

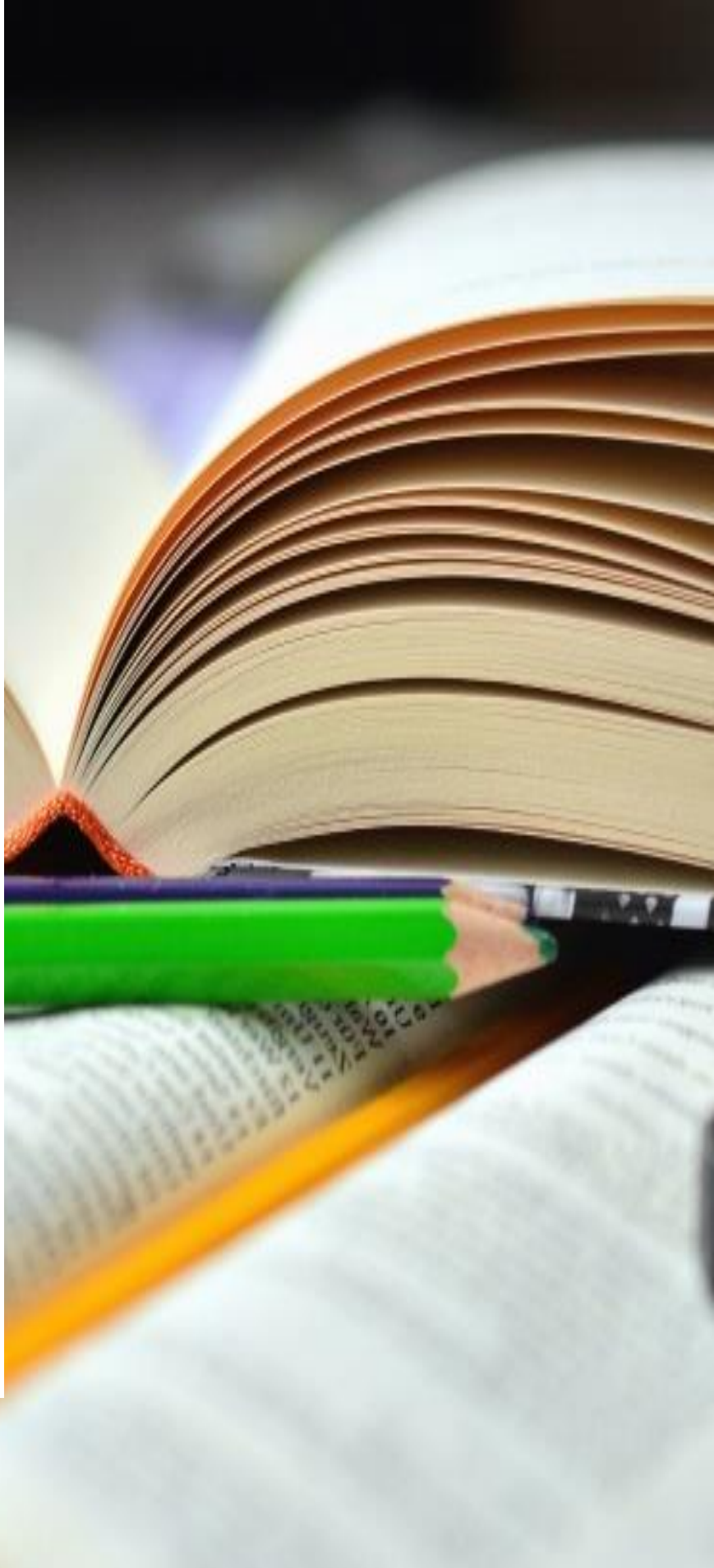
# **Virtual School COVID-19 Update Report to Governors**

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# **Virtual School**

## **COVID-19**

### **Update Report to Governors**

<b>1. Virtual School response.....</b>	<b>P3</b>
<b>2. Safeguarding arrangements.....</b>	<b>P4</b>
<b>3. DT training.....</b>	<b>P6</b>
<b>4. Foster carer support.....</b>	<b>P6</b>
<b>5. Tuition provision.....</b>	<b>P6</b>
<b>6. Distribution of books, study materials and on line learning resources .....</b>	<b>P7</b>
<b>7. Laptop provision.....</b>	<b>P8</b>
<b>8. Attendance.....</b>	<b>P9</b>
<b>9. Appendix.....</b>	<b>P12</b>

## **Virtual School response**

In the light of Covid-19 we wanted to let you know what the Virtual School has been doing to support young people, their carers and schools.

On March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 the Government announced that schools across England would be 'closed' from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until further notice. Schools would however continue to accommodate vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

With the repurposing of schools it has not been practical for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to be created or reviewed. This is due to the difficulties in assessing academic attainment and progress in order to create SMART targets. Many schools contacted the Virtual School noting that carrying out meaningful PEPs was not currently viable and that the added pressure of completing PEPs was adding unnecessary pressure to schools.

Virtual School has responded by suspending all PEPs until further notice. To ensure our students still receive quality education and emotional support throughout these difficult times the Virtual School has worked with schools, social workers, the SEND team and foster carers to ensure each child has an education offer and safety plan.

## **Safeguarding children**

Middlesbrough Local Authority has been working closely with schools to ensure that vulnerable children can, where it is safe to do so, attend a school or college.

The majority of Middlesbrough's educational settings remain open and safe for vulnerable children and young people. The Virtual School has ensured that all Middlesbrough's looked after children, both in and outside of Middlesbrough have the option of attending a school setting and that continued educational support and safeguarding checks are in place where children are deemed to be safer at home.

After the DFE issued guidance on vulnerable children attending school during COVID-19, the local authority then took a decision to undertake safety plans on all vulnerable children. Information was also gathered from all schools regarding the supports they were offering and this information was recorded directly onto the children's electronic records to inform the safety planning process. Safety plans have been completed with a total of 2,700 children and their families. This total changes each day as new referrals come into the service. It was identified that there was an issue with schools receiving copies of the safety plans in a timely way and additional support has been put into place to send these all out to schools securely. In addition we have commissioned bespoke coaching and mentoring from Strengthening Practice for social workers to improve the quality of their safety plans.

The completion of safety plans has been monitored through the children's leadership team on a daily basis, along with performance regarding social work visits to ensure that all children receive the appropriate contact from their social workers at this time. Data is being analysed on a daily basis. Middlesbrough has not relaxed any of the restrictions suggested by government in terms of care planning.

Within the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service, individual "Lead Professionals" including officers from SEN Assessment Team, Alternative Provision team, EYSS, STARS and Community Learning have been allocated to each setting with a child/young person with an EHCP to quality assure risk assessments produced by settings in dialogue with families and the LA. This relates to current delivery of EHCP either in settings or virtual provision out of setting/at

home but does not replace the work being done by social workers on social care safety plans. There is now weekly contact with settings on the provision for each child/young person with an EHCP to monitor whether there are any issues or difficulties which need to be flagged in terms of positive working between services including settings, social care staff and families. More recently, where Lead Professionals were already attached to a setting, LPs have commenced similar process with those settings for LAC without EHCPs. The aim is that, in addition to the safety plans produced by social care staff, there is also a robust risk assessment done, quality assured and monitored for each child/young person concerned.

## **DT training**

The VSH should ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. Since the last meeting of the Virtual School Governing body there has been one DT forum that was well attended covering;

Pupil Premium Plus

SMART targets

Exclusions

Due to COVID 19 we have adapted how we are deliver training. In conjunction with Sheila Mulvenney (See appendix B), we will be delivering a bespoke webinar for all DTs on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

## **Foster Carer Support**

At Middlesbrough Virtual School the voice of the child is at the heart of everything we do, however we also recognise that listening to parents/carers and supporting them is essential to promoting a positive home environment. During recent communication with parents/carers it became apparent that many are feeling isolated and worried - they are not doing enough to support their child's education.

In order to support parents/carers during these unprecedented times we have organised a weekly Educational Support Session which will allow everyone to share their concerns and provide us with the opportunity to support them and, most importantly, share our experience and resources on how to approach home education and how education by stealth can often be the best way forward.

## **Tuition Provision**

To ensure our students have the best support possible with their education the Virtual School has been using an on line education platform called Bramble which is an interactive online classroom allowing for direct teaching to take place. It can be accessed via computer, laptop, iPad or tablet.

Each student has a bespoke programme of education and staff can continue to build relationships, carry out safeguarding checks and help bridge educational gaps.

Virtual School has the capacity to deliver 135 hours direct learning per week.

As of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 we are delivering 75 hours (15 young people) of education to those children who are most vulnerable and those who live in care homes.

Phase two is to support our year 10 cohort by delivering 60 hours of direct education per week (12).

### **Distribution of books, study materials and on line learning resources**

In line with attachment aware trauma informed practice and our legal and moral duty to promote education, the Virtual School has made every effort to ensure children and young people feel remembered and loved, especially during this time of increased isolation. Every child in the care of Middlesbrough Local Authority has received a parcel containing stationery, a reading book and a letter. (See Appendix)

We have also created educational resource packs that can be accessed via the Council website with everything from Early Years to Year 11. There are also resources for foster carers to help them deliver home education.

The Virtual School are running a weekly competition where students are asked to

1. Go to [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) and register their details to create a Bitesize account.
2. Pick a topic, complete the tasks and take the quiz at the end.
3. When they get all the answers right, take a screen shot and email it to Virtual School.

Every Friday names are entered into a prize draw.

## **Laptop Provision**

The Department for Education have stated that they will provide the following for some disadvantaged children and young people who do not currently have access to them from other sources, such as their school:

- digital devices (laptops and tablets)
- internet access

The Local Authority can request digital devices for:

- children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker

Middlesbrough Local Authority have completed the online form detailing the request forecast for the number of laptops and tablets needed for children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker .

We are currently waiting to be contacted by the Department for Education to confirm the number of laptops and tablets we have been allocated.

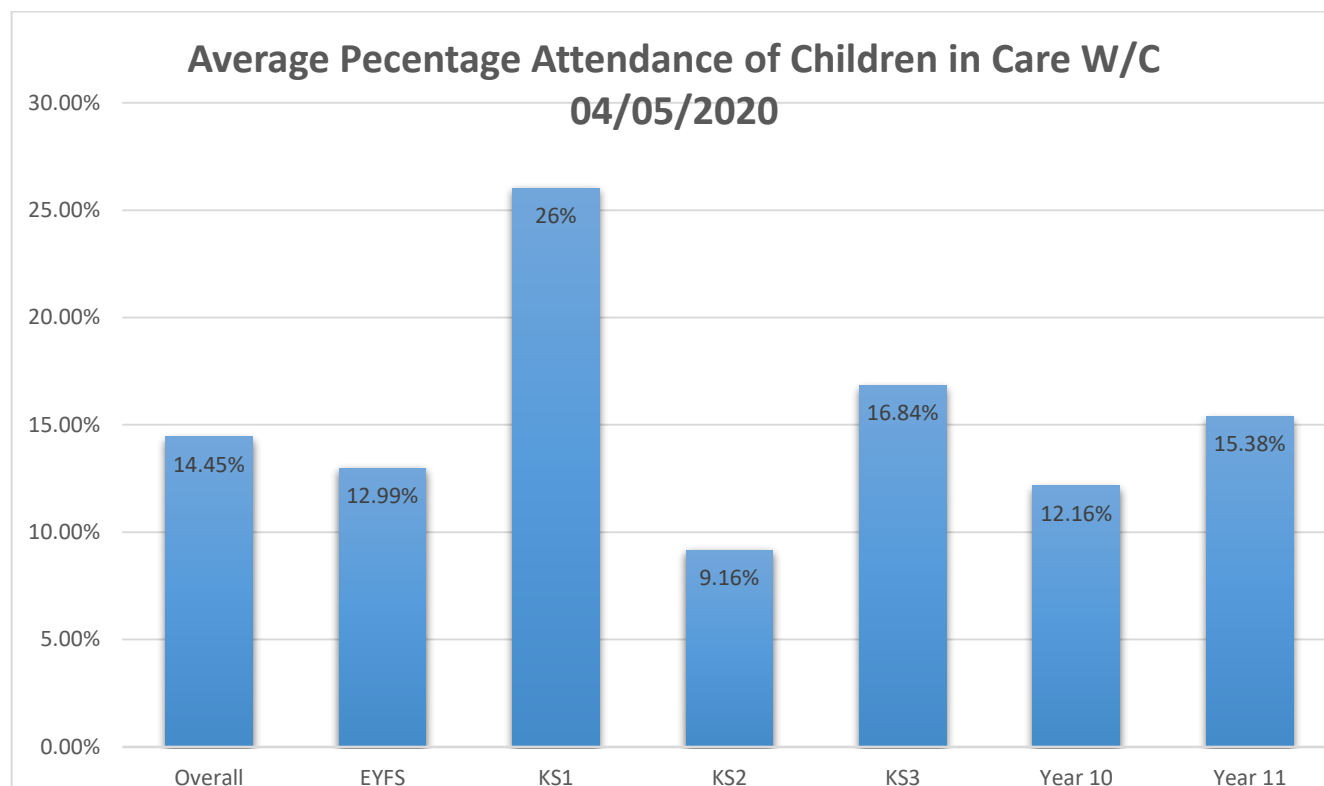
Virtual School and social care colleagues have worked together to identify the level of need for digital provision. Given the high number of children in Middlesbrough with a social worker this was a huge task and the hard work of all involved should be recognised in this forum.



## Attendance

### Data Analysis

The table below shows the average attendance of all Children in Care for the week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (1668 days) and how many days were actually attended (241).



### **Overall attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (1668 days) and how many days were actually attended (241). Resulting in an average attendance of 14.45%
- Out of the 417 students, 68 attended an education establishment (16.3%)
- 4 students attended for 1 day per week
- 7 students attended for 2 days per week
- 5 students attended for 3 days per week
- 52 students attended for 4 days per week

### **Early Years Foundation Stage attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (308 days) and how many days were actually attended (40). Resulting in an average attendance of 12.99%
- Out of the 77 students, 10 attended an education establishment (12.98%)
- All 10 students attended for 4 days per week

### **KS1 Attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (196 days) and how many days were actually attended (51). Resulting in an average attendance of 26.02%
- Out of the 49 students, 13 attended an education establishment (26.53%)
- 12 students attended for 4 days per week
- 1 student attended for 3 days

### **KS2 Attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (480 days) and how many days were actually attended (44). Resulting in an average attendance of 9.16%
- Out of the 120 students, 15 attended an education establishment (12.5%)
- 3 students attended for 1 day per week
- 2 students attended for 2 days per week
- 3 students attended for 3 days per week
- 7 students attended for 4 days per week

### **KS3 Attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (380 days) and how many days were actually attended (64). Resulting in an average attendance of 16.84%
- Out of the 95 students, 18 attended an education establishment (18.95%)
- 1 students attended for 1 day per week
- 2 students attended for 2 days per week
- 1 students attended for 3 days per week
- 14 students attended for 4 days per week

### **Year 10 Attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (148 days) and how many days were actually attended (18). Resulting in an average attendance of 12.16%
- Out of the 37 students, 6 attended an education establishment (16.21%)
- 3 students attended for 2 days per week
- 3 students attended for 4 days per week

### **Year 11 Attendance**

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (156 days) and how many days were actually attended (24). Resulting in an average attendance of 15.38%
- Out of the 39 students, 6 attended an education establishment (15.38%)
- All 6 students attended for 4 days per week

## **Appendix**

### **A.**

Dear

I am writing to you because I wanted you to know that at the Virtual School we are all thinking about you, and hope that if you are not going into school at the moment, you are still able to do some school work to keep your brain active!

Being stuck indoors it can be difficult to think about learning and school work, but it's important to keep at it and do some every day. To help you, I am sending you some stationery and books. These are to help make your learning fun and enjoyable – I hope you have fun with them!

I have also put lots of useful links on the Council website; there's lots of things here for you and your carer or parent to have a look at. Follow this link and see for yourself.

[www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/schools-and-education/covid-19-home-schooling-resources](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/schools-and-education/covid-19-home-schooling-resources)

We are also running a great competition for you to take part in; all you have to enter is:

1. Go to [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) and register your details to create your own Bitesize account.
2. Pick a topic, complete the tasks and take the quiz at the end.
3. If you get any questions wrong, go back over the work and take the quiz again.
4. When you get all the answers right, take a screen shot and email it to me at [contactvirtualschool@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:contactvirtualschool@middlesbrough.gov.uk).

Every Friday I will enter the names of those who have sent me their screen shot into a prize draw. There will be a great prize every week for the winner! Get logged on and good luck! And if you don't win, enter again the next week for another chance at getting your hands on the fab prize! Finally, if you have run out of work to do, or are not sure about what to do next, give me a ring on 01642 201885 and I will help get you back on track.

Don't forget that it won't be long until everyone is back at school as normal. All the Virtual School staff send you their very best regards and we are looking forward to the start of the new term.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Banks

Head of Virtual School

### **B.**



### **Sheila Mulvenney Biography**

During my career in Health, Care and Education I have worked in a wide variety of settings and roles, in the Community, schools, colleges and several local authorities. In addition to working directly with children, young people and families I have in many roles been responsible for developing and delivering training programmes for teachers and school staff, social workers, other social care professionals and parents and carers. The topics have included all aspects of parenting and caring, mental health and resilience, attachment, trauma and child development, as well as behaviour, special educational needs and inclusion. I also deliver regular training for teachers on phonics, and teaching reading, I am CELTA qualified and have taught English as a foreign language to many children and adults.

I have also worked in a number of different local authority Virtual Schools for children in care, as a consultant, deputy head and head. Working with children and young people in care I have worked with many young asylum seekers and migrant children and both managed and delivered EAL and ESOL lessons and programmes.

My book, 'Overcoming Barriers to Learning' was published in 2017 and I have had articles published in the TES and Guardian. I spend most of my time now delivering training to groups of professionals either on a freelance basis or via my own training company.