

Notice of Meeting



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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 4 December 2025 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Date Not Specified

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Gordon Oliver on 01635 519486

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WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

**Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 4
December 2025 (continued)**

To: Councillors Dominic Boeck (Chairman), Janine Lewis, Paul Dick, Owen Jeffery, Jane Langford, Alan Macro, Louise Sturgess, Martha Vickers, Clive Taylor.
Co-opted Members: Emily Daly, Catherine Hobbs and Tony Wilson

Substitutes: Councillors Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Martin Colston, Carolyne Culver, Billy Drummond, Clive Hooker, David Marsh, Matt Shakespeare and Richard Somner

Agenda

Part I	Page No.
1 Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	5 - 6
2 Election of Vice-Chairman To elect a Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.	7 - 8
3 Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 September 2025.	9 - 18
4 Actions from previous Minutes To receive an update on recommendations and actions following the previous Committee meeting.	19 - 20
5 Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	21 - 22
6 Petitions Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.	23 - 24
7 Children's Scrutiny Board Report: Local Authority Statutory Duties Around Attendance Purpose: To provide Children's Scrutiny with information on school attendance in West Berkshire. This report outlines how West Berkshire Council is meeting its statutory duties in relation to school attendance. It provides an overview of our strategic approach, operational delivery, and multi-agency collaboration to support children and families, with a focus on reducing persistent and severe absence. It draws on the approved	25 - 52

Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 4 December 2025 (continued)

Attendance Strategy 2025 and the Improving School Attendance Delivery Plan 2025–2026, demonstrating a strategic, multi-agency, and child-centred approach to improving attendance outcomes across the local area.

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| 8 | Ofsted School Inspection Reports
Purpose: This report provides an update on the latest Ofsted inspection reports for schools in West Berkshire, and changes to the Ofsted school inspection regime that came into effect in November 2025. | 53 - 62 |
| 9 | Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Report October 2025 (EX4745)
Purpose: Ofsted visited West Berkshire's Children's Services to conduct a short ILACS (Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services) between 8 – 19 September 2025. The inspection report was published by Ofsted on 28 October 2025. This report provides an overview of Ofsted's findings. | 63 - 82 |
| 10 | Executive Forward Plan September to December 2025
Purpose: To advise the Committee of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council's Executive from September to December 2025 and for Members to decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Plan. | 83 - 94 |
| 11 | Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Committee. | 95 - 96 |

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director - Resources

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Agenda Item 1

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
4 December 2025

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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Agenda Item 2

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
4 December 2025

Item 2 – Election of Vice Chairman

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

Committee Members Present: Councillors Dominic Boeck (Chairman), Owen Jeffery, Jane Langford, Alan Macro, Louise Sturgess, Martha Vickers, Clive Taylor, and Billy Drummond (Substitute) (In place of Janine Lewis), and Emily Daly (Co-opted Member)

Also Present: Stacey Clay, Hannah Geddert (SEND Strategy Officer), Neil Goddard (Service Director - Education and SEND), Vanessa Grizzle (Principal Educational Psychologist), Sue O'Brien (Complaints & Access to Records Manager), Melissa Perry (Principal EWO/Lead Officer for Safeguarding, Education), Nicola Robertson (QAAS Service Manager), Rebecca Wilshire (Service Director - Children's Social Care) and Dave Wraight (Service Manager - Youth Offending Team),

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Janine Lewis, Councillor Paul Dick and Tony Wilson (Co-opted Member)

Absent: Catherine Hobbs (Co-opted Member)

PART I

15 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Actions from previous Minutes

Members reviewed the actions from the previous meetings. No further updates or comments were received.

17 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

18 Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

19 Youth Justice Annual Plan

Dave Wraight presented the Youth Justice Annual Plan (Agenda Item 6).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members praised the quality of the report.
- It was noted that the report included a large number of acronyms.

Action: Include a glossary to explain acronyms used.

- Members noted the increase in suspensions/exclusions from schools. It was acknowledged that there was a clear link to offending. Schools could refer pupils at

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risk of offending to the Positive Intervention Programme (PIP). This sought to divert young people from crime and reduce suspensions/exclusions. Also, a focused diversion pilot to target children suspended from school was about to be rolled out with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

- Concern was expressed about the increase in incidents of violence perpetrated by girls. This was not unique to West Berkshire, and the problem seemed to have its origins in online activity. Despite the increase, most violent offences were still committed by boys.
- Members asked if officers worked with children aged under 10 years. It was confirmed that 10 was the age of criminal responsibility. Younger children could be referred to Children's Services as a safeguarding issue. It was considered important not to give young children a criminal identity and to support them in a positive way.
- It was noted that food was being offered to young people/their families. Officers had found that children were coming to sessions hungry and were unable to concentrate. Referrals were also made to food banks.
- It was explained that the cohort of children engaged by the team fluctuated year-on-year, but overall numbers were relatively small.
- Members noted the increase in drug use. The Youth Justice Team was co-located with The Edge and there were good synergies between the services. Also, a drug diversion programme was being delivered in conjunction with Thames Valley Police (TVP), which connected young people into The Edge.
- It was acknowledged that there had been an increase in the number of girls referred to the Youth Justice Team. This mirrored the national trend, but the increase had been more pronounced in West Berkshire/Thames Valley. The reasons for the increase were unclear.
- Clarification was sought regarding the terms 'gravity' and 'substantive outcomes'. It was explained that each offence was given a gravity score related to its seriousness. Substantive outcomes were appropriate for more serious crimes and were recorded on the national police system. Informal outcomes were not recorded and would not appear in DBS checks.
- Members asked if the 2025/26 priorities for education, training and employment were sufficient, or if there was more that could be done. Officers indicated that they worked closely with colleagues in Education, schools and colleges and advocated for young people to sustain their education. Some children had speech/language difficulties, and the team had a therapist who could support them. However, there was always more that could be done and there was a clear case for early investment.
- It was noted that some primary schools had very low numbers of exclusions but exclusions for the same pupils jumped significantly when they moved up to secondary schools. At primary school, classes had an individual teacher who knew each child well, but at secondary school they had multiple teachers. It was recognised that neurodiverse pupils often struggled with the transition and colleagues in Education were doing more to support them. It was recognised that suspensions varied significantly between schools and there may be opportunities to share learning.
- Members asked if statistics were affected by cross-boundary issues. Officers confirmed that children from other areas may be placed in West Berkshire and vice versa. The service had a dual responsibility and the data captured both cohorts. It

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was noted that some children were placed a considerable distance away from home, which was more problematic.

- Members asked about restorative justice. Not all crimes had a specific victim and where there was one, take-up of direct restorative justice was low, since often victims did not want to meet the perpetrator. However, indirect restorative justice was more common (e.g., letters). Restorative justice needed to be timely in order to be effective, but this was sometimes difficult to achieve.
- It was suggested that more could be done to facilitate conversations between young people and older people to address concerns and improve mutual understanding. It was confirmed that work was ongoing with partner organisations to address anti-social behaviour. Meetings could be arranged as part of that activity. The OPCC had recognised this as good practice.
- Officers were asked if more needed to be done around reducing exclusions. It was confirmed that suspensions/exclusions had been recognised as a strategic issue. Best practice was being shared across Thames Valley, and a Safer Schools Officer had been reinstated by TVP. Operationally, it was important to respond quickly to changes in trends. The Team advocated for a Therapeutic Thinking approach in schools and worked closely with them to support and retain young people in education.
- Members asked how the Team worked with the Building Communities Together Partnership (BCTP). It was confirmed that there were several officers in BCTP who had close working relationships with the Youth Justice Support Team. The Team was represented on the BCTP Board where they were able to raise/escalate issues and seek feedback on ideas.
- There was discussion about the effectiveness of prevention letters and PIP. It was noted that the COO of the Youth Justice Board had visited West Berkshire to learn about these initiatives as examples of best practice. Evidence showed that preventative measures were effective in helping to change children's behaviour before they committed a crime. As a result, very few children went to court. Also, schools had been good at identifying suitable children to be referred to PIP.
- Members asked about over-represented groups. Officers were trained in terms of diversity and disproportionality and made effective use of screening tools. Programmes were tailored to the particular needs and learning styles of individual children. The Team had staff who engaged with particular groups such as the Traveller community.
- It was recognised that long delays in the restorative justice programme could be disheartening for victims. Work was underway with the OPCC and Chief Constable around improving timeliness. The Team's Victim Worker was very good at keeping in touch.
- Members asked if young people slipped through the net and if this caused problems later. It was recognised that children may commit crimes before they are caught. However, it was felt that there was a strong police response and numbers not caught were thought to be lower than previously.
- There was discussion around whether children saw bad behaviour as something to boast about. Officers indicated that they worked hard to avoid stigmatisation and give children a criminal identity.

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- Officers were asked how they would allocate funds in an ideal scenario. It was noted that a custodial sentence was the most costly outcome, with those imprisoned often repeat offending. The team had reduced the number of children going into custody from 18 to 1 per year, saving the public purse millions of pounds. Preventative work, building pro-social values and keeping children in education were seen as key elements.
- The David Gauke report on reforming the justice system was welcomed. However, the number of people in the prison estate needed to reduce to free up funds to implement the proposed measures.
- Members asked about the changes to the TVP reorganisation. Officers indicated that the new arrangements were bedding in well.

RESOLVED to note the report.

20 **Children's Services Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25**

Sue O'Brien (Complaints and Access to Records Manager) presented the Children's Services Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25 (Agenda Item 7).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- The Committee welcomed the fact that complaints from children and young people were always prioritised and congratulated officers on the number of compliments received.
- Further detail was sought regarding the 'information' outcome as set out in paragraphs 5.46-5.48 of the report. It was explained that previous analysis had not considered whether complaints were upheld or not – the focus had been on responding. However, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) was clear that local authorities should acknowledge where they were at fault and show how they were learning from mistakes. This approach had now been adopted.
- Members asked about action to address criticism concerning the lack of sincerity in responses. It was explained that LGSCO training was being rolled out, which stressed the importance of acknowledging where things had gone wrong and admitting fault. Learning opportunities were being identified and shared within teams, with changes made to policies and processes where appropriate.
- Presentational issues were highlighted. Officers explained that the Communications Team would tidy up the report prior to publication.

Action: Officers to amend charts in sections 5.35 and 6.7 of the report to make them easier to read.

- There was discussion about the staff resources used to create the Central Team. It was confirmed that the existing East and West Teams had been made slightly smaller, but transformation funding had been used for assistant team managers to improve oversight and line management.
- Members asked about common themes in complaints. Officers indicated that communication was a common issue (e.g., not keeping the customer updated, not responding to queries in a timely manner, etc). It was recognised that it was important to build trust and develop relationships with families from the outset. The work often involved difficult conversations, so how the service was delivered was key.

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- In terms of changes made, there had been a focus on training. Also, cases were reviewed where things had gone wrong to learn lessons, and new policies were often developed in response to findings.
- Officers were asked about how they were reducing delays in handling complaints. This was achieved through regular reminders and training. Realistic timescales for responding were set and clearly communicated with the customer. Customers were also given information on where they could go for independent advice.
- Members asked for details of specific complaints that had led to service improvements. It was confirmed that the main improvement had been around timescales for responses. Also, the service was working better with fathers. Training had been provided for staff around why and how fathers should be informed and included, particularly where they did not live in the same household.
- There was discussion about how children were supported to make complaints. It was confirmed that advocates were used, and children could speak to any member of the team. The complaints process and pathway options were clearly communicated. Statutory routes were always used with children's complaints. If complaints went to Stage 2, then an independent investigating officer would be assigned. Children were always listened to without judgement about what they were saying.

RESOLVED to approve the report subject to changes being made by the Communications Team to address presentational issues.

21 Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25

Nicola Robertson (Service Manager – Quality Assurance and Safeguarding) presented the Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25 (Agenda Item 8).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- It was not known why West Berkshire had a higher number of children on protection plans than the national average. There had been an upward trend since the Covid pandemic. Cases were more complex and there were more issues around financial hardship, as well as drug and alcohol abuse, which often accompanied issues around neglect and physical harm. Discussions with other local authorities in the South East suggested that similar trends had been observed elsewhere. It was noted that national statistics lagged behind local reporting.
- Members asked if schools were employing officers to get absent pupils back into school. It was confirmed that attendance was highly scrutinised, involving multi-agency child protection conferences. Schools had pastoral support workers and designated safeguarding leads, and headteachers and tutors attended child protection conferences.
- There was discussion around the approach to preventing and tackling domestic abuse, and the links to mental health. Officers stated that frontline staff followed the family safeguarding model. Domestic abuse workers and adult mental health staff were co-located within these teams. Social workers sought to work with families to break the cycle of domestic abuse. In some cases, levels were insufficient to go through the courts, and people could not be made to engage. Often, perpetrators did not have sufficient insight to accept that they exhibited that behaviour, which could lead to repeating patterns. Women were encouraged to use Clare's Law to check their partner's history, but some chose not to. In some cases, women were being

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convinced that they were to blame. It was noted that children growing up in homes where domestic abuse was present may believe that such relationships were normal.

- Members asked why 80% of repeat child protection plans were considered unavoidable and what more could be done. Officers indicated that there were only 10 families where repeat plans were applied. The challenge was where the non-abusive partner formed a new relationship with a new abuser. Officers confirmed that cases remained open for 3 months after a child protection plan was closed, and contact was phased down in this period. Decisions to close were evidence based and were taken when professionals had done all they could for the family. They made sure that families knew where to go for support if they needed it. Officers were considering how they could work in different ways with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- Concern was expressed about staff welfare and whether additional support was needed. It was confirmed that all staff had daily contact and monthly supervision with their manager. There was a good staff support system available, and staff could access counselling and confidential support. It was recognised that conferences could be emotional, so debrief sessions were held with staff afterwards. It was suggested that additional business support staff would be helpful due the rising caseload.

Action: CYPSC Chairman to ask the Lead Member for Children and Family Services to look at business support resources in Children's Services to see if there is a need that is not being met.

- Recruitment and retention were discussed. It was acknowledged that the work could be traumatising, which naturally led to churn in social work staff. It was difficult to attract staff due to competition with neighbouring authorities, who were offering attractive packages. However, work had been done recently around recruitment and retention, which had led to the proportion of agency staff reducing from 32% to 11% in the last year. The remainder were mostly covering sickness and maternity leave. In future, the aim was to have a greater focus on staff retention and wellbeing.
- Members highlighted issues around parental mental health and asked about the role of health visitors. It was confirmed that social workers worked closely with health visitors who had great insight and understanding of their patients. They attended conferences and went the extra mile to support families. However, they had significant challenges due to large caseloads. Previously, health visitors and social workers would have made joint visits, but opportunities to provide in-person support had reduced, and increasingly checks were made over the phone/online, or required the parent to attend a clinic. It was recognised that if parents had poor mental health, they may not attend. Officers felt that changes in health visitors' working practices had been felt most keenly in relation preventative work and early help.
- There was discussion about the use of advocates in child protection conferences and how the data had been presented. It was explained that for complaints, children had a right to an advocate, and one must be provided. West Berkshire Council went a step further by facilitating independent advocacy for any child who might benefit from this. The National Youth Advisory Service was commissioned to provide 300 advocacy contacts per year. This had recently been increased. Officers undertook to review the table to make the headings clearer and to include data about how many times an advocate had been present. It was noted that Child Protection Chairs ensured that the voice of the child was heard in all conferences. Even when a formal advocate was not present, the child would have been supported to speak to a trusted adult.

Action: Officers to review the table on child advocacy.

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- Members asked how parents' views on conferences were captured. Child protection chairs held pre-meetings with families and asked them about their experiences. The report highlighted cases where negative feedback had been received and changes introduced in response. Also, social workers regularly checked in with families throughout the process. There were plans to give families more of a voice by using family decision meetings, where they would be supported to come up with their own plans to be fed into the conferences. Such plans were logged within the Children's Services system.

RESOLVED to note the report.

22 SEND High Needs Block and Implementation of the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan

Hannah Geddert (SEND Strategy Officer) presented the report on SEND High Needs Block and Implementation of the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan (Agenda Item 9).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- It was confirmed that officers were working with schools to help them self-assess for the Dyslexia Friendly Award.
- Expansion of provision at the Castle School was welcomed.
- Members asked about what could be done to address capacity constraints affecting annual reviews. It was noted that two interim officers had been appointed to support the annual reviews, particularly around Years 6 and 11 transitions.
- There was discussion about the review of the Capita One system. There were concerns as to whether this would be able to meet the Council's needs, and so alternative systems were being reviewed. A business case was being developed for an EHCP Hub, which would reduce administration time, while providing access to necessary data.
- Members asked if the SEND Youth Forum would be re-established. This had previously been run by SENDIASS. It had subsequently been brought in-house and had been run by an apprentice, but the apprenticeship had come to an end and there had not been capacity to maintain it. SEND children in care still had their voices heard through separate participation networks. A retendering exercise was planned, and a market engagement exercise was underway. It was hoped this would pick up the Youth Forum aspects.
- There was a question around local special education capacity. It was noted that Interim Special Education Development Officers were undertaking analysis regarding special education needs vs provision in West Berkshire. Castle School had already expanded and work was ongoing with other schools regarding possible new units for autism and SEN.
- Members asked how the strategy's priorities had been chosen. It was explained that there had been a lot of surveys and co-production work undertaken. Although priorities had changed slightly for the current version of the strategy, previous work had not been lost. Task Groups had been set up to look at emotional based school avoidance and short breaks.
- Increased SEND was noted, but officers were asked if there was evidence to show that this was leading to better outcomes. Officers confirmed that this would be picked up through the annual review process.

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- Members asked how young people were supported into employment and independent living. It was explained that Internship Work Grant had been used to fund the supported employment provider, Ways into Work. A SEND Employment Forum had been created in West Berkshire and work was ongoing to create something at the Berkshire level. Ways into Work were working with Newbury College to deliver supported internships, and WBC was looking to offer supported internships too. An employer event had been organised to provide information on supported internships which had attracted over 80 attendees and featured a case study of a young person who had been helped into permanent employment through the scheme.
- Members asked about learnings from the recent Ofsted review. It was confirmed that the SEND Delivery Plan actions were reviewed in the light of the Ofsted findings. Lots of the Ofsted recommendations had already been incorporated into the strategy.

RESOLVED to note the report.

23 Young Person Co-opted Members

Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Services) presented the report on Young Person Co-opted Members (Agenda Item 10).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members welcomed the proposal.
- It was suggested that the iCollege be approached for nominations.
- Members asked how the two co-optees would be selected. It was confirmed that this would be done via interviews. Interviews would be good preparation for transition to adult life.
- It was suggested that young people may need advocates to help them articulate their views. It was noted that this would be part of the role of the organisation appointed to provide support for the co-optees.
- Members noted the safeguarding issues and asked if it would be better for the co-optees to join remotely or to attend meetings in person. Officers suggested that the needs of the individual should be considered (i.e., whether they had a quiet space at home). It was also noted that there were practical/safeguarding issues with ensuring they were able to get home safely after the meeting. However, Members felt that it would be better for the young people attend in person if possible. It was noted that this happened at Corporate Parenting Panel.

Action: Officers to review whether the young people could attend in person rather than remotely.

- It was suggested that the requirements for co-optees to be bound by the Members' Code of Conduct and to sign a Declarations of Interest form were too onerous. Officers confirmed that the Monitoring Officer had been consulted. However, all co-optees needed to be clear that there were certain standards of behaviour expected at meetings.
- Members questioned whether the co-optees should be 'non-political and independent'. It was suggested that if they were formally affiliated to a particular political party, then this may affect the political proportionality of the committee. However, it was highlighted that the co-optees would be non-voting, so they would not impact on political proportionality. It was suggested that the advert could simply say

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that this is not a political role. However, the important thing was for the arrangement to work successfully.

Action: Officers to check the requirement for co-optees to be 'non-political and independent' with the Monitoring Officer.

- There was a question about parental consent. This had been covered in the report as part of the proposed safeguarding protocols. In addition to seeking parental consent for their child to participate, parents would also be copied in on all correspondence.
- Members asked about the allowance for the co-optees. Officers stated that this would be paid pro-rata depending on the start date. Normally, it would be paid in 11 instalments.
- It was suggested that nominees be encouraged to watch recordings of previous meetings.
- Officers were challenged to ensure that the young people had real impact. It was noted that there would be training for Members and the co-optees. Also, it was proposed to check-in with the co-optees after each meeting to ensure they understood the papers and had sufficient opportunity to contribute. Also, it was suggested that it would be important for the Committee to choose topics that would be of interest to the young people. It was noted that consideration was being given to a Youth Forum, which would provide another opportunity for youth engagement.

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorse the proposed approach, including:

- (a) The proposed process and timescales for the recruitment of two young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- (b) The proposed support arrangements to be put in place for the two young people.
- (c) The proposed training to be provided to the young people, Members and other Co-opted Members of the Committee.
- (d) The proposed safeguarding protocols to be put in place

24 **Executive Forward Plan 1 September to 31 December 2025**

The Committee considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan for the period covering September to December 2025 (Agenda Item 11).

Members did not ask to review any reports before they went to Executive for decision.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

25 **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered the proposed work programme (Agenda Item 12).

It was suggested that the Youth Council report should come to the December meeting to coincide with the proposed Youth Takeover Day.

It was noted that a report on mobile phones policies for schools had been proposed previously. This had originally come from the Children and Mental Health Task Group. There had been media reports of students doing much better at schools where mobile phones had been banned.

Members queried if the Children and Mental Health Task and Finish Group report needed to come to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

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It was also suggested that the committee could look at making more effective use of school buildings in school holidays and options for reducing the cost of holiday activities.

Members highlighted that a number of suggestions had been made at the previous meeting, which had not been incorporated into the work programme.

It was proposed that the Ofsted Children's Social Care report be pushed back to December.

Action: Officers to update the work programme and circulate to Members for comment.

RESOLVED to note the work programme.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.20 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Recommendations and Actions Tracker

The Recommendations and Actions Tracker is a standing item, and documents the progress of formal scrutiny recommendations and suggested actions for improvement made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its public meetings. Items will remain on the tracker until a response has been provided to the Committee by the Executive, council departments, and/or external partners.

Formal Recommendations to Executive

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Formal Recommendations to External Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Suggested Actions for Improvement to Council Departments/Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Action	Lead	Target date	Last update	Update	Status
215	26 November 2024: Early Intervention and Family Help	Timetable a future scrutiny review of wraparound care	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	To be considered by the CYP Scrutiny Committee when determining its future work programme.	Complete
25-1	5 June 2025: LGA Review of Children's Social Care	CYP Scrutiny Committee to be consulted on the draft Attendance Strategy.	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	The strategy has been shared.	Complete
25-2	5 June 2025: LGA Review of Children's Social Care	Officers to confirm qualifications gained by i-College students	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	These will be provided when validated outcomes are available.	In progress
25-3	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring an update on the family hubs to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee.	Dave Wraight	Mar-26	Aug-25	Families First Reforms continue to be explored and plans developed to deliver which includes family hubs. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting on 3 March 2026.	In progress
25-4	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to provide data in relation to the Dynamic Support Register.	Dora Gouvias-Scholfield	Dec-25	Aug-25	There are no children on the DSR with an EHCP who are out of school	Complete
25-5	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring a report on exclusions to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	This will be an agenda item for the next meeting on 3 March 2026.	In progress

25-6	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring a report on attendance to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	This is an agenda item for 4 December	Complete
25-8	5 June 2025: Work Programme	Discuss potential Task and Finish Groups at the September meeting.	Gordon Oliver	Sep-25	Oct-25	A possible task and finish group has been proposed in relation to mobile phone use in schools. This was raised by the Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task and Finish Group report.	In progress
25-9	11 September 2025: Youth Justice Annual Plan	Include a glossary to explain acronyms used	Dave Wraight	Sep-25	Nov-25	The current plan has already been submitted to the Youth Justice Board, but it will be incorporated into next year's plan.	Complete
25-10	11 September 2025: Children's Services Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2024/25	Amend charts in sections 5.35 and 6.7 of the report to make them easier to read.	Sue O'Brien	Sep-25	Nov-25	Final version of the report was produced on 4 November - this incorporates updates plans.	Complete
25-11	11 September 2025: Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25	Ask the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services to look at business support resources in Children's Services to see if there is a need that is not being met.	Cllr Dominic Boeck	Sep-25			
25-12	11 September 2025: Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25	Review the headings in the table on child advocacy.	Nicky Robertson	Sep-25	Nov-25	This is being addressed for the next report, which will be produced in May/June 2026.	Complete
25-13	11 September 2025: Young Person Co-opted Members	Review whether the young people could attend in person rather than remotely.	Gordon Oliver	Sep-25	Nov-25	The intention is for the young people to join the meeting in person where possible.	Complete
25-14	11 September 2025: Young Person Co-opted Members	Check the requirement for co-optees to be 'non-political and independent' with the Monitoring Officer.	Gordon Oliver	Sep-25	Oct-25	The wording in the advert was changed to 'independent minded'.	Complete
25-15	11 September 2025: Work Programme	Update the work programme and circulate to Members for comment.	Gordon Oliver	Sep-25	Sep-25	This was circulated on 30 September	Complete

Last updated: 26-Nov-25

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
4 December 2025

Item 5 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
4 December 2025

Item 6 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Briefing Note: Local Authority Statutory Duties Around Attendance

Produced for:	<i>Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee</i>
Requested by:	<i>Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee</i>
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Service Director:	Neil Goddard
Date Prepared:	07/10/25
Briefing Author:	Melissa Perry

1 Purpose of the Briefing

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Children’s Scrutiny with information on school attendance in West Berkshire. This report outlines how West Berkshire Council is meeting its statutory duties in relation to school attendance. It provides an overview of our strategic approach, operational delivery, and multi-agency collaboration to support children and families, with a focus on reducing persistent and severe absence. It draws on the approved Attendance Strategy 2025 and the Improving School Attendance Delivery Plan 2025–2026, demonstrating a strategic, multi-agency, and child-centred approach to improving attendance outcomes across the local area.

2 Background

- 2.1 The attendance data across West Berkshire and its statistical neighbours for the academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25 reveals consistent patterns that reinforce the need for a collaborative and proactive attendance strategy. West Berkshire maintains a strong attendance rate of 94.82% in 2024/25, slightly above the national average of 94%, and comparable to neighbouring areas such as Hampshire (94.9%) and Bracknell (94.65%). However, persistent absence remains a concern across all areas, with West Berkshire at 12.65%, closely aligned with Reading (12.3%), Bracknell (12.4%), and Buckinghamshire (12.2%). These figures suggest that while overall attendance is relatively stable, a significant proportion of pupils are missing substantial amounts of school.
- 2.2 Unauthorised absence rates have also seen a slight increase across the board, with West Berkshire rising from 1.05% to 1.2%, mirroring national and regional trends. This may reflect growing challenges related to disengagement, unmet needs, or family pressures. The data highlights the importance of early identification, emotional support, and inclusive education pathways—core pillars of the strategy—to address the underlying causes of absence and ensure every child is supported to attend and thrive. West Berkshire’s performance is encouraging—but we’re not complacent. We’re

committed to raising aspirations, removing barriers, and ensuring every child is supported to attend, thrive, and succeed

3 Current Status

3.1 General Duties – All Pupils

Statutory Responsibilities:

- Develop a strategic approach to attendance.
- Make attendance a focus across council services.
- Maintain a School Attendance Support Team.
- Provide a named contact for each school.
- Facilitate the sharing of effective practice.

3.2 West Berkshire Delivery:

- The Attendance Strategy 2025 has been approved and aligns with the Council's priorities for inclusion, early help, and wellbeing. It is underpinned by the DfE's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* framework.
- Attendance is embedded across council services, supported by the development of an Educational Neglect Policy and regular multi-agency forums.
- The Education Attendance Team (EAT) is fully operational and provides direct support to schools.
- Named Education Attendance Officers are assigned to all schools, including independent settings, with active engagement in training and networking.
- Best practice is shared through forums, newsletters, and expert-led sessions. The Attendance Working Group (AWG) is being established to oversee governance and delivery.

3.3 Pupils At Risk of Becoming Persistently Absent

Statutory Responsibilities:

- Review attendance data regularly.
- Hold conversations with schools to identify at-risk pupils.
- Provide access to services for families.
- Facilitate early help.
- Act as lead practitioner if agreed.
- Continue support even if another service leads.

West Berkshire Delivery:

- Attendance data is reviewed through Team Around the School Meetings (TSMs) and informs resource allocation. KPIs from the Attendance Strategy are monitored quarterly via Attendance Working Group and will be fed into Children's Scrutiny Board.
- Schools of concern receive tailored support, including improvement plans and drop-in sessions. A referral pathway is in place for escalated concerns.

- Families can access a wide range of services including Early Help, EBSA support, and Mental Health Services.
- The LA acts as Lead Professional where appropriate, with Early Help and Family Hubs often leading.
- Attendance is a key theme in multi-agency plans, and the LA is leading projects with BOB ICS and ICB Safeguarding to improve frontline understanding and support.

3.4 Persistently Absent Pupils

Statutory Responsibilities:

- Continue support as above.
- Work with schools on formal support (e.g., attendance contracts).
- Ensure joint working with social care and safeguarding.
- Enforce attendance through legal intervention if needed.

West Berkshire Delivery:

- Schools are supported with Panel Days, a PA Toolkit, and training on attendance contracts and SMART targets. EAOs provide direct support.
- Joint working is embedded. The Virtual School supports Social Workers in using attendance as a safety factor in planning. Attendance is a theme in shared service days and CP/CIN plan audits.
- Safeguarding Officers are embedded in the EAT. West Berkshire leads the BWSCP priority on “Children Not in School,” developing shared protocols.
- Legal intervention is used as a last resort. A new portal is being developed to streamline Penalty Notices (10in10 and Holiday PNs).

3.5 Severely Absent Pupils

Statutory Responsibilities:

- Continue support as above.
- Intensify support.
- Consider statutory children’s social care referrals if safeguarding concerns exist.

West Berkshire Delivery:

- A Complex Case Panel is being formalised, currently operating through multi-agency MDTs.
- CSC referrals are considered under educational neglect where safeguarding concerns exist. Safeguarding audits ensure robust practice at both individual and whole-school levels.
- SEN processes are being improved, including funding pathways and the Ordinarily Available Offer.
- SPAs from the previous year are being audited to assess gaps in CSC involvement.
- A graduated response is in place to intensify support and ensure transparency in decision-making.

Strategic Alignment and Governance

- The Attendance Strategy aligns with the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024–2029 and the Council Strategy 2025–2027, promoting early identification, inclusive education, and collaborative working.
- Governance is provided through a Multi-Agency Attendance Board and the Attendance Working Group (AWG), ensuring strategic oversight and operational delivery.
- Monitoring includes monthly data dashboards, quarterly feedback from families, and an annual impact report.

3.6 The development of West Berkshire's Attendance Strategy has been shaped by a strong collaborative effort across internal teams and external partners. Over the past year, we have worked closely with the DfE Attendance Advisor, drawing on national guidance and best practice from other local authorities. Engagement has included a dedicated CSC away day and an external partner session, both focused on raising awareness, setting priorities, and securing pledges to support attendance improvement. Multiple versions of the strategy have been shared across Children's Services, with valuable input from managers and stakeholders. Individual consultations have further strengthened the strategy's relevance and alignment. This collective effort has laid the foundation for a shared vision, and we welcome continued feedback and support through the Attendance Working Group to ensure the strategy remains responsive, inclusive, and impactful

4 Implications and Impact

The implementation of the Attendance Strategy and Delivery Plan has significant implications for improving outcomes for children and young people in West Berkshire:

- Improved Attendance Outcomes: Early identification and targeted support are reducing persistent and severe absence.
- Enhanced Multi-Agency Collaboration: Stronger partnerships across education, health, and social care are enabling more coordinated responses.
- Increased Family Engagement: Empowering families through training, personalised plans, and practical support is fostering trust and shared responsibility.
- Safeguarding Strengthened: Attendance is now embedded as a safeguarding factor in planning and review processes.
- Systemic Change: The strategy is driving cultural change across services, promoting curiosity, compassion, and accountability.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Finalise Governance Structures:

- Launch the Attendance Working Group (AWG) and confirm membership.
- Establish regular reporting to the Multi-Agency Attendance Board.

5.2 **Embed Strategy Across Services:**

- Ensure all departments and partners are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Integrate attendance into existing planning and review frameworks.

5.3 **Monitor and Evaluate:**

- Implement monthly data dashboards and quarterly feedback loops.
- Publish an annual impact report with recommendations for refinement.

5.4 **Strengthen Legal and Digital Infrastructure:**

- Roll out the new Penalty Notice Portal to streamline enforcement.
- Continue to use legal intervention only as a last resort.

5.5 **Continue Training and Empowerment:**

- Deliver termly training for professionals and carers.
- Expand therapeutic and inclusive education practices.

6 **Conclusion**

West Berkshire is meeting its statutory duties around attendance through a robust strategy, a detailed delivery plan, and strong multi-agency collaboration. The approach is inclusive, proactive, and focused on improving outcomes for all children—particularly those at risk of persistent or severe absence.

7 **Appendices**

Appendix A – Local Area Attendance Strategy

Appendix B – Improving School Attendance Delivery Plan 2025-2028

Background Papers:

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

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Local Area Attendance Strategy



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Version control			
Date	Version	Owner	Review Date
September 2025	V1	Melissa Perry	September 2026

Strategic Alignment with West Berkshire Council Priorities

The vision and approach outlined in the school attendance strategy directly support the Council's overarching goals of creating a fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all, building thriving communities, and delivering services we are proud of.

By focusing on early intervention, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families, the attendance strategy contributes to the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people, particularly those facing disadvantage or additional needs.

The strategy also complements the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024–2029, which emphasises early identification, person-centred planning, and collaborative working across education, health, and care. The attendance strategy's focus on empowering families, supporting emotional wellbeing, and reducing barriers to engagement reflects the same principles found in the SEND strategy.

Together, these strategies form a cohesive framework for improving attendance, inclusion, and wellbeing across West Berkshire. They demonstrate a shared commitment to ensuring that every child is seen, heard, and supported—not just to attend school, but to thrive within it.

Executive Summary

This strategy sets out West Berkshire's shared commitment to improving school attendance. It outlines our vision, key challenges, and strategic priorities, and provides a clear roadmap for action. Guided by the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework, the strategy focuses on early intervention, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families and professionals. Success will be measured through key performance indicators including attendance rates, persistent absence, and engagement with support services.

Summary for Families and Community Partners

Every child in West Berkshire deserves to be in school every day, learning, making friends, and feeling safe. This strategy is about working together—schools, health services, social care, and families—to make sure children get the support they need. We're focusing on spotting problems early, listening to children and parents, helping with worries and routines, and making school work for everyone. We'll keep checking how things are going and make changes based on what families tell us.

Local Area Attendance Strategy

Our Vision: Every Day Counts, Every Child Matters

In West Berkshire, our vision is simple but powerful:

To ensure every child is supported to attend school regularly through a collaborative, inclusive, and child-centred approach—one that reflects their lived experiences, removes barriers, and promotes wellbeing.

This vision is at the heart of our strategy to improve school attendance. It recognises that behind every absence is a story—and behind every story is a child who deserves to be seen, heard, and supported. We know that persistent absence is often a symptom of deeper challenges, whether it's unmet needs, mental health concerns, or family pressures. That's why we're committed to working together—across schools, health services, social care, and communities—to create environments where children feel safe, valued, and ready to learn.

Our approach is guided by the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework and shaped by what we hear from children, families, and professionals in our local area. It's not just about getting children through the school gates—it's about making sure they thrive once they're there.

Together, we're building a culture where attendance is everyone's business—and every day in school is a step toward a brighter future.

Every Day Counts: A Shared Commitment to School Attendance in West Berkshire

In West Berkshire, we believe that every child deserves the best start in life—and that starts with being in school, every day. School attendance is more than a legal requirement; it's a gateway to learning, friendships, wellbeing, and future opportunities. That's why improving attendance is a shared priority across education, health, and social care.

This strategy sets out how we will work together to reduce persistent and severe absence, guided by the Department for Education's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework*. It reflects our local commitment to early help, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families.

Empowering Families, Professionals, and Communities

This strategy is designed to empower everyone involved in a child's education—from families and carers to teachers, health professionals, and social workers. By promoting open communication, inclusive practices, and shared responsibility across the Local Authority, we aim to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and ensure that every child feels supported to attend school regularly. Empowerment means giving families the tools to advocate for their children, equipping professionals with the training and resources they need, and creating systems that listen, adapt, and respond to lived experiences.

Local Picture: West Berkshire and Our Neighbours

The attendance data across West Berkshire and its statistical neighbours for the academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25 reveals consistent patterns that reinforce the need for a collaborative and proactive attendance strategy. West Berkshire maintains a strong attendance rate of 94.82% in 2024/25, slightly above the national average of 94%, and comparable to neighbouring areas such as Hampshire (94.9%) and Bracknell (94.65%). However, persistent absence remains a concern across all areas, with West Berkshire at 12.65%, closely aligned with Reading (12.3%), Bracknell (12.4%), and Buckinghamshire (12.2%). These figures suggest that while overall attendance is relatively stable, a significant proportion of pupils are missing substantial amounts of school.

Unauthorised absence rates have also seen a slight increase across the board, with West Berkshire rising from 1.05% to 1.2%, mirroring national and regional trends. This may reflect growing challenges related to disengagement, unmet needs, or family pressures. The data highlights the importance of early identification, emotional support, and inclusive education pathways—core pillars of the strategy—to address the underlying causes of absence and ensure every child is supported to attend and thrive. West Berkshire’s performance is encouraging—but we’re not complacent. We’re committed to raising aspirations, removing barriers, and ensuring every child is supported to attend, thrive, and succeed.

This strategy aims to:

- Embed a culture of high attendance across all schools, settings and services.
- Embed curiosity around attendance
- Strengthen early identification and intervention pathways.
- Ensure inclusive, flexible education that meets diverse needs.
- Empower families and communities to be active partners in attendance.
- Hold all stakeholders accountable through clear roles, responsibilities, and performance indicators.

Data insights:

Area	2023/24 Attendance Rate (%)	2024/25 Attendance Rate (%)	2023/24 Persistent Absence Rate (%)	2024/25 Persistent Absence Rate (%)	2023/24 Unauthorised Absence Rate (%)	2024/25 Unauthorised Absence Rate (%)
West Berkshire	95.12	94.82	12.1	12.65	1.05	1.2
Bracknell	94.85	94.65	12	12.4	1.15	1.25
Oxfordshire	94.9	94.7	11.8	12	1.1	1.2
Hampshire	95	94.9	11.7	12.1	1.05	1.15
Buckinghamshire	94.88	94.68	11.9	12.2	1.1	1.2
National Average	94.3	94	12.5	13.1	1.2	1.3

Our Priorities and Pledges

Improving school attendance in West Berkshire is a shared mission. We are committed to working together—across education, health, social care, and communities—to ensure every child is supported to attend school regularly and thrive. Our approach is shaped by local lived experiences and guided by the national *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA)* framework.

What We’re Focusing On:

Priority Area	What It Means
Early Identification and Intervention <i>Spot problems early</i>	We monitor attendance closely so we can act quickly when a child starts missing school. Early help means better outcomes.
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support <i>Help with worries and feelings</i>	We know emotional wellbeing affects attendance. We’re making sure children have trusted adults and safe spaces to talk and feel supported.
Inclusive and Flexible Education Pathways <i>Make school work for everyone</i>	Every child learns differently. We’re promoting flexible, inclusive approaches so school feels right for every learner.
Strengthening Family and Community Partnerships <i>Work with families</i>	Families are key partners. We’re building strong relationships and working together to support children’s attendance and engagement.

How We'll Make It Happen

Collaboration and Communication

- Strong multi-agency working across schools & settings, social care, health, and local services to ensure a joined-up approach.
- Clear, consistent communication between adults and professionals using, shared platforms, and regular multi-agency meetings.
- Early joint planning when concerns arise, ensuring the right support is in place at the right time.
- Open, honest, and timely communication with families and parents to build trust, share concerns early, and work together on solutions.

Child-Centred and Family-Focused Approaches

- Listening to children and ensuring they have trusted adults.
- Creating personalised plans that reflect each child's needs.
- Supporting foster and kinship carers to promote education.

Early Intervention and Prevention

- Using data and school meetings to identify concerns early.
- Promoting curiosity and compassion in understanding barriers.
- Strengthening access to Early Help and preventative services.

Practical and Emotional Support

- Helping families with morning routines, uniforms, and transport.
- Providing emotional support and trauma-informed care.
- Addressing mental health and family dynamics that affect attendance.

Training and Empowerment

- Delivering training on EHCPs, therapeutic thinking, and inclusive language.
- Empowering parents and carers to advocate for their children.
- Building confidence across the workforce to support attendance.

Accountability and Follow-Through

- Clear ownership of actions and regular follow-up.
- Reviewing EHCPs and ensuring plans are implemented.
- Holding professionals accountable for delivering support.

Inclusive and Flexible Education

- Promoting inclusive practices for children with SEMH and neurodivergence.
- Encouraging flexible approaches to meet individual needs.
- Supporting reintegration after exclusions and reducing school-based anxiety.

Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities
School Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a clear and consistent vision for good attendance - Foster a whole-school culture that prioritises attendance - Appoint a senior leader to oversee attendance strategy and interventions - Monitor attendance data and evaluate the impact of actions taken
Teachers and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record attendance accurately and promptly - Build positive relationships with pupils and families - Identify early signs of attendance concerns - Support attendance interventions and maintain proactive communication with families
Attendance Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead the development and delivery of the school's attendance strategy - Ensure staff are trained and consistent in their approach - Promote best practice and innovative approaches - Liaise with external partners and report to school leadership
Governing Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold school leaders to account for attendance outcomes - Ensure attendance policies are in place and implemented effectively - Review attendance data and challenge areas of concern
Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor attendance across all schools - Provide guidance and support to families and schools - Use legal powers where appropriate to address non-attendance - Coordinate multi-agency responses for persistent and severe absence
Parents and Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure children attend school regularly and on time - Support children to be prepared to learn - Work in partnership with schools to support attendance - Communicate reasons for absence promptly and accurately
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend school consistently and punctually, in alignment with their agreed timetable and educational provision. - Remain on site for the full school day, unless alternative arrangements have been formally agreed with the school or local authority. - Present appropriately for learning. - Follow the school policies and behavioural expectations
Multi-Agency Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with schools, settings and the local authority to remove barriers to attendance - Share relevant information and coordinate support - Engage in Early Help and Team Around the Family (TAF) processes where appropriate

Strategic Themes and Action Plan

As this strategy applies across the entire Local Authority, it is essential to emphasise that while specific lead roles are identified, implementation is a collective responsibility. All partners and stakeholders—across education, health, social care, police and voluntary sectors—are accountable for embedding and delivering the strategy consistently throughout West Berkshire. A unified and collaborative approach is critical to achieving meaningful outcomes for children and families.

Theme	Key Actions	Lead Roles
1. Collaboration and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen multi-agency working across schools, social care, health, and local services - Maintain clear, consistent communication between professionals using shared platforms and regular meetings - Initiate early joint planning when concerns arise to ensure timely support - Communicate openly and honestly with families to build trust and co-develop solutions 	Schools, Education and Social Care, Health Services, Parent Carer Forums (PCF)
2. Child-Centred and Family-Focused Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure every child has access to trusted adults - Listen to and act on the voices of children and families in all planning - Create personalised support plans that reflect individual needs - Support foster and kinship carers to promote education and wellbeing 	Schools, Social Workers, Early Help & Family Hubs
3. Early Intervention and Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use attendance data and school meetings to identify concerns early - Promote curiosity and compassion in understanding barriers to attendance - Strengthen access to Early Help and preventative services 	Schools (Lead Practitioner), Education Services, CAAS, Public Health
4. Practical and Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support families with morning routines, uniforms, and transport - Provide emotional support through trauma-informed approaches - Address mental health and family dynamics that impact school engagement 	Children & Family Services, Schools, Health Services

Theme	Key Actions	Lead Roles
5. Inclusive and Flexible Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote inclusive and therapeutic practices, especially for children with SEMH and neurodivergence - Offer flexible education pathways and alternative provision where needed - Support reintegration after exclusions and reduce school-based anxiety 	Schools, SEN Teams, Virtual School, Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
6. Training and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver training on EHCPs, therapeutic thinking, and inclusive communication - Empower parents and carers to advocate for their children - Build confidence across the workforce to support attendance effectively 	TTST, SENDIASS, PCFs, Education Attendance Team, Schools, Foster/Kinship Carers/Early Years
7. Accountability and Follow-Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assign clear ownership of actions and ensure regular follow-up - Monitor EHCP reviews and ensure plans are implemented - Hold professionals accountable for delivering agreed support 	All Professionals
8. Advocacy and Systemic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote attendance as a shared priority across sectors - Share best practice and learning across the partnership - Engage councillors and public health leaders in shaping strategy 	Councillors, Public Health, Senior Leaders

Monitoring & Review

- **Monthly multi-agency reviews** of attendance data and action plans.
- **Quarterly feedback** from families and young people.
- **Annual evaluation** of strategy impact and updates based on lived experience.

References

- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)
- [Council Strategy 2025-2027](#)
- [SEND Strategy \(Draft\)](#)
- [EBSA Guidance](#)

Governance

Governance Summary

Effective governance is essential to ensure the successful implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of the Local Area Attendance Strategy. Oversight will be provided through a structured governance framework that promotes accountability, transparency, and collaboration across all stakeholders.

1. Strategic Oversight

- The strategy will be overseen by a Multi-Agency Attendance Board, chaired by a senior representative from the Local Authority.
- This board will meet quarterly to review progress, evaluate impact, and steer strategic direction.
- Membership will include representatives from education, health, social care, youth justice, and parent carer forums.

2. Attendance Working Group

- A dedicated Attendance Working Group (AWG) will be established to drive operational delivery of the strategy.
- The AWG will meet monthly and report to the Multi-Agency Attendance Board.
- Core responsibilities include:
 - Coordinating implementation of strategic actions.
 - Reviewing attendance data and identifying trends.
 - Sharing best practices and case studies.
 - Escalating systemic issues or barriers to the strategic board.
 - Ensuring lived experience and family voice are embedded in all planning.

Membership of the AWG will include:

- School attendance leads
- Education Attendance Team
- Early Years Service
- Early Help and Social Care representatives
- SENDIASS and Parent Carer Forum members
- Virtual School and Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
- Public Health and Youth Services

3. Monitoring and Review

- Monthly data dashboards will be produced and reviewed by the AWG.
- Quarterly feedback will be gathered from families and young people.
- An annual impact report will be published, including recommendations for strategy updates.

4. Measuring Our Impact: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To track progress and ensure accountability, we will monitor the following KPIs across the partnership:

- **Overall attendance rate** across schools (target: $\geq 95\%$)
- **Persistent absence rate** (target: $\leq 10\%$)
- **Reduction in unauthorised absence** (target: $\leq 1\%$)
- **Number of Early Help referrals** linked to attendance concerns
- **Percentage of children with personalised attendance support plans**
- **Engagement levels in training for professionals and carers**
- **Feedback from families and young people** on support received
- **Timeliness of multi-agency meetings** following attendance concerns

These indicators will be reviewed regularly and shared across the partnership to inform decision-making, celebrate progress, and identify areas for improvement.

Services and Contributors to the Attendance Strategy and thanks to:

1. Primary & Secondary Schools
2. Parent Carer Forums (PCF)
3. SENDIASS
4. Youth Justice Service Team (YJST)
5. Thames Valley Police
6. Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT)
7. SEN Assessment Team
8. Early Help & Family Hubs
9. Education Attendance Team
10. School Improvement Team
11. Virtual School
12. Family Safeguarding Team
13. Early Response Hub
14. Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
15. Contact, Advice & Assessment Services (CAAS)
16. Public Health Team
17. Local Councillors
18. Foster and Kinship Carer Support Services
19. Exclusions and Reintegration Services
20. Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Services (QAAS)
21. Children in Need (CIN) Pilot Team
22. Social Workers and Family Resource Teams

West Berkshire School Attendance Strategy: Family & Community Summary

Summary

Every child deserves the best start in life—and that starts with being in school every day. This summary explains how West Berkshire is working together with families, schools, health services, and social care to help children attend school regularly and thrive.

Why Attendance Matters

When children miss school, they miss out on learning, friendships, and support. Sometimes absence is linked to deeper challenges like mental health, family pressures, or special educational needs. We want to work with families to understand these challenges and find solutions together.

Our Vision

To support every child to attend school regularly through a collaborative, inclusive, and child-centred approach—one that reflects their lived experiences, removes barriers, and promotes wellbeing.

How we will make this happen

Here are the main ways we're working to improve attendance:

Working Together

Schools, health services, and social care are joining forces to support families early.

Listening to Children and Families

We support children to have trusted adults and that their voices shape support plans.

Spotting Problems Early

We will use data and regular meetings to notice attendance issues before they get worse.

Practical Help

We will offer the right support at the right time.

Training and Support

We train staff and empower parents to advocate for their children.

Clear Responsibilities

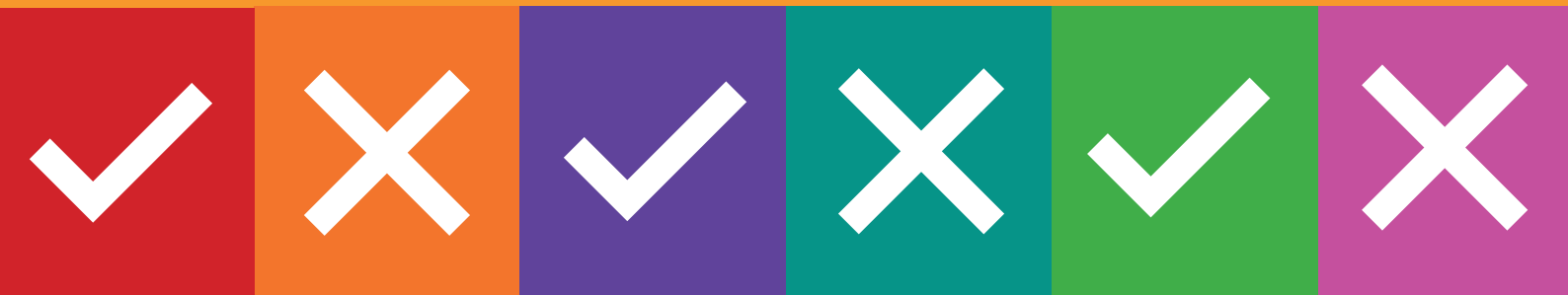
Everyone involved knows their role and follows up on agreed actions.

Flexible Education

We promote inclusive practices and help children return to school after exclusions or anxiety.

How You Can Get Involved

Families are key partners in this strategy. If you have concerns about attendance or need support, please speak to your child's school or contact the local authority's attendance team. We're here to listen and help.



www.westberks.gov.uk

WBC/TR/MP/0725

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Improving School Attendance

DELIVERY PLAN 2025 - 2028

Vision

To ensure every child is supported to attend school regularly through a collaborative, inclusive, and child-centred approach that reflects lived experiences, removes barriers, and promotes wellbeing.

The plan will be reviewed annually each February, providing an opportunity to assess progress, reflect on emerging priorities and identify new tasks and enablers for the following 12-month period. This ongoing cycle of review and refinement will ensure that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of children, young people and their families.

We have a set of enablers to support the delivery of improving school attendance to ensure maintained momentum and effective delivery of actions outlined in this delivery plan.

The Enablers are:

No.	Objective Area	Timeline	Owner	RAG Status*	Commentary
1.	Collaboration and Communication		Lead Action Owner:		
1.1.	Establish regular multi-agency meetings Create secure platforms for effective sharing of information Develop joint planning protocols for early concerns	Immediate Implementation & then business as usual	EAT, Schools, Social Care, Health		ICCP ToR and Referral Form have been created.
1.2	Corporate Parenting Panel to be aware of attendance trends and add scrutiny Virtual School Extended Duties to support attendance planning and information to Social Workers Life Chances Meetings to include attendance	December 2025	CSC Corporate Parenting Panel Virtual School – engagement		In Progress
1.3	Ensure that all plans around Child and Family have a multiagency approach to include attendance – use as a strength or area of concern	Immediate Implementation & then business as usual	CAAS		
1.4	Attendance to be on the agenda for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headteacher Forum SENCO Forum Parent Carer Partnership SEN Team Termly cafe catch ups 	As per meeting schedule	All		

1.5	KIT emails weekly to Head Teachers to regularly contain Attendance information and training available, including DfE updates	Weekly throughout academic year	School Improvement		In place
1.6	Youth Justice Education Meeting includes Attendance information and discussion with SMART actions to improve	Termly	YTJS		In place
1.7	Creation & adoption of Educational Neglect Policy to support all partners understanding the thresholds	End of September 2025	All PEWO & Safeguarding Lead		Policy created. Progression through Corporate adoption process.
2.	Child-Centred and Family-Focused Approaches		Lead Action Owner:		
2.1	Embed child voice in all planning Develop personalised education and support plans Provide training for carers on educational advocacy	December 2025	EHE Officers, Social Workers, Carers		
2.2	All plans to include the child's voice in relation to education and attendance All Child Protection Conferences to explore attendance and education matters Include non-attendance in all plans	Implementation to commence immediately and embedded over the year	CSC ISOs		
2.3	Training for Youth Justice Staff	As per training schedule	YTJS		
3.	Early Intervention and Prevention				
3.1	Use attendance data to flag concerns early Hold regular school-based meetings	Immediate Implementation & then business as usual	Attendance Leads, Schools, Early Help		
3.2	SENCO Updates to include attendance information. SEN to be aware of attendance as key indicator and placement success monitor. SENCOs to be consulted as part of school attendance	Termly	SEN, SENCO, Attendance Leads		

	strategy. High expectations for ALL pupils				
3.3	Primary focus meetings x3 a year Secondary focus meetings x3 a year Attendance meetings in school PHF Intervention / input / training	Termly	School Improvement, Schools		A member of the SIA team attends and leads the meeting. Schools with poor attainment data or Ofsted judgement are discussed and attendance percentages feed into this. The WBPHA put together an agenda with the Director of Education.
3.4	Use ETE data to do focussed diversion ETE data at allocation	As per meeting schedule	YTJS		In place – the Focused Diversion Pilot Programme is in place until 31/03/2026
4.	Practical and Emotional Support				
4.1	Deploy Family Support Workers for morning routines Provide uniforms, transport, and emotional support Address mental health and trauma through referrals	Family Support, CAMHS, Schools EHA, FGC, FSWs	December 2025		
4.2	Ensure that this is embedded in any family plan Transport to be considered and stability of placement in line with statutory guidance and policy	Implementation immediate and embedding ongoing	SW, FSW,		
4.3	Aligned SEMH Services, Referrals from Schools to be streamlined in a graduated response with clear pathways of support available	December 2025	SEMH services, EPs, Schools		
4.5	Youth Justice workers and FSW in Hubs to support families with practical and emotional support	Implementation immediate and embedding ongoing	YTJS, FSW		In place
5.	Training and Empowerment				
5.1	Deliver training on therapeutic thinking, EHCPs, and inclusive language Host workshops for parents/carers on navigating support	Termly	Training Leads, SEND Teams, ALL staff		
5.2	All Staff Meeting Engagement Events	All staff	As per meeting schedule		
5.3	WB Therapeutic Networks (termly) Therapeutic approaches in schools training	Termly	SEMH services		

	Family training via EdPsychEd (EBSA Horizons)				
5.4	SENCO Forum Parent Carer Forum SEN Team Termly Cafe Catch Ups	As per meeting schedule	SEN, PCF, SENCO network		
5.5	PHF Training / intervention / input Ofsted support via SI Team Training on attendance New framework training	As per training schedule	School Improvement, Schools		SIA team provide support in the moment with Ofsted inspections. Wider discussions around attendance are happening due to the greater focus in the Ofsted toolkit. There will be training around the IDSR at the November meeting and part of this will be looking at attendance data for pupil groups.
5.6	Attendance Training for all youth justice staff including educational neglect	As per training schedule	YJST		
6.	Accountability and Follow-Through				
6.1	Assign clear ownership of actions Review EHCPs regularly and challenge funding use Monitor implementation of support plans	Monthly reviews	SENDCo, EWO, Case Leads		
6.2	Annual EHCP Reviews Termly School Reviews	Implementation immediate and embedding ongoing	SEN, SEN support		
6.3	Ofsted Accountability – attendance element of inspections		School Improvement		Development of Attendance Audit tool – PEWO Best Practice and learning from schools inspected on new framework.
7.	Inclusive and Flexible Education				
7.1	Promote inclusive practices for SEMH and neurodivergent pupils Encourage flexible timetables and reintegration support Address school-based anxiety with tailored strategies	Implementation immediate and embedding ongoing	Schools, Inclusion Teams, Mental Health Services, Learning Support Team, Autism, EHA, MHST, TTST, EPS		
7.2	Exclusion and Reintegration Team to promote inclusive practices and support inclusion and integration Short term AP always striving for	Implementation immediate and embedding ongoing	Learning Support Team, Autism, EHA, MHST, TTST,		

	full time reintegration into a setting EBSA Advisory support current Teams. EHA Interventions liaison with MHST TTST offer on schools-based anxiety groups – coping with Worries EPS TTST		EPS, EBSA		
7.3	Ordinarily available provision and QF Teaching Clear LA expectations & policies – review of all Education Policies to ensure consistency Termly meetings Forums	Introduction Autumn term, embedding part of throughout 25/26	SEN		
7.4	Ofsted Inspection support for schools and support for success indicators	Academic year 25-28	School Improvement		This will be ongoing once the inspections begin from the 1 st December.

*RAG Status				
Not started	Overdue/Unresolved Issue	Partial Completion	Started – On Track	Completed

Monitoring & Review

- ½ **termly review** of attendance data and action plans from AWG.
- **Quarterly feedback** from families and young people.
- **Annual evaluation** of strategy impact and updates based on lived experience.

References

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

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Ofsted School Inspection Reports

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	4 December 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Neil Goddard and Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update on the latest Ofsted inspection reports for schools in West Berkshire, and changes to the Ofsted school inspection regime that came into effect in November 2025.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- (a) Be informed of the latest Ofsted inspection outcomes for schools in West Berkshire;
- (b) Uses the information to help inform its future work programme.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications associated with this report.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications associated with this report.
Legal:	There are no legal implications associated with this report.
Risk Management:	There are no risk management implications associated with this report.
Property:	There are no property implications associated with this report.
Policy:	There are no policy implications associated with this report.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		Report is for information only.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		Report is for information only.
Environmental Impact:		X		Report is for information only.
Health Impact:		X		Report is for information only.
ICT Impact:		X		Report is for information only.
Digital Services Impact:		X		Report is for information only.
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		Report is for information only.
Core Business:		X		Report is for information only.
Data Impact:		X		Report is for information only.
Consultation and Engagement:	Neil Goddard (Service Director – Education and SEND) Corporate Board			

4 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Ofsted Inspection reports for schools in West Berkshire that have been published since the last meeting of the Children and Young

People Scrutiny Committee. It highlights areas of strong and weak performance in local schools and may be used by the Committee to inform its future work programme. Comparator data is provided to highlight how West Berkshire's schools are performing against regional and national averages.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 This report provides updates on recently published Ofsted inspection reports. These are based on the education inspection framework (EIF) introduced in September 2019.
- 5.2 For the 2024-2025 academic year, a new grading system was introduced for full inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (known as graded inspections). These have moved away from single graded judgements. Instead, inspections report key judgements for the following aspects, which are assessed against Ofsted grade descriptors set out within the EIF:
- quality of education
 - behaviour and attitudes personal development
 - leadership and management
 - early years and/or sixth-form provision
- 5.3 Ungraded inspections are conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. These inspections are of schools previously rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' and focus on determining whether the school has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection. The wording of judgements for ungraded inspections in 2024/25 have changed to:
- Outcome 1 – the school has taken effective action to maintain standards identified at the previous inspection. (Abbreviated as 'standards maintained'.)
 - Outcome 2 – evidence gathered suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. (Abbreviated as 'improved significantly'.)
 - Outcome 3 - evidence gathered suggests that the school's work may not be as strong as at the previous inspection. (Abbreviated as 'some aspects not as strong'.)
- 5.4 Urgent inspections are also carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. They were previously known as inspections with no formal designation and unannounced behaviour inspections. These remain the same.
- 5.5 The published Ofsted inspection outcomes for all West Berkshire schools inspected between 1 September 2024 and 31 August 2025 are provided in Appendix A.

5.6 The following tables provide a comparison of West Berkshire's performance compared to the national and regional averages for the period

Table 1: Published Ofsted inspection outcomes for the period from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 - % of all schools with section 5 graded inspections

	Outstanding			Good			Requires Improvement			Inadequate		
All Schools	Nat.	SE	WB	Nat.	SE	WB	Nat.	SE	WB	Nat.	SE	WB
Quality of education	16	14	17	67	71	72	15	13	6	1	1	6
Behaviour & attitudes	29	29	28	65	67	72	6	3	0	1	1	0
Personal development	35	37	39	61	60	61	3	2	0	0	1	0
Effectiveness of leadership & management	21	19	6	68	71	89	10	8	0	2	2	6
Early years provision (where applicable)	27	29	15	66	68	85	6	3	0	0	0	0
Sixth form provision (where applicable)	34	33	100	59	59	0	6	6	0	1	2	0

Note: Just one West Berkshire school had aspects rated as inadequate

Table 2: Published Ofsted inspection outcomes for the period from 1 September 2024 to 31 July 2025 - % of all schools with section 8 ungraded inspections

	Improved Significantly			Standards Maintained			Some aspects not as strong		
	Nat.	SE	WB	Nat.	SE	WB	Nat.	SE	WB
All Schools	11	12	25	83	79	63	5	6	13
Nursery	9	0	N/A	88	100	N/A	3	0	N/A
Primary	11	12	29	84	82	57	5	6	14
Secondary	15	9	N/A	78	84	N/A	6	7	N/A
Special	12	13	0	83	77	100	5	10	0
Alternative Provision	5	0	N/A	93	100	N/A	2	0	N/A

Notes: Just one West Berkshire school was assessed as having 'some aspects not as strong'.

Proposals

- 5.7 There are no proposals arising directly from this report – the report is for information only. However, Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee may use the information provided to inform their future work programme (e.g., visiting schools that have aspects assessed as inadequate to see how concerns are being addressed, or those assessed as outstanding to see if there are any lessons to be learned that could be applied to other settings).

6 Other options considered

None – report is for information only.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, outcomes of section 5 and section 8 inspections are very positive, demonstrating the strong performance by West Berkshire schools. Just one school had aspects assessed as 'inadequate' over the last year, and one school previously assessed as 'good' was found to have aspects that may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The high proportion of 'good' and 'outstanding' ratings show that schools are delivering a high standard of education, with effective school leadership teams, and positive learning environments that are allowing local children and young people to realise their potential.
- 7.2 For the 2025/26 academic year, Ofsted will be working under a new inspection framework. From November 2025, all inspections will be 'full' inspections and Ofsted will no longer carry out ungraded inspections.
- 7.3 Inspections will utilise a new report card format, with up to 11 distinct areas being assessed using a five point grading scale. Schools will receive targeted recommendations rather than an overall grade.

8 Appendices

Appendix A - Ofsted state school inspections carried out between 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 and published by 30 September 2025 in West Berkshire

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:Yes: ☐ No: ☒The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐Report is to note only ☒**Wards affected:** All wards**Officer details:**

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Job Title: Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Democratic Services)
Tel No: 01635 519486
E-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

Appendix A: Ofsted state school inspections carried out between 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 and published by 30 September 2025 in West Berkshire

School	School Category	Inspection Date	Inspection Type	Quality of Education	Behaviour & Attitudes	Personal Development	Leadership & Management	Early Years/ Sixth Form Provision
Bucklebury C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Controlled	01/10/24 to 02/10/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
The Downs School Ofsted school webpage	Foundation	01/10/24 to 02/10/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Chieveley Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Community	01/10/24 to 02/10/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
St Nicolas C.E. Junior School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Aided	08/10/24 to 09/10/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	N/A
Compton C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Controlled	05/11-24 to 06/11/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
John Rankin Junior School Ofsted school webpage	Community	22/10/24 and 07/11/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Inadequate	Good	Good	Inadequate	N/A
Woolhampton C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Aided	12/11/24	Section 8 (Ungraded)	Aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.				

Long Lane Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Community	12/11/24 to 13/11/24	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.				
Theale C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Controlled	26/11/24 to 27/11/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mortimer St. John's C.E. Infant School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary controlled	10/12/24 to 11/12/24	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Enborne C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Aided	17/12/24	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection				
Englefield C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Aided	07/01/25 to 08/01/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
John O'Gaunt School Ofsted school webpage	Academy sponsor led	14/01/25 to 15/01/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Good	N/A
Mrs Bland's Infant School Ofsted school webpage	Maintained	28/01/25 to 29/01/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
Hermitage Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Community	11/03/25 to 12/03/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
St John the Evangelist CofE Infant & Nursery School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary Aided	11/03/25 to 12/03/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Robert Sandilands Primary School & Nursery Ofsted school webpage	Community	25/03/25 to 26/03/25	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection.				
Kennet Valley Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Community	01/04/25 to 02/04/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Bradfield CE Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary aided	29/04/25	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection.				
Falkland Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Maintained	29/04/25 to 30/04/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Park House School Ofsted school webpage	Academy converter	07/05/25 to 08/05/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Mary Hare School Ofsted school webpage	Special	13/05/25 to 14/05/25	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.				
Hampstead Norreys CE Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary controlled	03/06/25	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.				
Hungerford Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Community	24/06/25 to 25/06/25	Section 8 (Ungraded)	School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.				
Lambourn CofE Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Academy sponsor led	01/07/25 to 02/07/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good

Shaw-cum-Donnington C.E. Primary School Ofsted school webpage	Voluntary controlled	01/07/25 to 02/07/25	Section 5 (Graded)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
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Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Report October 2025

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	6 November 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	AnnMarie Dodds
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4745

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Ofsted visited West Berkshire's Children's Services to conduct a short ILACS (Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services) between 8 – 19 September 2025. The council's previous ILACS inspection occurred in March 2022. The inspection report is published by Ofsted on 28 October 2025. This report provides an overview of Ofsted's findings.
- 1.2 The Judgement from Ofsted is
 - Overall Effectiveness: Good
 - All key areas inspected were graded Good:
 - Impact of leaders on social work practice
 - Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
 - Experiences and progress of children in care
 - Experiences and progress of care leavers

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To inform the Executive of the "Good" overall effectiveness rating and commend the progress made since 2023.
- 2.2 To inform the Executive that for the continued development of children's services that Executive note the requirement for:
 - Investment in Early Help capacity to ensure timely support for families.
 - Propose a revised multi-agency Early Help strategy with clear delivery milestones.

- Targeted improvement in practice for children experiencing chronic neglect and domestic abuse.
- Standardising contingency plans across child protection and child-in-need cases.
- Continued recruitment and retention efforts.
- Twice yearly progress reports to the committee on Ofsted development progress concentrating on Early Help capacity, participation metrics and Workforce stability & caseloads.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary			
Financial:	There are no financial implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report.			
Human Resource:	There are no Human Resource implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report.			
Legal:	There are no Legal implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report.			
Risk Management:	There are no Risk Management implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report; the rating of good overall assists in managing the Council's corporate risk register.			
Property:	There are no Property implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report.			
Policy:	There are no Policy implications related to the publication of the Ofsted report.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:		x		

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT Impact:		x		
Digital Services Impact:		x		
Council Strategy Priorities:	x			<p>The publication of this report positively impacts the following strategy priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services we are proud of • A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all • Thriving communities with a strong local voice.
Core Business:	x			<p>The publication of this report positively reinforces the deliver of quality services as business as usual for Children's Services.</p>
Data Impact:		x		<p>The publication of this report has no impact on the rights of data subjects.</p>

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Service Director for Children's Social Care</p> <p>Service Director for Education and SEND</p> <p>Lead Member for Children's Services</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 West Berkshire has made significant progress in the past year despite previous challenges linked to leadership changes and financial pressures. It was noted that prior to the change in administration, during the summer of 2023, the limited focus on and funding for children's services had resulted in a noticeable decline in the performance of children's services. Leadership is now stable and focused, resulting in improved practice and outcomes for children and families. While early help and responses to cumulative harm remain areas for development, the authority demonstrates strong commitment to continuous improvement, workforce stability, and partnership working.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Ofsted report covers in detail the key strengths and areas for further development across children's social care. It identifies three specific areas for improvement relating to the development of early help, the consideration of the impact of cumulative harm for children and the use of contingency planning when working with children and families.

Background

- 5.2 Key Strengths are identified throughout the services.
- 5.3 In the domain of Leadership & Governance Ofsted recognise a strong and stable leadership team since late 2023 has driven improvement. There is Increased workforce capacity and creation of new roles. There is evidence of strengthened partnership working with police, health, and most schools. The council's corporate parenting commitment evident, including reverse mentoring and plans to boost participation.
- 5.4 For children in Care permanence planning is highly effective; most children achieve stability quickly. Kinship care options are significantly improved. Foster care recruitment and retention have strengthened, fostering hubs support carers. The Adoption processes for children is timely and well-supported.
- 5.5 Care Leavers in West Berkshire have a stable, experienced team of social workers and personal advisers. The revised local offer has been co-produced with care leavers; accessible and clear. Care leavers have good access to health, education, employment, and housing support. Peer mentoring and participation forums positively impact service design.
- 5.6 Across the Safeguarding & Protection of children there are effective multi-agency responses to exploitation and extra-familial harm. Children's services provide prompt

and proportionate child protection interventions. Improved support for disabled children and young carers are recognised.

5.7 Areas for targeted Improvement are defined by Ofsted

5.8 Early Help is underdeveloped due to insufficient resources and results in delays in providing timely support.

5.9 Practice with children experiencing chronic neglect/domestic abuse needs strengthening may lead to the cumulative harm of children.

5.10 Contingency Planning with families varies and some plans lack clarity for parents.

5.11 We continue to experience workforce pressures and caseloads remain high in some areas; experience levels across the workforce are uneven.

5.12 Participation of our children and young people is limited with minimal reach of children's voice initiatives (e.g., R:Vue council).

5.13 System & Processes are impacted by the current case recording system which is inflexible.

Proposals

5.14 It is proposed that Children's Services' development plan aligns the with the widescale transformation activity delivering the Families First Reform in West Berkshire. This will achieve a single plan of development and transformation activity. The Ofsted specific developments are

5.15 Strengthen Early Help Provision

- Action: Develop and implement a fully resourced Early Help strategy with clear timelines.
- Why: Current capacity is insufficient, causing delays in support and prolonged statutory involvement.
- Next Step: Secure additional funding and workforce; formalize multi-agency contributions.

5.16 Improve Practice for Children Experiencing Cumulative Harm

- Action: Introduce targeted training and tools for identifying and responding to chronic neglect and domestic abuse.
- Why: A small but significant number of children remain in harmful situations for too long.
- Next Step: Embed use of chronologies and escalation protocols; monitor impact through audits.

5.17 Enhance Contingency Planning

- Action: Standardize contingency planning templates and guidance for child protection and child-in-need plans.
- Why: Current variability risks unclear expectations for families.
- Next Step: Include contingency planning in supervision audits and performance dashboards.

5.18 Reduce Caseloads and Build Workforce Expertise

- Action: Continue recruitment drive and accelerate induction for new staff
- Why: High caseloads and uneven experience levels affect timeliness and quality.
- Next Step: Expand assistant team manager roles and mentoring schemes; monitor caseload distribution monthly.

5.19 Upgrade Case Management System – In delivery

- Next Step: Engage frontline staff in design/testing; ensure training plan is ready by Q1 2026.

5.20 Expand Participation and Voice of Children

- Action: Strengthen R:Vue council and participation officer roles. (This is the participation group led by and for our children in care to ensure the voices of our children are represented)
- Why: Current reach is limited; children's voices need greater influence.
- Next Step: Launch engagement campaign; set measurable targets for participation.

5.21 Embed Practice Model and Continuous Learning

- Action: Ensure consistent application of the chosen practice model across all services.
- Why: Variability remains despite progress.
- Next Step: Use audit findings to target coaching; integrate model into performance reviews.

6 Other options considered

6.1 No other options are considered.

7 Conclusion

7.1 For children's services to continue to develop it is essential that the recommendations from this Ofsted inspection inform next steps to ensure children in West Berkshire are appropriately supported and cared for to achieve their best outcomes.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Final report

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees or associated Task Groups within the preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All

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Inspection of West Berkshire local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 15 to 19 September 2025

Lead inspector: Rodica Cobarzan, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of children care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Since the previous inspection in 2022, there have been changes in the local authority's corporate, political and children's services senior leadership. These changes in 2023, compounded by financial pressures and insufficient strategic and political focus on children's services, had acted as a brake on progress and led to the quality of services in some areas of practice declining. The appointment of a director of children's services at the end of 2023, replacing the previous combined role of director of children's and adults' services, along with the establishment of a strong and stable leadership team, have acted as a catalyst for the local authority to refocus on delivering high-quality services for children and families. This is also leading to strengthening focus on implementing the social care reforms. Progress has been made in improving kinship care options for children, but in other areas, such as family help, implementation of the reform is at an early stage.

This reinvigorated focus on getting the right support for children has led to strengthened practice in several areas, including the multi-agency 'front door', work to tackle extra-familial harm and permanence planning. For a very small number of children experiencing the cumulative impact of neglect or domestic abuse, their needs are not always recognised or acted on quickly enough. In other areas, such as early help, plans are promising but are at too early a stage to demonstrate a sustained impact for children and families.

What needs to improve?¹

- The effectiveness of practice with children who may be experiencing cumulative harm from neglect and/or domestic abuse, including those subject to the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline. (Outcome 1, national framework)
- The consistency of contingency planning for children being supported through child protection and child-in-need plans. (Outcome 3, national framework)
- The pace of work by the local authority, together with its partner agencies, to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to provide timely and effective early help to all children and families who need it. (Outcome 1, national framework)

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. Early help for children and families is underdeveloped because there is not currently sufficient resource to meet need, which means that not all children receive support as early as they could. When children do receive early help, they benefit from effective services. When concerns for children who are open to early help escalate, they are swiftly stepped up for a statutory assessment. But when children could step down from assessments, there is insufficient resource to provide them with ongoing targeted family support from the early help team. This means that for some children, they receive statutory support for longer than they may need. Leaders are aware of this shortfall and are working with partner agencies to develop a new strategy and to increase the capacity for support.
2. When children are referred to the Contact, Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS), they receive a prompt and effective service. Thresholds are well understood and consistently applied. There is careful consideration of children's experiences, including the impact of domestic abuse, which is well understood. Workers engage well with families to explain how and why information about their children is shared, including when it is necessary to do this without their agreement. Management oversight is sound, with very clear direction and rationale for decision-making.
3. Children and families receive a swift response when concerns are raised outside of the normal working hours. The team takes appropriate actions to safeguard children, and there is proactive information-sharing between the daytime and emergency duty social workers.
4. Arrangements to manage allegations against adults who work with children are effective. The local authority designated officer (LADO) ensures that a prompt

¹ The areas for improvement have been cross-referenced with the outcomes, enablers or principles in the [Children's Social Care: National Framework](#). This statutory guidance sets out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children's social care.

and comprehensive response is taken to allegations and that safeguarding children is always paramount.

5. Most assessments are thorough, consider each child individually and are informed by a broad range of partnership information. Children's and parents' views inform the findings from assessments. Most children and families receive appropriate and effective support during the assessments, which results in their circumstances improving or starting to improve.
6. The quality and effectiveness of support and safeguarding for disabled children has improved notably. This means that disabled children are now better supported by workers who generally know them well and understand their needs. They receive a range of effective services and packages of support that help children make progress.
7. Children at risk of exploitation benefit from a strong and coordinated multi-agency response. Regular meetings are held to analyse data and information, mapping risks and patterns that can help professionals take swift actions. Children who go missing are offered return home conversations, and efforts are consistently made to get alongside children to build relationships and understand why they went missing. This means that many children are well supported through this work.
8. The number of children identified as young carers has increased significantly, due to improved identification processes. However, a small number of children are still awaiting an assessment due to limited capacity. The accessibility of support varies slightly across the local area, which means that some young carers struggle to attend or fully engage with the support.
9. Visits to children are regular and include both announced and unannounced visits. Most visits are purposeful, and social workers have meaningful conversations with children to understand their wishes and feelings. For most children, these relationships are often strengthened through a range of direct work that takes place in the family home or school, and this provides valuable insights for assessment and planning.
10. When there are potential risks of significant harm, child protection strategy meetings are held promptly, with attendance from appropriate partner agencies. Interim safety plans are put in place to address children's immediate safety, and children are seen without delay. Child protection enquiries build on information shared at strategy meetings, with information from family members adding additional insight. Enquiries are timely, child focused and lead to proportionate actions. This includes progression to child protection conferences, when necessary.
11. Children's family networks are explored during social work interventions. Some children and families are not offered a family network meeting when this would have been appropriate. This means they may miss out on benefiting from a

structured support plan involving their kinship and wider support network, which could have helped to facilitate progress. Leaders have a plan to extend the offer, and training provided to staff to support this is underway.

12. Most initial child protection conferences (ICPCs) are held within statutory timescales and are effective. Review child protection conferences, core groups and child-in-need meetings are regular and well attended. Decisions made in meetings are appropriate, and, for most children, the assessment of risk is based on accurate evidence about parents' ability to make and sustain change.
13. Most child-in-need and child protection plans are well written, have timescales and are appropriate and proportionate to children's needs. Children receive the right support, under the right plan. However, contingency plans vary in quality, with some not sufficiently detailed to enable parents to understand what would happen should change not be secured.
14. A very small, but significant, number of children have been the subject of statutory interventions for very lengthy periods, due to neglect or domestic abuse, but without their lives improving. Chronologies are not always used well enough as a tool to identify the impact of cumulative harm over time. As a result, interventions do not always start early enough and are sometimes over-optimistic, resulting in delay for these few children. Positively, more recent practice is stronger and shows improvement in the accurate and timely identification of the cumulative negative impact on children of living with chronic neglect or domestic abuse. Managers have better oversight of child protection planning, which has contributed to a reduction in the number of children remaining on child protection plans for extended periods.
15. When risks to children escalate, most children appropriately enter the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline. Letters given to parents are clear and clarify concerns and support well. Managers and leaders oversee children in pre-proceedings. However, despite this level of oversight, a very small number of children have not benefited from swift or effective work, meaning that they have been in pre-proceedings for a prolonged period. As a result, positive changes for those children have not been achieved quickly enough.
16. There is a child-focused response to 16- and 17-year-old children who present as homeless. These children receive effective support, either through coming into care, if this is appropriate, or through support as children in need.
17. Privately fostered children are visited and arrangements assessed appropriately. There is an ongoing programme of awareness raising with partner agencies because the current number of identified privately fostered children is very low.
18. Effective systems are in place to ensure that children who are home educated are safeguarded. The local authority's oversight of children who are missing education is appropriate. Action is taken to help them re-engage in education as soon as possible.

19. Social workers generally benefit from regular management oversight and supervision. This helps them to reflect on and develop the effectiveness of their practice and to progress plans for children.

The experiences and progress of children in care: good

20. When children come into care, it is for the right reasons. For many, their entry into care is planned and at a time that is right for them. However, some children enter care too late, or in an unplanned way. This means that for these children, the initial stages of coming into care can be unsettling. However, support is provided to help them settle in their new homes.
21. Permanence planning is very effective, with managers closely monitoring children's plans for permanence in its different forms from the moment they come in to care. There is an appropriate emphasis on keeping brothers and sisters together whenever possible. Social workers consider all permanence options for children and progress parallel and triple plans effectively until they identify what the right plan is for each individual child. This means that once children come into care, they almost all move to stable homes that meet their needs well and do so in a timely manner.
22. Leaders have created the right support structures for social workers to explore kinship care options for children. As a result, a high number of children achieve permanence by living in kinship arrangements. Children who cannot safely remain within their family and friends' network, and have a permanence plan of long-term fostering, are promptly and appropriately matched with their long-term carers so that they have certainty about their future care arrangements.
23. When children return to the care of their parents, assessments are completed and support provided. Care orders are discharged when it is appropriate to do so. Consequently, children are not subject to ongoing statutory involvement for any longer than they need to be.
24. A very small number of children live in unlawful, unregistered children's homes. These children are placed as a last resort and moved to suitable registered provision as soon as possible. Social workers regularly visit them to monitor their welfare and safety. Senior leaders have robust oversight of these children.
25. Children in care benefit from having consistent social workers who visit them regularly, spend time alone with them and know them well. Social workers are skilled in building relationships with children, enabling them to have a trusted adult with whom they can share their worries and aspirations. Assessments of children's needs are regularly updated to include their lived experiences and changing needs.
26. A range of direct work tools are used to ascertain children's views and to explore their understanding of their experiences. Not all children living in long-term foster care have the benefit of life-story work to provide them with a clear

and accurate narrative of their life experiences and help them to celebrate their journeys.

27. Children's plans are regularly considered through statutory reviews, chaired by independent reviewing officers (IROs) who are consistent people in children's lives. IROs write sensitively to children following reviews, informing them of what was agreed in the meetings. They escalate any concerns on behalf of children promptly if progress against plans is not being made. This helps to ensure that agreed actions are taken in agreed timescales and that children always remain at the centre of decision-making.
28. Children's written plans are sometimes very lengthy, including those plans for disabled children. This makes it harder for children to understand exactly who will be doing what and when for them so that their needs are met.
29. Children benefit from spending time with those who are important to them, in line with their wishes and an analysis of risk. Social workers and carers support children in care to participate in a range of enriching leisure and social activities that match their interests. Talents are nurtured, and children are supported to have fun.
30. Children are supported to progress and to achieve well educationally. The virtual school knows its children well and is unrelenting in its ambition for children in care to receive the best support. Staff balance promoting children's well-being with prioritising their educational achievement. The virtual school works positively with both schools and social workers. This includes providing useful training for designated teachers to help them to understand their responsibilities. This support is beginning to have a positive impact on children's attendance and academic progress.
31. Children's health needs are prioritised, with initial and review health assessments or tuberculosis screening happening on time for most children. Children access child and adolescent mental health services with minimal delay, and, for those children who have a specific need that cannot be met by universal health services, privately sourced therapeutic support is provided.
32. Disabled children in care benefit from consistent social workers who know them well and who regularly seek their wishes and feelings through children's preferred individual communication styles. Children make good progress in their homes.
33. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children live in homes that meet their needs. Social workers help and support these children well in all aspects of their lives. As a result, they have positive experiences.
34. Children in care who are at risk of exploitation or other forms of extra-familial harm benefit from a strong, multi-agency response to both review the level of potential risk and to agree joint actions to reduce risk and disrupt the activities

of exploiters. Consequently, this means that for most children in care, risks are well managed and understood, and children are safer.

35. Fostering panels are effective and support the recruitment and retention of foster carers well. Most children in care benefit from living in good-quality, stable foster homes, where they are well cared for. Whenever possible, children live locally with foster carers, who have been well trained and well supported, including through the fostering hubs. The local authority has successfully recruited additional foster carers. They have also strengthened retention, which is an indication of the high quality of support provided to carers.
36. Children live with adopters who meet their needs. There is a strong partnership between the regional adoption agency and the local authority that supports planning for children. When adoption is the right permanence plan for children, this is achieved in a timely way. Adopters receive effective support during the adoption process and subsequently.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: good

37. Care leavers benefit from a stable and experienced team of social workers and personal advisers (PAs). Most young people are introduced to their PAs early enough for them to develop a relationship before PAs take over from social workers as the key person providing support to them.
38. Most care leavers have positive and productive relationships with their PAs. PAs speak with empathy and warmth about their care leavers and recognise the unique challenges they face. Equally, the care leavers inspectors met with are positive about their relationships with their PAs and the impact they have on their lives. Care leavers are visited in accordance with their needs.
39. The health needs of care leavers, including emotional and mental health needs, are regularly reviewed and promoted. PAs support care leavers to manage their own health needs, ensuring that they have access to their health information and are registered with the relevant services. PAs are proactively referred to specialist services when necessary. For some care leavers with acute or specific health needs, the local authority has mitigated deficits in health services by funding private therapy or counselling to support these young people.
40. PAs encourage care leavers to lead fit and active lives, with many being supported to access sports and other activities in line with their interests. The 16+ service facilitates a series of creative and purposeful workshops such as music, drama and cooking, which have a positive impact on young people's lives.
41. Care leavers can share their views about the effectiveness of the support they receive and how services should be shaped going forwards through their access to the 'R:Vue' forum and 'community club'. These groups have had some impact in shaping discrete areas of practice across the service. The peer

mentoring scheme is highly valued by those delivering and receiving mentorship.

42. The local offer has been revised and co-produced with care leavers. It is presented in a format which is clear and accessible. Most care leavers are aware of their rights and entitlements. They are supported by PAs in securing relevant documents to help them transition to independence. Care leavers know how to make a complaint, and when this happens, staff are receptive and committed to learning from the experience.
43. Young people over the age of 21 who want or need ongoing support continue to have good access to this from their PAs. They know how to reach out, and when they want help or advice, PAs are responsive, and their work is impactful.
44. Pathway plans are completed in partnership with young people. Plans are mostly focused on key issues and identified needs. Actions are appropriate and most have clear review dates. While there is some variability in the quality of written records, including how effectively PAs evidence their high aspirations for care leavers, most pathway plans are being used well to support young people to make progress.
45. The response to care leavers who were former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is strong. Skilled PAs support young people with culturally matched mentoring schemes, to benefit from purposeful and engaging activities and to access education, and with community integration. While PAs understand and promote the identity needs of care leavers, these are not often explicitly recorded in pathway plans. These plans therefore do not always fully reflect the positive work completed by PAs.
46. Care leavers in custody receive regular, purposeful support from their PAs, including support to plan their return to the community and maintain links with their families and friendship networks.
47. Most care leavers who are young parents are well supported. They receive appropriate emotional and practical support from their PAs and via the young parent group. One young person inspectors met spoke about the positive and profound impact her PA's support had on her life.
48. Care leavers have access to support from a broad range of services, and professionals maintain frequent contact with them to help them to make safer choices and to navigate the risks and challenges of adult life. For most, risks are closely monitored, and when risks increase, responses are swift and effective. A small number of young people with complex risks are not as robustly supported into adulthood.
49. Most care leavers are successfully engaged in education, employment or training. Strong partnership working and personalised guidance raise the aspirations of care leavers. This empowers them to develop confidence and skills to access purposeful work and educational opportunities. The local

authority successfully engages a range of agencies to help young people to prepare for adulthood.

50. Almost all care leavers live in suitable accommodation that is safe and meets their needs. Most care leavers receive tailored tenancy support, which ensures a successful transition into independent living. Similarly, care leavers who want to live with their foster carers are supported to remain in stable 'staying put' arrangements for as long as they want or need. Strong and purposeful relationships with their carers result in supportive, lifelong relationships.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good

51. West Berkshire's leaders have made children a high priority. This commitment has accelerated over the past 12 months, with increased workforce capacity, including the creation of new roles, to support social work practice. Action was also taken to address the absence of a sufficiency strategy to ensure that there are the right number and range of homes and foster carers for children who need them. This includes ongoing work with the Regional Care Cooperative, fostering hubs and the local authority's own fostering service to improve the council's ability to support children to remain within their communities. As a result, children are now benefiting from an increase in the range of homes for both children in care and care leavers.
52. Strengthened partnership relationships are now evident at all levels. Managers from key partner agencies, including the police and health services, consistently attend both strategic and operational decision-making forums, contributing to effective joint working. Partnership working is strong with most, but not all, schools, and some challenges remain in ensuring that inclusion is promoted effectively in every school.
53. Leaders are engaged and active corporate parents. A very small number of children in care and care leavers take part in the 'R:Vue' council, and, through this, they help to inform the Corporate Parenting Board's agenda. However, the influence and reach of this group is currently limited. Leaders recognise this and have plans to strengthen participation, including the recently agreed additional two participation officers. Senior leaders, including the chief executive, have also become directly involved in 'reverse mentoring' with children in care and care leavers. This provides meaningful opportunities for children's and young people's voices to be heard at the highest level in the council, with an impact already being noticeable.
54. There is ongoing work to embed the local authority's chosen model of practice across all services. The model is being applied increasingly consistently, resulting in more children and families receiving effective and relationship-based support in line with the local authority's aspirations.

55. A broad range of audit activity is now being undertaken. Learning from this is resulting in improvements in practice, although not always within the timescales that would achieve the most benefit to children and families.
56. The local authority's existing case recording and management system has proven unwieldy and inflexible and has not best supported social work practice. It is positive that leaders have recognised this and have a plan in place to implement a new system in spring 2026 aimed at strengthening case recording.
57. The local authority's ongoing efforts to improve the stability and capacity of the workforce are being successful. There has been a significant reduction in both turnover and reliance on agency staff and an improvement in the percentage of staff who are permanent. This has been supported by the very recent introduction of additional assistant team managers. While workforce stability has improved overall, there are still some areas where the level of experience of staff is limited, and this impacts on the allocation of more complex work. Nevertheless, progress over the past year has been both steady and significant, reflecting a clear and increasingly successful commitment to strengthening the workforce and improving outcomes for children and families.
58. While there is some variation across teams and services, caseloads for some practitioners remain high. Leaders are acutely aware of this and have plans in place to further increase staffing and so reduce caseloads. However, the current workloads of some staff are limiting the timeliness and quality of support they are able to provide to some children and families.
59. Staff are encouraged and supported to develop their careers in West Berkshire. There are numerous opportunities for all staff to enhance their knowledge, skills and practice so that they are well equipped to support children and families that require help, including through an academy that supports the learning and development needs of social workers, particularly those who are newly qualified.
60. Leaders have ensured that supervision is taking place regularly across most areas of the service. Children's progress is mostly well documented, and actions arising from supervision are clearly recorded. Supervision helps social workers and PAs to reflect on their practice with children and maintain a focus on their experiences.
61. The workforce within children's services is well supported. There are staff engagement forums, a positive management culture with an accessible and visible wider leadership team and there is a strong commitment from staff, many of whom told inspectors that they enjoy working for West Berkshire.

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The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

1. This document gives 28 clear days notice of key decisions which the Executive and Individual Executive Members or Officer expect to take.
2. The document is updated as required and is available to the public on the Council's website.
3. The Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and eight Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Leader of the Council and Executive Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Communications	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Deputy Leader and Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services	Councillor Heather Codling
Adult Social Care and Public Health	Councillor Patrick Clark
Finance and Resources	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Councillor Nigel Foot
Planning and Housing	Councillor Denise Gaines
Environment and Highways	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment)	Councillor Tom McCann
Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation	Councillor Justin Pemberton
Transformation and Corporate Programme	Councillor Vicky Poole

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.
5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.
6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.
8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.
9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 September 2025

Nicola Thomas
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Legal & Democratic Services
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
25 Sep 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Elizabeth Griffiths	Open
25 Sep 2025	ASC Annual Report		No	Executive			Melanie O'Rourke	Open
25 Sep 2025	Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development	To approve the inclusion of a 3G pitch at Faraday Rd in the Council's Capital Programme.	Yes	Executive	No statutory consultation needed. Discussion has taken place with football groups and will be subject to the recommendations in the Playing Pitch Strategy refresh.		Jon Winstanley	Open
25 Sep 2025	Section 20 Payment Policy	To introduce a Section 20 Parental Contribution Procedure	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
25 Sep 2025	Capital	To present the	Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open

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	Financial Performance Report Q1 2025/26	Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.						
25 Sep 2025	Contracts for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive	To gain approval from Executive to delegate authority to an individual (Service Lead or Service Director) to proceed with contract awards with a value in excess of £2.5M	Yes	Executive			Sarah Wood	Open
25 Sep 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
25 Sep 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q1		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
24 Oct 2025	Winter Service Plan 2025/26	To approve the Winter Service Plan 2025/26	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment	Consultation with Ward Members,		Andrew Reynolds	Open

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				and Highways	Town/ Parish Councils and consideration of comments received, including comments from members of the public during the previous winter service season.			
6 Nov 2025	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	To share proposed measures set out in the Council's emerging Rights of Way Improvement Plan with decision makers and request approval to publish.	Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
6 Nov 2025	Quarterly Financial Performance	To report on the financial performance of	No	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Report - Q2 of 2025/26	the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.						
6 Nov 2025	Update on the PPP shared service contract	To fulfil the requirement of the IAA which is due to expire in January 2027, which requires the partner authorities to review the current arrangements and adopt any changes 2 years before the current arrangement expires.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
6 Nov 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
6 Nov 2025	Children's Services Ofsted Outcome		No	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Report							
12 Nov 2025	North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025 - 2030	To seek approval for adoption of the new North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 for this National Landscape legally referred to as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Yes	Executive			Rachael Lancaster	Open
12 Nov 2025	Ridgeway Council Formal Proposal		Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
4 Dec 2025	Speed Limit Review 2024 – Objections	To summarise the responses to the four statutory consultations of the proposed speed limit	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Heather Young	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		changes and to make recommendations as to how to proceed in light of the comments received.						
18 Dec 2025	Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task Group Recommendations		No	Executive			Steven Bow	Open
18 Dec 2025	Finance, Property and Procurement resource allocation		No	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Fully exempt Information relating to any individual.
18 Dec 2025	The Enforcement Plan		Yes	Executive			Laura Callan	Open
18 Dec 2025	Financial Improvement Plan and draft		Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	MTFS							
18 Dec 2025	Annual Report of the Shared Building Control Service	To provide and update on the performance of the shared building control service.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
18 Dec 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q2		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
18 Dec 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
18 Dec 2025	Devolution Update		Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
18 Dec 2025	Youth Council		No	Executive			Gordon Oliver	Open
18 Dec 2025	Sports Hub T & F Group response		No	Executive			Clare Lawrence	Open
20 Jan 2026	Schools Funding Formula 2026/27		Yes	Portfolio Holder: Deputy Leader,			Lisa Potts	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
				Children and Family Services				
12 Feb 2026	Independent Lives at Home Procurement		Yes	Executive			Nigel Harvey-Whitten	Fully exempt Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
12 Feb 2026	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2026-27		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
12 Feb 2026	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
12 Feb 2026	Revenue		Yes	Executive			Elizabeth	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Budget 2026/27						Griffiths	
12 Feb 2026	Quarterly Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open
12 Feb 2026	Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service	To approve West Berkshire Public Health's intention to jointly procure an Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service with Reading Borough Council	Yes	Executive			Jessica Ryall-Spoor	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
12 Feb 2026	Capital Budget 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
12 Feb 2026	Henwick Worthy		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Masterplan							
12 Feb 2026	Response to motion from Councillor Mackinnon		No	Executive			Martyn Sargeant	Open
12 Feb 2026	Contract Award – Older Peoples Block Beds		Yes	Executive			Thomas Bailey	Open
19 Mar 2026	Playing Pitch Strategy		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme					
Item	Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
03 March 2026					
Development of Family Hubs & The Early Help Offer in West Berkshire	Corporate Effectiveness	To explain how Family Hubs and the Early Help Offer are developing in West Berkshire	Dave Wraight	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
Exclusions	Corporate Effectiveness	To present the latest data on permanent exclusions from schools in West Berkshire and the work that is being done with schools and other partners to prevent these and to get excluded pupils back into education.	Dave Wraight	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPS Decision
Impact of SEND Clawback Investment	Corporate Effectiveness	To consider the impact of SEND measures funded through school budget clawback, including senior temporary appointments	Neil Goddard	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
Wraparound Care	Partnership Effectiveness	To provide an update on the availability of wraparound care in West Berkshire.	TBC	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision

Items to be programmed:

- Attainment of Children on Free School Meals
- Smart phones, social media use and online safety for young people in West Berkshire
- Review of Future School Viability in West Berkshire
- Youth Council

Council Strategy Priorities

- Priority Area 1: Services We Are Proud Of
- Priority Area 2: A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
- Priority Area 3: Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
- Priority Area 4: A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire
- Priority Area 5: Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice

Scrutiny Themes

- Policy Effectiveness
- Corporate Effectiveness
- Partnership Effectiveness

Last updated:

26 November 2025

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