

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

### VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT

**Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr**

**Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings**

**29 September 2011**

---

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the progress of the Virtual School for Looked after Children.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to accept the report attached as Appendix 1.

#### IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION, WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£75,000)   
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards   
Non Key

#### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent   
Urgent report

If urgent, please give full reasons.

## **BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

5. The attached report (Appendix 1) summarises the key outcomes for Looked After Children in Middlesbrough in the academic year to 31 August 2011 and the priorities for development of the Virtual School for Looked After Children in the year ahead. Consultation with all the schools attended by Looked After Children is needed in order to produce this report.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6. All Looked After Children are supported and their progress monitored by the Virtual School in the same way, regardless of their personal profile.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL**

7. Not applicable.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

8. The Local Authority has an obligation to report on educational outcomes for all those who have been continuously looked after for a period of 12 months as at the 31 March 2011.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

9. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to accept the report attached as Appendix 1, as a summary of progress to date.

## **REASONS**

10. The Corporate Parenting Board stands in the place of a Governing Body for the Virtual School.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
  - A report on the outcomes of the last year and future priorities for the Virtual School, attached as Appendix 1.

**Author: Patricia Miller**  
**Tel No: 201858**

---

*Address: PO Box 501, Vancouver House, Gurney Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 9FU*  
*Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>*

**MIDDLESBROUGH VIRTUAL SCHOOL  
FOR  
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**REPORT TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
(ACTING AS GOVERNING BODY)**

**OUTCOMES 2010/2011**

Outcomes for Looked after Children at the end of Key Stage 4 remain below the school population in general. This summer of the 28 Year 11 students eligible to sit GCSEs 32% attained five A\* to C grades with half of those including English and mathematics.

The actual outcomes compared with 2010 and the whole school population are summarised below.

	5 A* to C with EM	5 A* to C	5 A to G	1 A to G
Middlesbrough LAC 2011	15%	32%	61%	82%
Middlesbrough LAC 2010	21%	29%	57%	79%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2011	41%	78%	93%	98%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2010	44%	73%	92%	98%
LAC Nationally 2010	12%	27%	51%	Not recorded

Outcomes for Middlesbrough Looked After Children remain in line with or in some cases ahead of Looked After Children Nationally based on the figures available for national outcomes.

Those students who as they approached the end of year 11 were seen to be at risk of not gaining any recognised qualifications were offered places on a specially arranged and commissioned 'Options' programme at Middlesbrough College where they attended the College for three weeks with intensive support and 1:1 mentoring to allow them to become familiar with the College environment and try out a range of courses with a view to helping them make an informed decision and a positive transition. Of the five students who took part in this course, all are now enrolled on full time post 16 courses.

The outcomes for younger pupils again show results in line with or ahead of National outcomes – but again the gap between Looked After Children and the population as a whole remains.

**At Key Stage 2 (12 pupils)**

	Level 4+ English	Level 4 + mathematics	Level 4+ both subjects
Middlesbrough LAC 2011	42%	67%	42%
Middlesbrough LAC 2010	67%	56%	54%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2011	76%	73%	67%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2010	79%	79%	75%
LAC Nationally 2010	45%	44%	36%

**At key Stage 1 (13 children)**

	Level 2+ reading	Level 2+ writing	Level 2+ mathematics
Middlesbrough LAC 2011	85%	77%	69%
Middlesbrough LAC 2010	67%	33%	67%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2011	80%	77%	84%
Middlesbrough all pupils 2010	80%	75%	85%
LAC Nationally 2010	58%	51%	62%

Percentage changes can be misleading because of the small number of children and young people in the cohort; however the poor outcome in writing at key stage 1 in 2010 has not been repeated in 2011.

**Attendance and Exclusions**

Attendance of Looked After Children remains slightly better than for the population as a whole at all key stages.

<b>Maintained Primary (including special schools)</b>	
All pupils	LAC
94.2%	96%
<b>Maintained Secondary schools (inc Special schools)</b>	
All pupils	LAC
90.9%	94.2%

In the 2010/2011 academic year, the exclusions of Looked After Children from Primary Schools was less than for the general population, with the figures for LAC and the general population in secondary schools being broadly the same. In both cases the figures are considerably better than National comparisons

<b>Primary School Exclusions Middlesbrough All Pupils</b>	<b>Primary School Exclusions Middlesbrough Looked After Children</b>	<b>Primary School Exclusions Looked After Children Nationally**</b>
6.3%	2.6%	5%
<b>Secondary School Exclusions Middlesbrough All Pupils</b>	<b>Secondary School Exclusions Middlesbrough Looked After Children</b>	<b>Secondary School Exclusions Looked After Children Nationally**</b>
7.1%	7.7%	20%

### The Current Position

At the start of the current academic year there are some 338 Looked After Children on the roll of the Virtual School. The breakdown by gender and key stage is as follows.

	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>EYFS</b>	17	13	30
<b>Key Stage 1</b>	22	30	52
<b>Key Stage 2</b>	35	26	61
<b>Key Stage 3</b>	99	47	146
<b>Key Stage 4</b>	32	17	49
<b>Total</b>	205	133	338

Between them they attend approximately 100 educational establishments of which a substantial proportion are outside of Middlesbrough, although the majority are within the Tees Valley. This naturally makes the role of the Designated Teacher in each school of vital importance in promoting the educational needs of each individual student, and in being the point of contact between the Virtual School and the 'real' schools that children and young people attend.

The number and the identity of the individuals change on a weekly basis and so the roll is constantly being altered and updated. This does sometimes cause a degree of statistical confusion as the LA is required to report on the educational outcomes of those children who have been continuously looked after for a period of 12 months as at the 31 of March in the year in question. However, the monitoring and support provided by the Virtual School begins as soon as a child becomes Looked After and hence the roll of the Virtual School is always much larger than the group whose outcomes are reported.

## **Future Plans**

### **1. The Monitoring of Progress**

During 2010/2011 a system has been developed to promote a straightforward exchange of data to allow the Virtual School to monitor the progress of each individual pupil. This will continue in the year ahead, facilitated by working agreements with Virtual School Heads in the other Tees Valley LAs. This will alert the VS to any issues of underachievement on the part of Middlesbrough's Looked After Children wherever they are placed and inform the appropriate dialogue with the Designated Teachers in their schools.

### **2. The Role of the Designated Teacher**

With the children and young people on the VS roll being spread amongst approximately 100 Educational establishments the Designated Teachers are both an essential support to individuals and a point of contact for the VS. CPD sessions and network meetings will continue for Designated Teachers in Middlesbrough and discussions will take place with other Tees Valley VS Heads as to how best to ensure a consistency of approach where schools in neighbouring Local Authorities have this shared responsibility for the education of all of our Looked After Children.

### **3. The Development of the PEP**

The format of the Personal Education Plan for Looked After Children has been the subject of much discussion at DT network meetings and amongst other groups of colleagues. This document has both to provide essential legal information for those who need access to it and provide an accessible document for children as young as four or five years of age and teenagers on the brink of adult life. It has been generally agreed that 'one-size' most certainly cannot 'fit all' and a format is being produced that is adaptable as the individual child's needs and understanding grows and develops.

### **4. Work with other Agencies**

The Virtual School Head is now a member of both the Family Placement Panel and MALAP and this facilitates discussions with other colleagues who share the responsibility for the well being and educational progress of Looked After Children.

### **5. Raising the profile of the Virtual School**

The capacity of the Virtual School to promote the interests and educational attainment of Looked After Children is limited if its existence and role are not well known and understood. Spreading this awareness will be a key task in this coming year and has begun with a training session for prospective foster carers in September 2011

## **6. Developing the Pool of Expertise**

Looked After Children like all other school pupils have changing support needs as they move through their educational journey. To ensure that they have access to the best support and advice a pilot programme of mentoring by specialists within the Achievement Service is being put in place to provide an individual mentor for each pupil when they are dealing with a particular issue or difficulty. This may be, for example, providing help from a colleague with a thorough knowledge of post 16 education and training opportunities for all students in Year 11 to support them in making a positive transition.

## **7. Supporting Excluded Pupils**

All Middlesbrough schools try hard to avoid excluding Looked After Children. There will be a Local Authority protocol which clearly states that Looked After Children should not be permanently excluded. However, there are times when a fixed term exclusion is the only appropriate option. To support school, individual pupils and their carers in these situations, a system of day 1 referral is being sought through the Complementary Education Service so that an alternative educational opportunity can be provided as soon as a fixed term (or permanent ) exclusion begins rather than the day 6 provision for all students.

## **8. Increasing Post 16 Opportunities**

Following the success of the Options programme at Middlesbrough College this year, plans are in place to extend this to a part time programme over a longer period towards the end of Year 11 for Looked After Children and to offer this to students in Complementary Education who have similar issues and needs. This is part of a generally closer working relationship between the Virtual School and the Complementary Education service to extend the opportunities available to all vulnerable young people.

## **9. Increased Involvement of Children and Young People**

The Children in Care Council has expressed a particular interest in shaping the future of the Virtual School. This report will be shared with them to allow them to add their views and suggestions.

Patricia Miller  
Virtual School Acting Head  
September 2011