**How Britannica supports Looked After Children**At Britannica, we put curiosity and the joy of learning at the heart of everything we do. When a student truly enjoys their educational experiences, their academic potential is unlocked. Ensuring we support the right that every young person is entitled to education, no matter their background, is at the very core of our vision; this is what makes the Looked After sector important to us.

Around 4 years ago, the Head of Surrey Virtual School envisioned our product, Britannica School, as a support tool for staff who ran revision sessions for Looked After Children. He wanted something that was safe for their vulnerable pupils to use without limiting their capabilities or need to explore. From this, they went on to purchase our resource. This is where our journey started.

Years later, through the fantastic advocacy of individuals, we have expanded into a much broader role, encompassing the whole community. Other Virtual Schools saw the endless advantages of Britannica School and expanded its use for Looked After Children through classroom support, engagement for the whole foster family and assisting Personal Education Plans.

The internet can be a dangerous place. Innocent search terms can lead young people to biased views or misinformation, and their views are shaped heavily by the things they see online. This can be incredibly worrying for carers and educators who want to feel assured that young people in their care are using a safe and reliable tool; a tool that they can explore freely and independently.

This is where we come in! All of Britannica’s information is written and edited by subject specialists, guaranteeing the child or young person is receiving the correct information from a trusted source. Unlike a lot of the content one may find online, our site is checked regularly to ensure the content is age-appropriate, up to date and educational. There are also no adverts or links to any unsafe websites, allowing young people to focus purely on their learning.

*“I have always found supporting with homework projects really difficult, as searching on the internet doesn’t guarantee you get the right information, but using Britannica has sorted this out in our house as we know it’s safe, it’s checked and it’s accurate. All my kids love it, including foster children and my birth children.”*

Looking specifically at literacy skills, it is no secret that many children in care may struggle to keep up with their peers if they have encountered disruption in their personal life. We have also supported this challenge through a plethora of literacy tools. For instance, the read-aloud function highlights sentences in yellow to encourage young people to read along as they listen, focusing on a sentence at a time and assisting aural learners if reading is difficult. When they do stumble upon a word that is alien to them, by double-clicking on the word they are be provided with a dictionary definition to enhance their vocabulary and understanding of the text. We also offer a translation tool to support children where English may not be their first language. For those who are more visual and kinaesthetic learners, or reluctant readers, Britannica also offers videos, images, games and interactive tools to engage young people with a learning style that suits their needs, ensuring no child is limited to expanding their knowledge.

*“My 8-year-old came to us with significant gaps in learning as he’d not been in school regularly up to then/ he had massive confidence issues and was really down about school, but Britannica has helped us to support him at home with learning and he loves it as the pictures are great and you can toggle the level of literacy to suit the child. Knowing that it’s totally safe and accurate means I don’t worry about what he might read online.”*

As you can see, we recognise that all children have different needs and this is why we allow our schools to create a customised space for Looked After children; an area where educators can cater learning for their interests or collate schoolwork for extra revision at home. It is a personalised area to increase engagement, support Personal Education Plans and allowing communication between school and home easier.

We strive to cater for each Virtual School, as well as the individual. In the past, we have run competitions and attended events in efforts to promote the usage of the resource, as well as to understand more about the Looked After community and their priorities. For us, it is always a pleasure meeting the different teams involved in the education of Looked After Children and learning new ways to support them. It is so refreshing to see the different communities and how passionate they are about the education and their children. A passion we, too, share and will continue to support in any way we can.

**References**
NFA (2020) ‘*Britannica Digital Learning with the National Fostering Group’.* NFA. Available at: [www.nfa.co.uk/stories](http://www.nfa.co.uk/stories)

**Profiles**

Author
Holly is a Curriculum Specialist at Britannica. After graduating with a First-Class Honours in English, she became a Secondary school English teacher for 4 years in Wales before taking this experience London in 2019. She now works with schools and ministries globally, focusing on how to engage learners in the classroom through technology and more specifically, how Britannica can help with this.

Co-Author

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