure that any attendance concerns are addressed promptly to promote stability and positive educational outcomes.

Eventbrite sign up for families

We've introduced Eventbrite into our events planning procedures. It's an online platform that allows families to seamlessly keep abreast of our enrichment activities and sign up for them. Having a one-stop shop has been successful. Families are familiar with the site and its processes, and we can keep track of who's attending events and any specific needs/requirements.



Cooking in a Squamish hostel

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Participation service update

Cognus Limited will be taking on the leadership of the Participation offer from February 2026. Joshua Winfield has been appointed Participation Officer to oversee the delivery of the Participation Strategy from January 2026. Sutton Virtual School Education Advisor Kieron Ifill has been appointed to the post of Participation Lead. The vision for the Participation Service is centred on the voices of Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people being integral to everything Cognus Limited, London Borough of Sutton and local area partners do. This is based around the belief that care experienced children and young people's voices, experiences, challenges and aspirations must be heard across the Corporate Partnership and service development is influenced in line with their views.

A Participation Annual Report will be published each year and regular reports will be made to the Corporate Parenting Board. Where events are jointly run by the Sutton Virtual School, they will continue to feature in the Sutton Virtual School Annual Report. The Participation service will develop the reach of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) to include out of Borough CLA, CLA with disabilities, as well as engaging post 18 care leavers. There will be a focus on increasing the diversity of engagement in CiCC and enrichment activities to ensure children of all ages have opportunities to take part, and the ethnicity, cultural and gender needs of the children are considered.

The Participation Officer will actively engage with young people to promote engagement in activities, run monthly CiCC meetings, provide regular updates to leaders and staff on Participation events, levels of engagement and service progress. The Participation Service aims to develop provision of training / mentoring for young people to help build their confidence to advocate for themselves at a senior/strategic level in the local area.

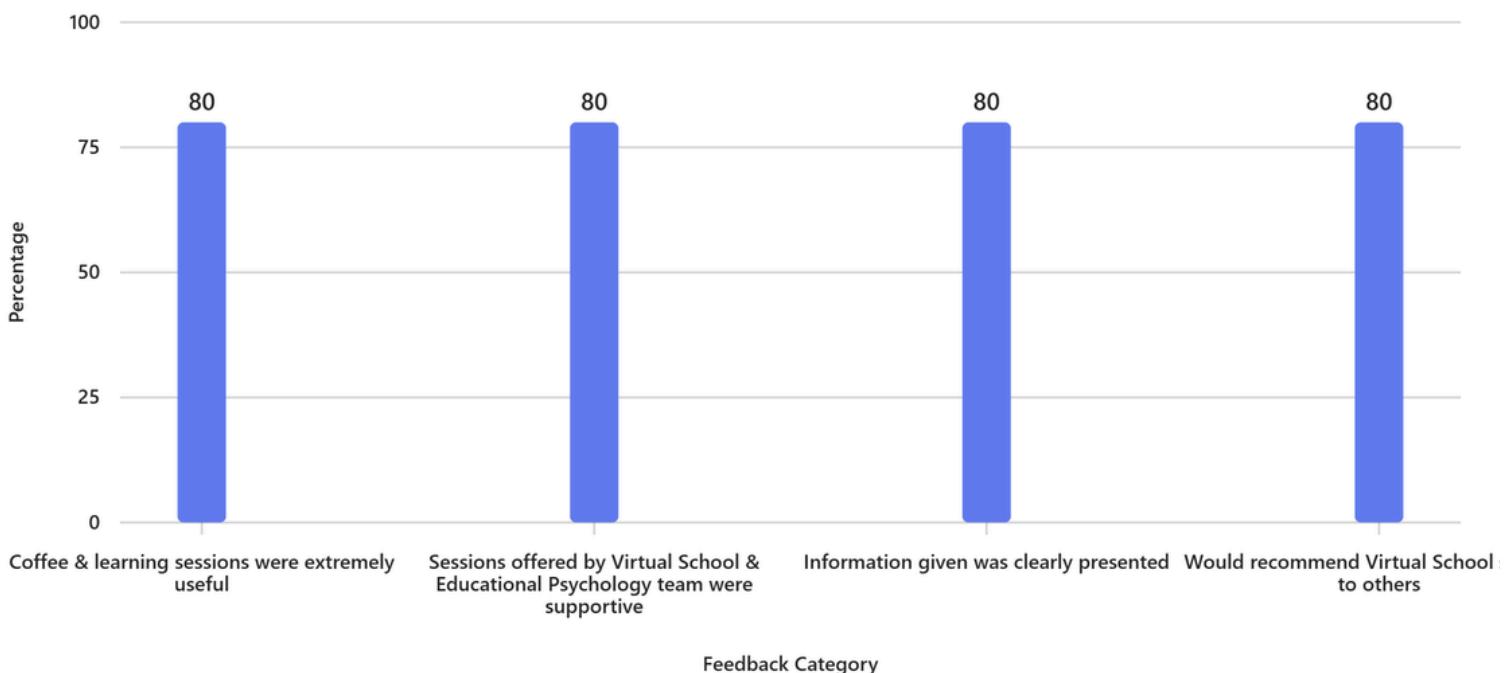


CARER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT COFFEE AND LEARNING SESSIONS

Sutton Virtual School, Cognus Educational Psychology Team, and the Therapeutic Hub collaborated to deliver coffee and learn sessions for carers and adoptive parents between September 2024 and July 2025. A wide range of topics was offered, including strategies for managing behaviour, supporting emotional regulation, and promoting learning at home for both primary and secondary-aged children. Foster carers, kinship carers, and adoptive parents attended these sessions, which provided valuable opportunities for connection and learning.

"I found the presentation interesting and informative...what I found most beneficial was to connect with other carers in a small group and to be able to relate to their stories and experiences. I also appreciated all the professionals being present to offer different areas of information and support"

"It was wonderful to attend a group in which I felt able to participate without being judged . It was a very comfortable group and one in which questions were encouraged"



SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALS

Cognus Therapies Service update

During the Summer Term 2024, an audit was completed on a 25% sample of the CLA caseload with regards to documented therapy needs in children and young people's PEPs. Analysis of the audit identified areas to strengthen around recording, reporting and training. Changes were implemented to create specific Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Occupational Therapy (OT) pages, which were added to the PEP. The process for young people accessing therapy assessment was formalised through the creation of Standard Operating Procedures for SLCN and OT, ensuring that staff knew when to expect an assessment and when they might need to refer on. An increased number of teaching staff in schools, both in and out of Sutton, accessed the Therapies SEND Champion training. Bespoke training was commissioned from Cognus Therapies Service, who provide SALT and OT therapies to children and young people in Sutton. This was delivered to Designated Teachers at the annual Sutton Virtual School conference. As a result, awareness of therapies has increased, documentation of therapy needs is more consistent, relevant information is more available, and more staff have accessed the training they need.

The Royal National Springboard Foundation

We partnered with The Royal National Springboard Foundation. A Year 6 student was successfully enrolled on to the programme, opening the door to life changing educational opportunities. After months of preparation and dedication, he sat the entrance examinations for Whitgift School in Croydon and achieved an outstanding result - earning a full bursary and started to attend the school in September.

His success reflects not only his hard work and resilience but also the power of collaboration between families, social care, schools, and partner organisations.

StudyBugs attendance system progress

Since Sutton Virtual School collaborated on the launch of Studybugs in 2024, staff across Cognus and the Local Authority have been able to support attendance in a more targeted way. Recent developments include working with the Police to enable Operation Encompass to link to school live attendance, supporting safeguarding in the local area. Work is well underway to link kinship identifiers to the system so this cohort can be supported. System developments have also enabled cross-border attendance data sharing of Sutton residents who attend other local authority schools.

Sutton Virtual School conference

This year's Sutton Virtual School conference theme was 'Communicating Belonging'. The day was well attended by close to 100 Sutton schools and social care professionals. Nick Barwick, a care experienced adult led an inspiring keynote and young person Tia Clark stole the show with a fantastic session on 'Adoption, Education and Me'. Workshops on Shared Reading, Children with a Social Worker, SEND Champions and Exclusion, Inclusion and the Space in Between left delegates with lots to take back to their schools.

SALT and OT therapies for CLA

Sutton Virtual School partnered with LBS to ensure that all young people new to care receive a speech, language and communication screener. This process has been successful in identifying any SLCN and OT needs that young people may have. Having this in place once young people become looked after, allows us to put a range of support in place early on.

Careers Support for Post 16

We have enhanced careers provision for post-16 young people by engaging a Careers Coach. They work one-to-one with those requesting guidance or advice, supporting them through a process of self-exploration and confidence building. This helps young people identify strengths, consider career pathways, and explore educational options that align with their aspirations. By providing personalised guidance, we aim to empower learners to make informed decisions and take positive steps towards future goals.

POWER OF READING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ADULTS WHO SUPPORT THEM

At our annual Sutton Virtual School Conference, we delivered a dedicated workshop on the importance of reading for young people in contact with the social care system. The session explored how shared reading can strengthen the bond between child and caregiver, support emotional regulation, help predict change, and ensure children feel represented in the stories they encounter. We emphasised the transformative power of books as tools for connection and resilience. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with staff reporting that they had successfully applied these strategies in school settings to help young people regulate their emotions.

“It was a stark reminder of the value in shared reading, particularly amongst older pupils.”
Designated Teacher, Sutton Primary School

This year also marked the successful launch of our first Summer Reading Challenge, designed to inspire young people to stay engaged with reading during the school break. The initiative featured a series of fun and motivating challenges, encouraging young people to explore new books and develop a lifelong love of reading. To recognise their efforts, each young person who completed the challenge received a voucher as a reward. The programme not only promoted literacy but also fostered a sense of achievement and excitement around reading.



SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL
 Aim, Aspire, Achieve

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

- LISTEN TO AN AUDIOBOOK
- READ A NON-FICTION BOOK
- READ A BOOK WITH AN ANIMAL AS A CHARACTER
- READ A FICTION BOOK
- VISIT A LIBRARY
- WRITE A SHORT BOOK REVIEW
- TRY SOMETHING NEW E.G. COMIC, GRAPHIC NOVEL, MAGAZINE, E-BOOK, POETRY
- TAKE A PICTURE OF YOU READING IN A FUNNY PLACE
- SHARE A STORY WITH SOMEONE

Book Review

Book Title: <u>Harry and the Dinosaur</u>	Who would you recommend the book to? Why? <u>Chloe because she is my small sister after all and I think chloe will like it.</u>
Author: <u>Tom & Andrew</u>	
Fiction or Non-fiction: <u>Fiction</u>	
What is the book about? <u>Harry goes in the attic with his nan and found a dinosaur. He was in the attic so he took the book and read it. He liked it so he fixed the book and read it. Then one day he lost his dinosaur on a train and convinced that it is his dinosaur. The end.</u>	Rating: ★★★★★
	What ages and interests is this book suitable for? Why? <u>under about 6 years old because you get to learn about dinosaur names.</u>

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL ROADSHOWS

In order to promote our work amongst our schools in Sutton and help strengthen relationships, the Sutton Virtual School Roadshow launched in September 2025. The purpose was to offer direct outreach to our partners explaining our roles, responsibilities and how we can build strong partnership.

The aim was to highlight the extended cohort of young people that we oversee to help schools reach out when they need support.

Feedback from schools that have taken part in the roadshow show that schools:

- **Strongly agreed** that the offer and support available from Sutton Virtual School was clearly outlined
- **Strongly agreed** that the offer and support available from SVS was clearly outlined
- **Strongly agreed** that the content was relevant to my role

“[I have learned...] that there are other mechanisms of support in the Borough for our vulnerable cohorts”

“The impact of this roadshow for our school was more about sharing the info throughout the school, so that all teachers are aware of the Virtual School offer and empowered to use the support they offer”

“I will contact Sutton Virtual School if I have any concerns or require signposting”



Summer fun day petting zoo

ENRICHMENT

SUMMER FUN DAY

This popular annual event took place at The Quad and was attended by well over 100 children and families. The petting zoo was a hit yet again, as well as the gaming wagon, freshly cooked pizza and this year a DJ and dance sessions on offer.

SKREENS PARK

As part of the preparations for Canada, we took 10 young people to Skreens Park outdoor activity centre in Essex for two days of activities and team building covering Jacobs Ladder, crate stacking, ziplining, archery, air rifle shooting and paddle boarding

OPERATION ELF

Approximately 100 young people joined in the Christmas celebrations with Santa and his elves at the Cognus Limited's offices at Cantium House. Games and arts activities engaged the young people, as parents and carers could meet service professionals. Each young person left happy with a present from Santa.

WATERSPORTS TRIP

Ten young people joined the trip to Mote Park water sports centre. The young people took part in Dragon Boat racing and had fun on the pedalos.



Ziplining in Whistler, Canada

ENRICHMENT

MINI LONDON MARATHON

Pan London Virtual Schools took part for the second year in the London Mini Marathon at Horse Guards Parade. The young people completed either the 1 mile or 2.8 km course dependent on age. The young people loved their medals, which were gold this year due to it being 40 years of the mini marathon.

WHITE WATER RAFTING

Young people were invited to take part in White Water Rafting at the Lea Valley Centre. Rafts flew down the rapids and everyone proudly remained in the boat the whole activity.

PAN LONDON ATHLETICS DAY

Pan London Virtual Schools took part in the first London Athletics Day at the track in the Olympic Park, Stratford. One hundred children joined in the event, which combined Children Looked After and children with health needs. Former Olympian Fatima Whitbread and Gladiator Fire helped create a really special day for all.

PANTO

A group of Sutton CLA took a trip to the panto at Fairfield Hall, Croydon. The performance of Beauty and the Beast was spellbinding and the children cheered for Belle, booed the bad Prince and had a wonderful time.

CANADA 2025

OVERVIEW

Ten young people and five staff took part in the Canada trip, funded through the Government's Turing Scheme. We flew from Heathrow Airport to Vancouver Airport and made our way along the stunning sea to Sky Highway and then onto Squamish, our base for much of the trip. Each day we experienced a different activity, including a Gondola ride into the mountains, hiking, whale watching, ziplining, camping, canoeing, mountain biking, forest bathing, sightseeing, cultural centre visit, playing volleyball and much more.

Bruce Wilson, our Canadian guide was on hand throughout the trip to lead us through the activities, teach us about the First Nations history of the land, show us the rich biodiversity of the natural environment and take us on a journey of self reflection and personal growth.

The young people excelled in the physical activities and experienced awe within the natural surroundings. They built friendships that will endure with other young people who implicitly understand their reality as a young person in care. The importance of teamwork and collaboration was ever present and the young people developed skills in cooking and organisation that will help prepare them to be well-equipped as they become care leavers.



Bruce Wilson and Amy Salter

FEEDBACK FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE

'To me, this trip has given all us young people an amazing, life changing opportunity to experience new life skills such as communication, adapting to new environments and learning to be more open minded, grateful and accepting. Over this time period, I've only seen people improve on themselves, which in itself has been a wonderful experience. But also, has encouraged me to believe in other people and have faith in them. Ultimately, this trip has included everyone, helped people in so many ways and has allowed us to have such a beneficial break from home. I would personally recommend this trip to any young individual. And I think it would surprise anyone how much one trip can impact a young person's life.'

'Inclusivity. That is what this trip has been all about. I have cherished every moment of this trip, meeting new young people and sharing our similar experiences is a really good way to make us stronger as individuals. The activities as well have given me new challenges, which have given me skills for a lifetime. I have felt tranquil and calm being in Canada and it has improved my mental health. I'd really recommend to other young people to have this experience as you'll never know what joy it can bring to a young person's life'

'It's really great. You get to know everyone on the trip. They make you laugh and they are respectful. Even though you are away from loved ones, you are a family here. The staff team are here to help with everything. It is really nice to be part of this trip.'

'It's really fun and educational. It has been great for socialising as you are surrounded by people you haven't met before. You stay in tents together and build relationships and social skills. It has also been nice to learn how to cook.'



Squamish Cultural Centre music show



Squamish Cultural Centre short film on First Nations history



A brown bear crossing the road



Learning tent skills



Bruce teaching effective packing



Whale watching

SHINING STAR AWARDS

On 14th July, two Sutton care leavers were awarded a London Shining Stars award for their exceptional educational dedication and achievement.

Nga was recognised for her commitment to her ESOL course, for using every opportunity to learn, helping her peers as a translator and for being such an inspiration. James was commended on his remarkable resilience, determination working to achieve 10 GCSEs, a BTEC and an unconditional offer to study a Games Design course at university this September.

The ceremony, held in the City of London's historic Guildhall, was attended by over a hundred people across London and Joanne McCartney, Deputy Major of London for Children and Families, congratulated them on their awards and the work of Virtual Schools in supporting care-experienced young people to fulfil their potential.

It was a special evening and a wonderful way to celebrate James and Nga's fantastic achievements.



Shining Star Award winners at London Guildhall



£45K

We have successfully secured increased funding from the Turing Scheme to take 10 children looked after on an trip to Canada in summer 2026

88

Number of requests for educational advice directly from SGO and adoptive families.

BUILDING STRONGER FOUNDATIONS

Building Stronger Foundations (BSF) is a programme designed by Sutton Virtual School that aims to support schools to take a consistent, whole-school relational approach based on strong staff-pupil relationships. Training provided within the programme equips staff with a greater understanding of the impact that trauma can have on children's learning and well-being, and provides them with practical strategies to know to best to support pupils experiencing difficulties.

We work in close partnership with the Educational Psychology Service, who deliver the training and package of educational psychology support that BSF participating schools receive. We also work in partnership with the Attachment and Research Community (ARC) and have designed the Building Stronger Foundations programme around the ARC pathways, to align to the ARC awards.

The three-year programme offers schools time to develop whole-school approaches, as well as providing opportunities for schools to network with other settings, share good practice and support each other.

2024-25 Highlights

- **22 schools participated in BSF** last year, with the 6 pilot schools from wave 1 continuing to wave 2, working to extend and embed relational practice, reflecting their commitment to developing or extending whole-school relational approaches.
- Special thanks and congratulations to **Carew Academy, Manor Park Primary Academy and The Federation of Hackbridge Primary School and Spencer Nursery School**, who all achieved their **Gold Building Stronger Foundations ARC awards** this year.
- Over **30 Sutton school leaders** attended the annual London and South East Attachment Research Community conference in July, and **Carew Academy and the Leo Academy Trust led workshops to showcase good practice** and share their journey to embedding relational approaches. We are a **leading local authority** within the regional London and South East ARC community.
- Approximately **700 staff** have already attended trauma training through BSF, highlighting the extensive reach the programme is having in developing consistent trauma-informed practice across Sutton.
- Staff feedback from a survey following training indicates that over **90%** of respondents report an **increased knowledge** of the impact of trauma, trauma-informed relational approaches and how it could positively impact on pupils.

BUILDING STRONGER FOUNDATIONS

2024-25 Impact on pupil outcomes

83% of schools who have been on the programme for a year or more **reported a reduction in suspension rates**, either across the school or within the CWSW cohort

86% of schools reported improved pupil regulation, and over half of schools noted **pupils self-regulated at a quicker speed**

81% of schools reported **improved alternatives to isolation or exclusion** as a result of BSF activities

57% of schools reported a **reduction in the number of behaviour incidents**

As schools move through the programme and work towards improving the consistency in relational practice in their schools with a view to embedding practice, settings are reporting increasing impact on pupil outcomes. Alongside statistical reporting, feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive regarding the impact the BSF programme is having.



'The project has had a transformative impact on pupils with trauma and attachment difficulties, both in attainment and progress. Progress data shows outstanding outcomes [and] when comparing progress with peers without trauma, pupils with trauma and attachment difficulties have outperformed.'

'Lunchtime behaviour incidents have reduced by 17%.'

'BSF training has been invaluable; it has raised awareness that the importance of using relational language is essential to being able 'to connect before correct'. Removals from class have reduced, staff are using the strategies to empathise and de-escalate situations and incorporating the language in restorative justice sessions.'

'Attendance improved by 2% across the school and persistent absence dropped by 12%.'

'As a result of our journey to become more relational, students experience safer, more predictable environments. There has been a reduction in reactive behaviour and improved staff confidence in using relational strategies to support pupils' regulation.'

'Attainment and progress for all groups of pupils has improved, with significant shifts in achievement for our pupils with trauma or attachment difficulties.'

BUILDING STRONGER FOUNDATIONS

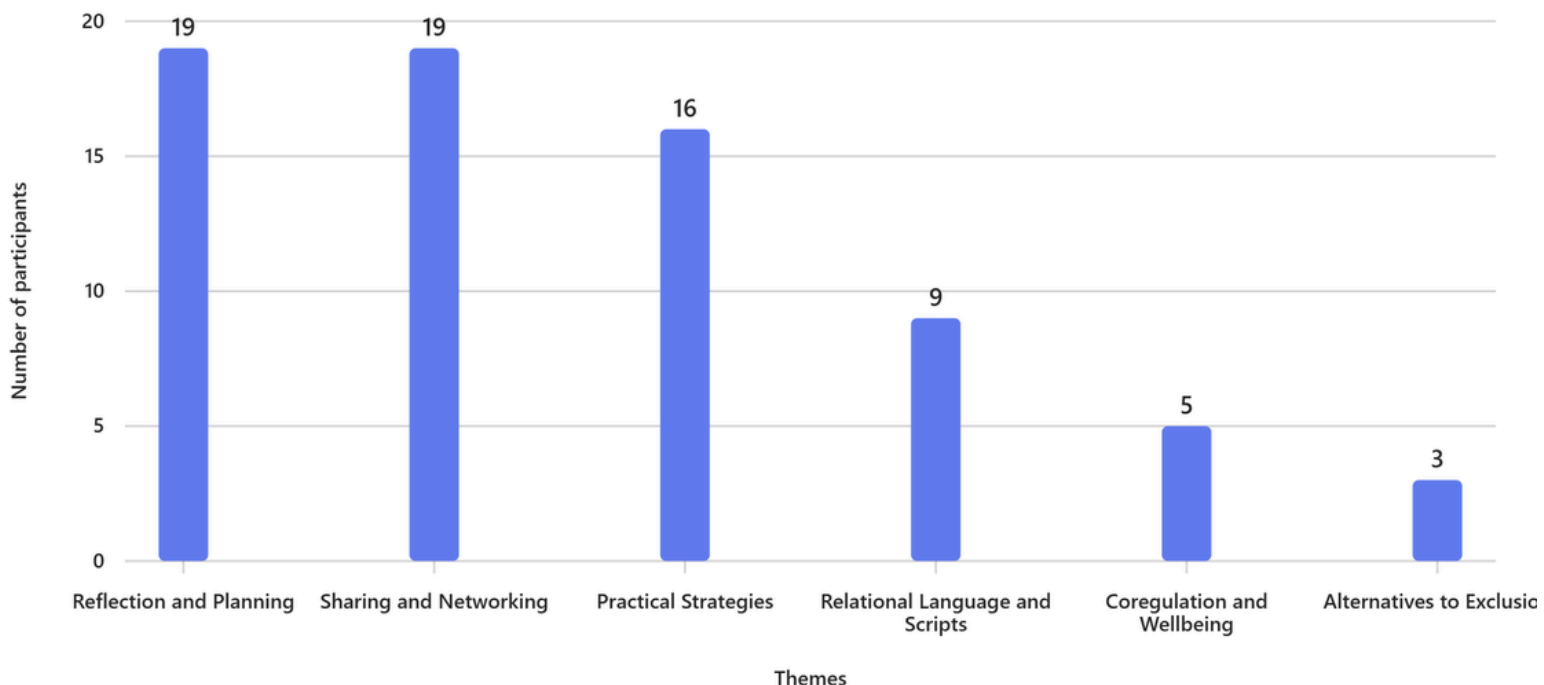
Wave Three: September 2025 - present

- As of September 2025, 36 schools are taking part in Building Stronger Foundations. We have also expanded to the Early Years sector and created an Early Years specific BSF programme, which we are piloting this year (2025-26) with six Early Years settings.
- We have a range of secondary schools, primaries, alternative provisions, several grammar and special schools taking part in Wave 3. All schools that had taken part in wave two continued their engagement in the BSF programme.
- Approximately 1,500 staff have completed trauma training through BSF, highlighting the extensive reach the programme is having in developing consistent trauma-informed practice across Sutton
- Staff feedback from a survey following training indicates that over 95% of respondents report an increased knowledge of the impact of trauma, trauma-informed relational approaches and how it could positively impact on pupils.
- Senior leaders across BSF schools are reporting a growing body of evidence to suggest they are observing relational practice in everyday interactions between staff and students.

Centralised Workshops

As part of the BSF programme, Sutton Virtual School delivers centralised workshops for all BSF schools, covering a wide range of topics led by our Educational Psychology team. These sessions provide school professionals with valuable opportunities to come together, share experiences, and exchange best practice, supporting their ongoing relational journey. From September to December 2025, 54 school staff attended the BSF workshops. Based on their feedback, the following key reflections emerged:

Centralised workshop themes participants found beneficial from attending the workshops



BUILDING STRONGER FOUNDATIONS

Centralised Workshops: feedback to date

98% of BSF school staff felt they learnt new relational ideas that can implement in their school by attending a centralised workshop

100% of BSF school staff reported the workshops to be informative and helpful

92% of BSF school staff felt more confident in their role in embedding relational practice

100% of BSF school staff would recommend the centralised workshops to other schools

"Alternatives to exclusion conversations, impact of 'stepping into the circle' video - will share with staff"

"Time to reflect in real life with other schools"

"So many ideas bouncing around with people happy to share ideas. I have so many ideas from today"

Building Stronger Foundations Gold Masterclass



MENTAL HEALTH

Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQ)

Each academic year, the Designated Teacher or class teacher at the school/college where a Sutton CLA attend completes an SDQ as part of the PEP process. An SDQ is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. The tool can capture the perspective of children and young people, their carers and teachers.

Below is a summary of the SDQ scores that have been submitted in PEPs for school years R - 11 in 2024/25.

	No of CLA with SDQ score	High SDQ score (16-40)	Medium SDQ score (12-15)	Low SDQ score (0-11)
Male	52	27	8	17
Female	50	20	8	22

The current SDQ scores indicate that 46% of Sutton CLA with SDQ scores present as having high scores for mental health, 16% for medium range and 38% low scores.

	No of CLA with high SDQ score	Hyperactivity score high (8-10)	Emotional symptoms score high (8-10)	Conduct score high (8-10)	Peer problems score high (8-10)	Pro social score high (8-10)
Male	27	20	2	1	0	2
Female	20	14	1	1	1	0

There are five sub scales that make up an SDQ score and the hyperactivity sub scale scores that is most prevalent amongst the highest SDQ scores. Where a hyperactivity score is heightened, the possibility of neurodiversity will be considered in the PEP. The SENCO, designated teacher and class teacher will monitor the child and discussions will take place around the need for formal assessment. Sutton Virtual School work closely with children's social care professionals, therapeutic hub, Cognus Educational Psychology and health services to ensure the appropriate support is in place for each individual child.

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

EBSA is a term used to describe children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. Whilst some children and young people stop attending school overnight, for most, the pattern of non-attendance and avoidance occurs gradually, over time. In many instances, the children and young people want to attend, even if they feel unable to do so. It is therefore important to be aware of the risk factors, early indicators, and pathways of support to remove barriers and promote engagement in education.

We have reviewed the attendance of all CLA attending school or college and have identified 20 children and young people as showing signs EBSA during 2024/25.

No of EBSA CLA	Male	Female
20	11	9

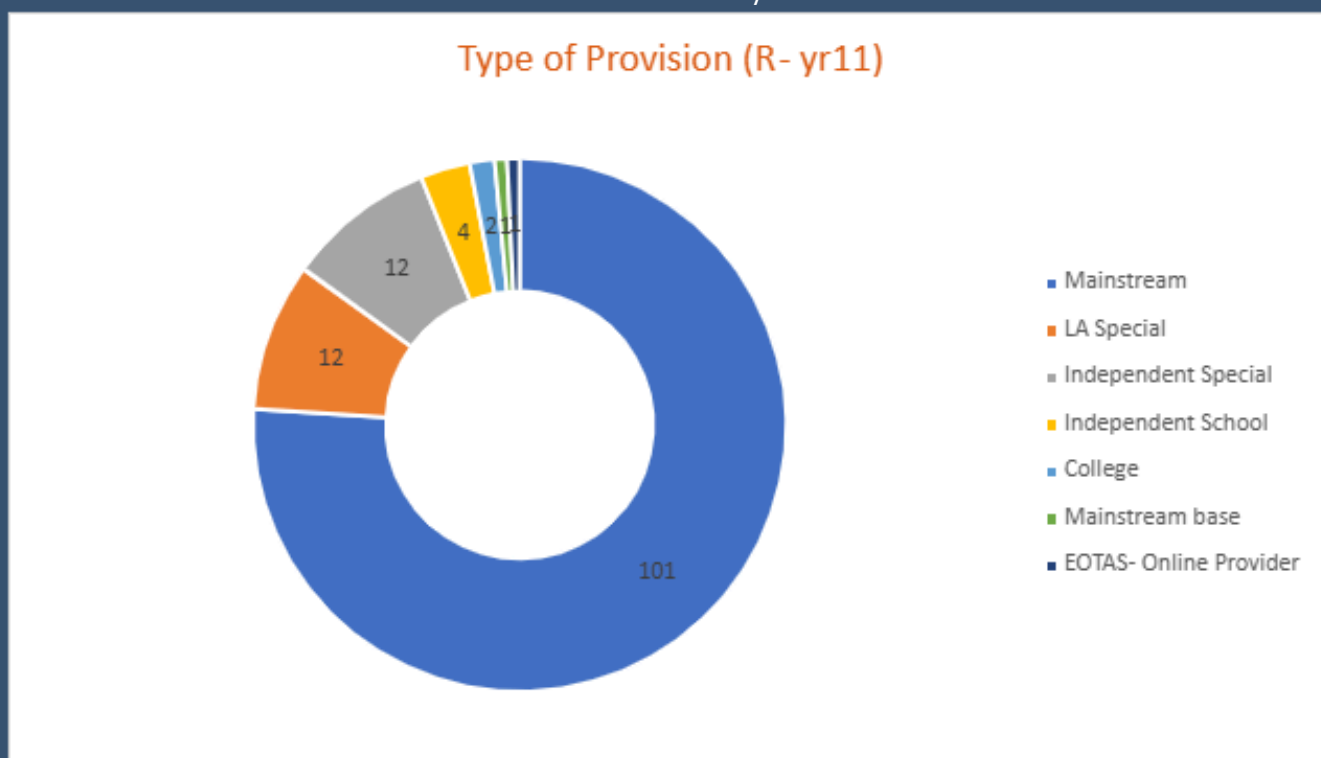
PROFILE OF SUTTON CLA

Number of Children Looked After (in care on 31 March 2025)							
Total CLA	2-4	Reception	Primary	Primary (% out of borough)	Secondary	Secondary (% out of borough)	16-18
225	6	6	47	54%	83	68%	83

The number of Children Looked After in Sutton has fallen by 20 since last year. Children aged 2–4 in early years continued to decline. Primary and post-16 numbers stayed constant, while secondary numbers dropped. The percentage of primary Children Looked After attending out-of-Borough schools decreased, with a slight rise for secondary schools.

% Female	% Male	Predominant Ethnic Group White British	2nd Ethnic Group Asian / Asian British / other Asian	EHCP	SEND Support
91 (40%)	134 (6%)	119 (53%)	10 (4%)	66 (29%)	39 (17%)

The percentage of male and female CLA has stayed similar to last year. There is an increase in the percentage of White British ethnic group, and Asian / British Asian / Other Asian continues to be the 2nd predominant ethnic group. There has been an increase in the number of children with EHCP, with SEND Support needs remaining similar as last year.



75% of Sutton CLA attend a mainstream school, 18% have their educational needs met in a special education setting. 100% children who required a new school place were admitted to a good/outstanding school or academy converter. We will not be reporting Ofsted gradings moving forward as the Framework is changing to a Dashboard system. We will be using Ofsted reports to inform the placement of schools by reviewing the inclusivity gradings and comments.

SUTTON CLA OUTCOMES

Early Years Foundation Stage

There were 6 young people in reception taking end of Early Year Foundation Stage key stage assessments. 17% Sutton CLA achieved a Good Level of Development, which was below National CLA (41.0% GLD). 50% of Sutton CLA did however achieve their Prime Goals, compared to 49% National CLA. There were three Sutton CLA with EHCP in the early years cohort.

Cohort	GLD achieved	Prime goals achieved
Sutton CLA	17%	50%
National CLA	41%	49%

Year 1 Phonics

There were 11 children who took Year 1 phonics tests. These children achieved well with **64% working at age related expectations, compared to 58% National CLA, 61% Regional CLA** and 83% for all children in Sutton. The average point score (APS) for Sutton CLA was 33.6, which was significantly higher than CLA National at 27.7 and almost in line with all Sutton children (33.8).

Cohort	Achieved ARE	Average point score
Sutton CLA	64%	33.6
National CLA	58%	27.7
Sutton all pupils	83%	33.8

A whale appears by Granville Island, Vancouver



SUTTON CLA OUTCOMES

Key Stage 2

There were 15 Sutton CLA, four with EHCP and three with SEND Support needs taking end of key stage 2 assessments. Age related expectations were achieved for 50% in reading, 40% in maths and 64% in Grammar Punctuation and Spelling (GPS), which was either broadly in line with or higher than National CLA.

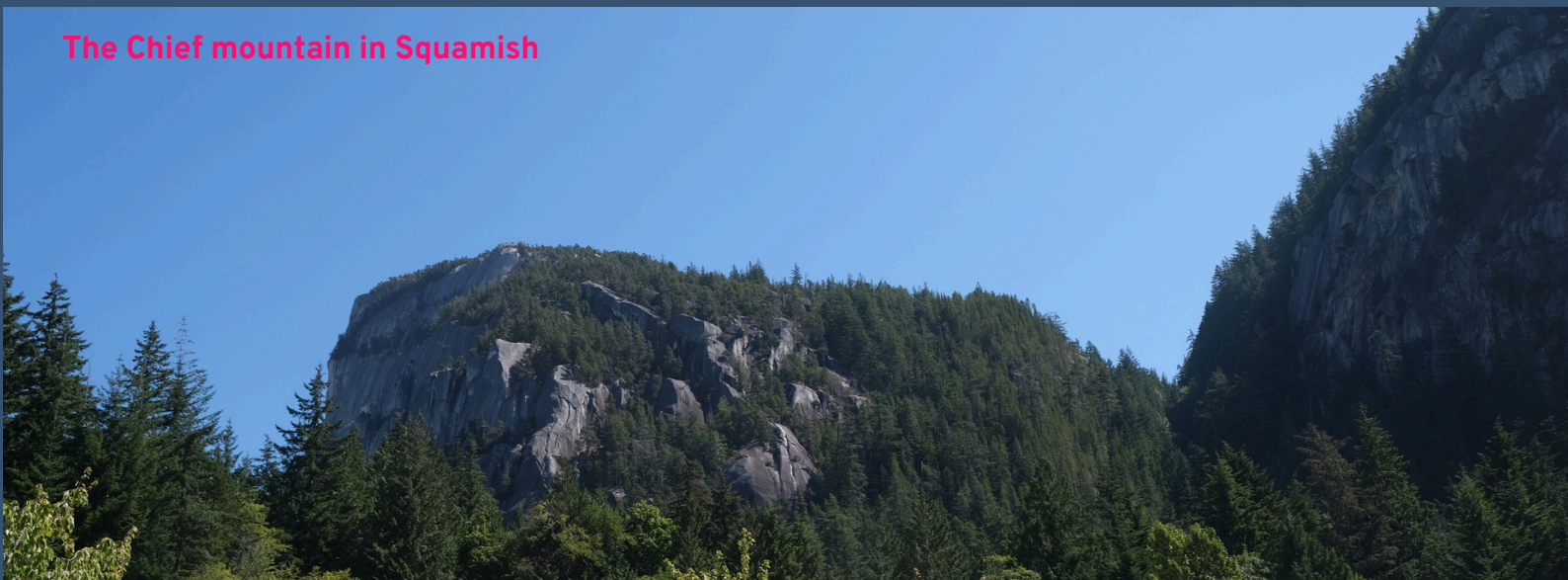
	2023-24					2024-25				
	Readin	Writing	Maths	RWM	GPS	Readin	Writing	Maths	RWM	GPS
Sutton CLA expect ed	14%	14%	14%	0	14%	50%	40%	50%	36%	64%
Nation al CLA expect ed	52%	46%	46%	34%	46%	51%	44%	46%	34%	47%

Key Stage 4

There were twenty two young people in year 11. 18.2% of the cohort achieved a grade 5 or more in maths and English GCSEs. 91% of young people identified and applied for an education, training, employment (EET) post 16 destination for September 2025 start. Post 16 students have registered for courses across the range from ESOL entry level 2 through to level 3 A-Levels.

	2023-24		2024-25	
	Att 8	E&M 5+	Att 8	E&M 5+
Sutton CLA	7.4	0%	24.6	18.2%
National CLA	11.8	8%	21.5	10.0%

The Chief mountain in Squamish



SUTTON CLA OUTCOMES

Key Stage 5

44 young people were in care at the end of Year 13. 82% continued into education, employment, or training (EET) pathways in September 2025. This is a 10% increase on 2023-24 and continues to be above the national average of 70% of 18-year-old care leavers in EET destinations; 68% achieved a formal education qualification at end of Year 13.

Post 18 Destination	No of young people
Further education	23
Employment	4
Higher education (uni)	4
Traineeship / apprenticeship	5
NEET	8



Dragon Boat racing

SUTTON CLA OUTCOMES

Higher Education Destinations for Sutton care leavers

As of the start of 2025/26 Academic Year, there are 20 care-experienced young people enrolled in undergraduate degree programmes. 1 young person has deferred their Midwifery degree at the University of Surrey and is scheduled to resume studies in September 2026 following the completion of a placement. A further young person is expected to commence university studies in January 2026. Four Year 13 and four care leavers began their studies at the start of the 25/26 Academic Year. Three care leavers successfully completed their degrees at the end of 2024/25. Among the graduates, 2 have progressed to postgraduate study, with one undertaking a Master's programmes in Creative Writing, while one is pursuing a Master's in Biological Sciences (Zoology) at the University of Cambridge.

Attendance

Overall average attendance for Sutton CLA in 2024-2025 was 87.1%, compared to 87% Regional CLA and 89% National CLA attendance. Authorised absence for CLA was 7.4% for Sutton CLA and 7.0% for Regional and National CLA. Unauthorised attendance was 5.6% for Sutton CLA compared to 6% Regional CLA and 4% for National CLA. We continue to use StudyBugs and ePEP to monitor live attendance and provide support where attendance is identified as a concern. Foster carers and residential care homes receive support and training from Cognus Attendance Service.

Suspensions and exclusions

The suspension rate for Sutton CLA was 10.29 in 2024/25, which is slightly better than National CLA suspension rate of 10.60 . No CLA children were permanently excluded this year. Seven Sutton CLA were identified by schools as at risk of permanent exclusion during the year and Sutton Virtual School have worked with the partnership to stabilise the education placement and ensure appropriate interventions are in place.



Canoeing, Vancouver, Canada

NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Support is in place for each young person Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) from Sutton Virtual School, Integrated Youth Service and Leaving Care Team; all NEET CLA have had a termly PEP and each young person is monitored through the VS / LCT NEET panel as well.

The work with all young people was monitored across the year in relation to steps of progress. The young people made an average of 1.5 steps of progress each.

YP	Aut	Spr	Sum	Total steps	Outcome
A	1	2	3	2	Started to engage
B	0	0	1	1	Considering options
C	1	2	3	2	Started to engage
D	2	4	5	3	Education: Apprenticeship
E	2	3	3	1	Started to engage
F	3	4	5	2	Employment
G	1	2	4	3	Settled to education (Course to begin Sept 2025)
H	1	0	1	0	Considering options
I	2	1	4	2	Settled to education (Course to begin Sept 2025)

YP	Aut	Spr	Sum	Total steps	Outcome
J	3	5	5	3	Employment
K	1	2	2	1	Beginning to investigate education, employment or training
L	3	5	5	2	Education: Tuition
M	1	2	3	2	Started to engage
N	1	2	2	2	Beginning to investigate education, employment or training
O	0	1	2	2	Beginning to investigate education, employment or training
P	2	3	3	1	Started to engage
Q	4	2	5	1	Settled to education (Course to begin Sept 2025)
R	N/A	1	2	1	Beginning to investigate education, employment or training
S	3	2	3	0	Started to engage
Total				31	

Key for steps of progress

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	Considering options	Beginning to investigate education, employment, or training.	Started to engage.	Settled to Education, Employment and Training. (EET)	Committed to Education, Employment and Training. (EET)



SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL FUNDING

2024-25

Service Funding

Sutton Virtual School staffing and operational costs are funded through a combination of Designated School Grant (DSG), Pupil Premium Plus and Children with Social Worker Grant funding. The percentage of staffing funded by Pupil Premium Plus to meet the increasing breadth of Statutory duties of the Virtual School (CLA, PCLA, kinship, CWSW and post 16) has increased to 37% compared to 34% last year, and 24% the previous year.

Sutton Virtual School continues to use the Previously Looked After Children Grant and Kinship Grant to fund the Extended Duties Education Advisor who works to deliver advice and guidance to adoptive, Special Guardianship Order and kinship families.

Sutton Virtual School used the Children with a Social Worker Grant in 2024/5 to fund the Virtual School Deputy Headteacher position, as well as contributing to two days a week of Educational Psychology staffing within the Virtual School to deliver the expanding Building Stronger Foundations programme.

Pupil Premium Plus Strategy

Sutton Virtual School receives £2630 Pupil Premium Plus for each statutory school age Sutton Child Looked After. The Pupil Premium Plus Grant is managed by the Sutton Virtual School Headteacher through a centrally held local authority budget with overall Governance via Cognus Board. It is deployed on a 'needs' led basis in consultation with link professionals and in line with conditions of the grant. Schools request up to £700 per child per term to support the learning of individual children through the PEP.

We continue to commission Cognus Educational Psychology and Cognus Therapies to provide direct work with children, teachers and families as well as delivering training and consultative support with professionals.

A significant investment has been made into maintaining and expanding the Building Stronger Foundations programme in Sutton schools with evidence now indicating impact on children's educational outcomes.

Laptops continue to be provided for children that require higher specification devices for their GCSE and A Level courses. We continue to fund laptop training for ESOL CLA when they first come into care.

Literacy remains a high priority, with training for Sutton staff around shared reading as well as reading challenges taking place throughout the year. Letterbox and Dolly Parton books are sent to children directly each month and the level of home based reading taking place is monitored through the PEP.

Tuition remains a key intervention for the children as they work hard to close gaps in their learning. Tuition takes place either in homes, school or online. Progress is monitored in PEP meetings and reports are submitted at regular intervals by tutors.

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL FUNDING

2024-25

Sutton Virtual School works with schools, social workers, carers and young people in termly PEP meetings to distribute Pupil Premium Plus funding to support educational outcomes. Pupil Premium Plus funding is additionally used to support the infrastructure of Sutton Virtual School, as well as training and development for schools and settings in Sutton. Reading continues to be a significant focus for our children and distribution of book packs half termly is centrally funded by Sutton Virtual School. Sutton Virtual School received £439,470 in Pupil Premium Plus funding in 2024/25.

Provision	Impact
Alternate Provision costs £7,901	Access to appropriate ESOL learning at KS4 was jointly funded by Pupil Premium Plus. A permanent exclusion was prevented for one young person by joint funding an alternate provision place that was more suitable to a young persons learning needs.
ARC £8,475	ARC membership for Sutton schools who joined Building Stronger Foundations. Given access to resources, school audit tool which informed school development plans and link to National ARC network of schools. Fully funded place for Building Stronger Foundations schools at ARC Conference. Sutton schools making good progress towards the ARC Gold award presented a workshop to share good practice.
Careers support £600	10 sessions of direct work with young people identified as needing additional support beyond the school offer, which led to three young people securing a college pathway.
Carer payments £2,603	Carers reimbursed for school trip / educational payments agreed within PEP meetings.
Cognus Attendance £9,311	We funded attendance support one day a week which provided direct work with children, schools and families. One young person returned to school after sustained absence as a result of direct work and other young people improved overall attendance percentage.

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL FUNDING

2024-25

Provision	Impact
Cognus Autism £496	5 x 1 hr autism support sessions to enable a school to more effectively meet the needs of an autistic child looked after.
Cognus central costs & VS staffing £63,427 £116,542	This covers core service costs including office space, utilities, IT and equipment, expenses, systems and CPD. Pupil Premium Plus also funds additional Sutton Virtual School staffing, including one day a week Creative Therapy, which enables prompt access to therapeutic input for our children , particularly those that find verbal therapy difficult to access.
Cognus Educational Psychology £59,699	100 hours of EP work with children looked after allocated according to need. Direct work and training with school staff, assessments and screeners. Reported in PEP that led to more stable classroom environments, increased engagement in learning and improved child to adult relationships in learning spaces. Fortnightly VS Educational Consultations sessions so popular we increased frequency to weekly. Impact includes prevention of suspension and exclusion, improvements in child to staff relationship, staff feeling more able to meet a young persons needs and greater range of strategies.
Cognus Therapies £4,495	We purchased 60 hours of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy which was allocated to children looked after where need was identified in PEP meetings. We have introduced SCLN and OT section to the PEP to track future impact.
Conference and training £7,230	Sutton Virtual School annual conference hosted 100 staff from Sutton schools, social care and Cognus. Care experienced speaker was well received and feedback indicated impact on delegates knowledge and understanding around vulnerable children. First aid training for all Sutton Virtual School staff to support safe running of enrichment activities

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL FUNDING

2024-25

Provision	Impact
eGOV £16,000	ePEP platform provides the system for PEPs to be maintained. Provides live attendance access, monitoring of progress and attainment and setting of SMART target. PEPs ensure appropriate and timely interventions which result in improving children looked after educational outcomes.
Enrichment activities £4,274	Sutton Virtual School delivered enrichment activities for over 150 children looked after throughout the year including summer fun day, water sports trip, London Mini Marathon, summer athletics day, cooking workshop, Operation Elf Christmas party, Coffley activity centre and panto. This has supported social development, skill learning, preparation for adulthood and well being.
ESOL £4,060	ESOL summer school places secured supported ongoing language learning in the summer holidays. Laptop training took place for each new UASC young person giving them access to IT in their college learning, all new ESOL learners received Flashacademy language learning app with 30 young people achieving over 500,000 XP learning points.
Laptops £1,679	8 laptops were provided to children looked after where it was identified in their PEP that a higher specification laptop was required to support their learning.
Letterbox books £18,146	Reading age specific Letterbox packages sent each half term to Early Years, Key Stage 1 & 2 and some KS3 children. Research shows the positive impact of shared reading on both reading and writing outcomes as well as supporting emotional regulation. Carer feedback has been positive stating the children love reading at home and are excited when the parcels arrive.

SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL FUNDING

2024-25

Provision	Impact
Misc £440	Miscellaneous memberships and fees eg Twinkl literacy platform for setting extension literacy and numeracy learning tasks
NAVSH £2,146	NAVSH annual membership enables access to National network of Virtual School Heads support, resources and opportunity to influence educational policy. NAVSH Conference tickets for all members of the Sutton Virtual School team to support continued professional development.
Payments to schools £41,034	School-based interventions including additional staff support, ELSA, staff training, small group learning, trips and visits, school based enrichment, school based therapy, phonics support, book work, handwriting intervention and maths support. Individual impact tracked in PEP in line with SMART targets.
Private therapy and assessments £4,000	Occasionally private therapy and assessors have delivered work for children looked after who live outside of Sutton. This has led to considerably shorter wait times for delivery due to backlog of services in some local authorities.
TIS £9,700	8 staff from Cognus, schools and social care completed the level 5 Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) diploma enabling them to deliver trauma informed practice in settings. The staff have formed a TIS group which has promoted trauma informed approaches to schools and helped increase Building Stronger Foundations sign up.
Tuition £57,212	Over 50 children looked after have had 8 or more tuition sessions to support learning. Most tuition is for maths and English and is delivered to children in key stage 4, leading to the best outcomes for English and maths to date. Tuition has also supported younger children to close gaps in learning and also to support post 16 young people to achieve grade 4 in core subjects at college.

CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER AND KINSHIP CARE

Sutton Virtual School has a strategic role in improving educational outcomes for children who currently have or previously had a social worker (CWSW), including those on Child in Need (CiN), Child Protection (CP) plans, and those in kinship care or under Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). Unlike our statutory duties for children looked after, Virtual Schools do not work directly with children or families in these cases. Instead, our remit focuses on supporting professionals - schools, social care teams, and partner agencies - through advice, training, and collaborative initiatives, as well as undertaking strategic work to address barriers to education.

Support for Professionals

We provide a range of support, advice and guidance to help those working directly with children under the remit of Sutton Virtual School. This includes providing education-related advice and guidance for school staff, social workers and specialist support workers, in relation to children in the early years through to post-16 provision. We receive approximately 60 advice requests a month in addition to offering advice in a range of forums and have impacted positively on the attendance, inclusion and outcomes of many young people.

We continue to collaborate with the Educational Psychology and Attendance teams to run education consultations, which offers a multi-agency problem-solving space with schools and the social worker, joined by a Sutton Virtual School Education advisor, Educational Psychologists, and Attendance Officer. This has supported improved identification of children's needs, and helped the professional network to consider new strategies or support to address educational barriers.

We deliver a programme of training and CPD for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), social workers and specialist practitioners, via conferences, roadshows, and bite-sized online modules, alongside funded membership to platforms such as the Attachment Research Community. These resources aim to promote trauma-informed and relational approaches across schools, ensuring staff are equipped to support all learners effectively.

Promoting Partnership and System Change

A significant strategic initiative we run is the Building Stronger Foundations programme, which we have designed to support schools in extending relational approaches that impact positively on student outcomes. As a result of our work in this field, Sutton is now a leading local authority in the London and South East ARC community and the work in Sutton is being showcased at a regional and national level:

'The Building Stronger Foundations model in Sutton exemplifies what ARC hopes to achieve across all London Boroughs. By engaging effectively with their schools and implementing the ARC framework, Sara and her team have developed a model of best practice for embedding Relational Safety in schools. BSF and Sutton schools have attended and presented at regional and national ARC conferences and continue to share their practice with other LAs via the Virtual School network and the London VRU. ARC is extremely excited to be collaborating with Sutton to develop their schools as Bronze, Silver, Gold and three possible Learning Hubs, and hope that the work in Sutton can continue to develop and influence national practice.'

– Dee Dee Roberts, ARC Trustee, London Partnerships Lead

CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER AND KINSHIP CARE

Other strategic work in this field that we've undertaken this year includes undertaking a joint audit with social care leaders into the profile of education in Child in Need plans and reviews. The audit highlighted some areas of good practice, with education featuring where difficulties were identified, and some good examples of capturing the support these children had to help them make progress. Areas for development included ensuring that targets set are 'SMART', and followed up on, so that, where a child experiences a barrier to education, there is a shared agreed action to address it and provide support needed, and this is reviewed regularly. Additional training has been provided to professionals, and this will continue when the Families First social care reforms are fully implemented.

We also work to promote the education of children who have/had a social worker and those under kinship by acting as a strategic partner in multi-agency forums, such as attendance panels and edge-of-care panels, providing advice and improving partnership-working. We continue to collaborate with Cognus education services so that, where possible, referrals for children with a social worker are prioritised to avoid children experiencing delays to assessment or support.



Gladiator Fire with a young person at Summer Athletics Day

CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL WORKER OUTCOMES

Attendance 2024-25

Cohort	Overall Attendance	Persistent absence	Severe absence	Unauthorised absence
Sutton CIN	83.9%	39.9%	9.8%	7.0%
National CIN	83.0%	43.6%	11.6%	8.1%
Sutton CP	72.7%	56.7%	22.7%	17%
National CP	78.1%	55.2%	15.7%	12.2%

School attendance remains an issue affecting children and young people nationally. Children with a social worker are disproportionately represented in persistent and severe absence data, both locally and nationally. The average attendance of Sutton CIN was 83.9%, which is slightly higher than the national CIN average. Sutton CP children have lower than the national CP attendance with 72.7%. Whilst there is a concerted effort across the local area to improve children's outcomes, data illustrate that there is an ongoing need to review this and work to improve children's experience of learning and subsequent outcomes.

Suspensions and exclusions

Cohort	Suspension rate	Exclusion rate
Sutton CIN	14.16	0.33
National CIN	19.15	0.26
Sutton CP	12.72	0.58
National CP	30.01	0.52

Suspension rate for Sutton CIN is better than National CIN average, although the exclusion rate is higher than National CIN average. Sutton CP suspension rate is significantly better than National CP rate although again the exclusion rate is higher.

CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL WORKER OUTCOMES

Attainment data

This is the data reported in relation to those who were subject to a CiN or CP plan according to census data as of 31st March; there will be pupils who were open to children social care before or after who are not included in this data but provides a snapshot of the picture for this cohort. Sutton children with a social worker are broadly achieving similarly to the national average for children with a social worker, or just behind, reflecting the continued need to prioritise promoting the education of this cohort.

Early Years Cohort	No of children	% achieved GLD	Average Expected ELGs
Sutton CWSW	50	27%	8.5
National CWSW	3,490	40%	10.5
Sutton CWSW EHCP	20	0%	1.3
National CWSW EHCP	400	2%	1.5
Sutton CWSW no SEND	20	55%	13.3
National CWSW no SEND	2,340	54%	14.3
Sutton all pupils	2,267	69.7%	14.2

- 60% of the cohort have identified SEND, impacting significantly on this data. 40% (20/50 pupils) have an EHCP and none of the 40% achieved GLD, attaining an average of 1.8 ELGs, which again would affect the data above significantly
- 33% of the National CWSW cohort had identified SEND this year, compared to 60% of Sutton CWSW.
- Of the 40% CWSW cohort who had no identified SEND, this group outperformed their national CWSW counterparts without SEND, achieving an average of 1 additional ELG compared to national CWSW with no SEND and achieving 55% GLD compared to 54% nationally. Sutton CWSW without SEND significantly outperformed their national peers across the Prime areas (COM, PSED & PHY, though performed less well in maths ELGs).

CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL WORKER OUTCOMES

Year 1 phonics

The percentage of children with identified SEND needs in Sutton was higher than National, particularly in the number of EHCPs:

57% of the Sutton CWSW Y1 cohort had identified SEND compared to 44% of National CWSW, and of this group, 57% of the Sutton cohort had EHCPs compared to 17.5% of national CWSW

Cohort	No of children	% passed phonics check	Average Point Score
Sutton CWSW	70	47%	23.9
Regional CWSW	560	47%	26.5
National CWSW	4,440	50%	26.3
Sutton all pupils	2,394	83%	33.0

Key stage 2

The proportion of Sutton CWSW in this end of KS2 cohort with identified SEND is 67% compared to 55% in the National CWSW cohort. In maths, 15% of Sutton CWSW achieved GDS, outperforming region and National CWSW averages.

Cohort	No of pupils	Reading >=Exp	Writing >=Exp	Maths >=Exp	RWM >=Exp
Sutton CWSW	90	41%	32%	40%	33%
National CWSW	5,100	46.9%	42.3%	43.4%	32.4%
Regional CWSW	660	43%	39%	40%	33%
Sutton SEND CWSW	60	10%	18%	21%	22%
National SEND CWSW	2,780	25%	22%	9%	18%
Sutton all pupils	2,659	82%	77%	83%	72%

CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL WORKER OUTCOMES

Key stage 4

End of KS4 data is on par with national averages. Overall, Sutton CWSW achieved broadly in line with national in some areas but those with SEND, many of whom are supported by EHCPs showing the extent of their special educational needs, do not attain as well as other peers, which affects the overall average attainment of the Sutton CWSW cohort reported here.

Cohort 2024-25	Attainment 8
Sutton CWSW	22.7
National CWSW	23.7
Sutton all pupils	41



Long jumping at Summer Athletics Day

GOOD NEWS AND COMMENDATIONS

“The support that we’ve had from Sutton Virtual School and EP team through Building Stronger Foundations has been fantastic. It’s really helped us to impact positively on pupil outcomes, especially for those open to social care.”

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all of you for giving up your time to give our young people such a great opportunity - one that I am sure they will not forget. I truly appreciate how much you have given personally to this trip and all the hard work, before, during and after.”

“Hannah, It has been great connecting with you and Sara, and I really appreciate the fantastic level of engagement and support you've shown from the beginning of us working together. Sutton has been one of the most engaged and proactive virtual schools and local authorities that I've worked with, and always helpful promoting our training and events. Thank you for the opportunity to promote Kinship at the DSLs and DDSLs meetings - grateful that you organised to include us in that. Amy from Kinship.org.uk”

“Dear Amy and all,
Thank you so much for today at the mini marathon ❤️
It was brilliant so so proud of R 🌞
And she is over the moon and so proud of herself.”

“An incredibly powerful session, a great speaker who was honest and open, enabling professionals to gain a genuine insight into how to make a difference. Highlighted how one person can make a difference to someone.
Thank you.”

“I just wanted to pass on my thanks for a great afternoon of fun and dancing. I attended today with the children in my care and they all had a great time. They participated in most activities including holding small animals and reptiles, had their faces painted, wore themselves out on the 2 man pulling machine. The pizzas were delicious but the biggest shoutout must go to the young girl organising the dancing both inside and out, she certainly got them moving and most importantly smiling and laughing”

“Hannah was so helpful and came up with some strategies, alternatives that we had not considered”

“Thank you, Kate and Georgia for organising the mini marathon for our children. They were absolutely buzzing on Saturday and both E and L did the park run on Sunday independently of each other because they wanted to try harder.”

“We had 2 parcels delivered on Friday for the children. Thank you they loved the contents.
Thank you too, to Sutton Virtual School for the teddy bears. I wish I had filmed them opening them! Both bears received huge hugs and have been added to the chosen toys that go to bed with them.”

“Just wanted to say a big thank you to you both for advocating for O.”

“The Sutton Virtual School conference was very inspiring and reiterated the importance of relational approaches and understanding how relationships underpin whole experiences”