



Virtual School Middlesbrough (VSM) Annual Report

September 2016 - September 2017 V2

The contribution of the Virtual School in improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the effectiveness of the Virtual School for the period September 2016 to September 2017 in carrying out its statutory role of supporting Looked after Children to do well at school. It is an opportunity to highlight areas of practice which are good and those which require improvement. The report identifies emerging themes and trends and describes areas of work which should be prioritised during the coming year.

Vision

In Middlesbrough, we want all our looked after children and young people (LACYP) to:

- Attend a wonderful school
- Have fantastic attendance
- Make accelerated progress and attain amazing exam results
- Receive incredible support from their corporate parents
- Have stability in care and education placement
- Receive insightful information, advice and guidance about employment and training or further and higher educational opportunities
- Receive regular and meaningful recognition for their achievements
- Enjoy celebrating success and growing in confidence and self esteem

To achieve this, the Virtual School aims to ensure all LACYP have a high quality and robust Personal Education Plan (PEP) resulting in challenging and meaningful targets, which are aspirational and include details of the support needed to enable the plan's outcomes to be achieved. We aim to track attainment, progress, attendance and exclusion rates, as this data signals areas where early intervention can raise attainment, or remove barriers to progress. The Virtual School will also take every opportunity to advocate on behalf of the child to ensure their experience at school is as positive as it possibly can be.

Review & Evaluation of the 2016-17 VSM Action Plan

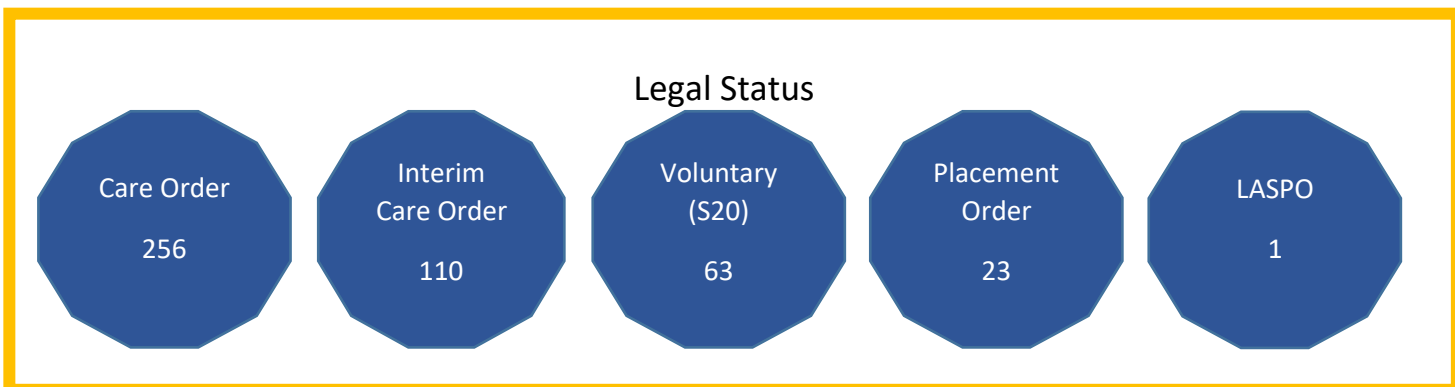
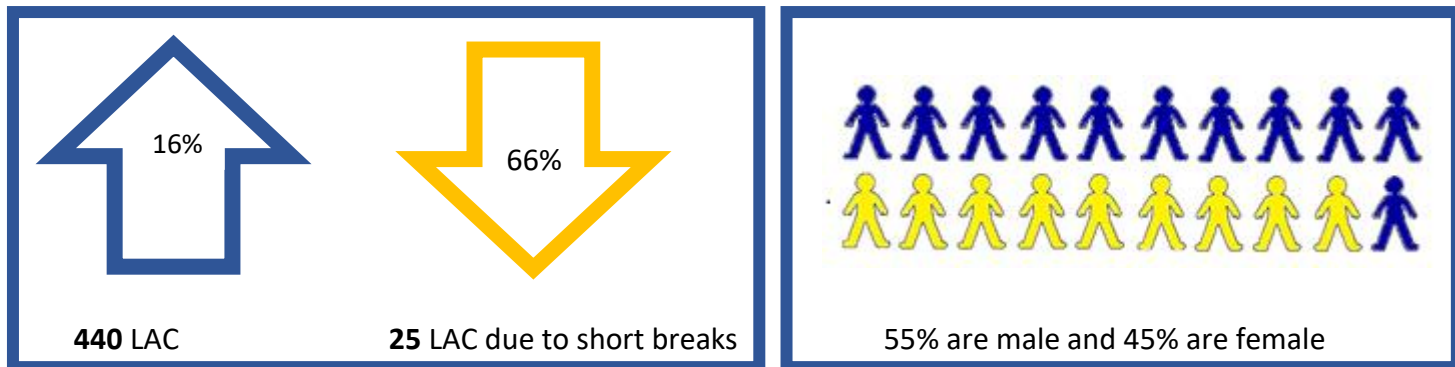
A detailed Action Plan was created in September 2016 to steer developments and help target resources towards addressing the identified areas requiring improvement in the previous cycle. The table below evaluates the degree to which the plan was successful in driving improvement. In some cases, where the improvements are not yet embedded, the action may be carried forward into the 2017-18 Action Plan.

Planned Action 2016-17	Progress & Impact
To facilitate and support the delivery of Personalised Education Plans. Ensure PEP plans are in place, regularly maintained and implemented effectively.	ACHIEVED: 95% of LAC have a current PEP in place, and for those that don't, there are documented reasons and a plan to address the issues. A carefully managed calendar ensures that PEPs are reviewed each school term, and where this is not possible, notes are kept to explain why. VS staff attend all PEP meetings to ensure that all involved understand their role in ensuring the actions detailed in the PEP are delivered. The impact of this work can be seen in the significant improvement in the Progress 8 average score between summer 2016 and summer 2017.
To work towards a change of emphasis, where by designated teachers and social workers lead the PEP system. Virtual School to move to a monitoring role and ensure quality assurance of PEPs relating to impact of Pupil Premium spend.	ACHIEVED IN PART: Some progress here, as SWs and DTs are benefitting from the training provided by VS.
Carry out regular PEP Audits	NOT YET ACHIEVED: There is little evidence of progress against this action up to September 2017. However, in the current action planning cycle an audit system has been introduced.
Improve progress of vulnerable learners at all key stages. In particular identify KS3 & KS4 pupils to target achievement.	ACHIEVED IN PART: Progress 8 figures indicate some progress has been made here.
Provide training, advice and support to Designated teachers for Looked After Children to enable schools to discharge their responsibilities for children in care.	ACHIEVED IN PART: Although a formal system of DT training was not in place, advice and support was provided on a one to one basis as required. Although this was valuable and there is anecdotal evidence it had an impact, it should be offered in addition to, rather than instead of a comprehensive training programme for all DTs.

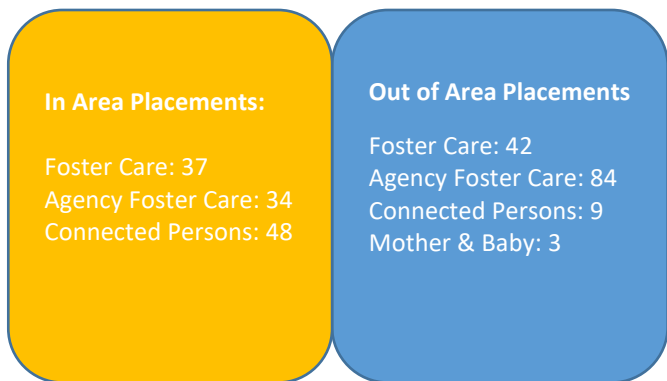
Enhance carer engagement	ACHIEVED: Regular attendance of VS staff at carer activities increased the level of engagement, which contributed to more productive relationships with carers.
Improve the attendance and prevent exclusions of Looked After Children.	ACHIEVED: The rate of exclusion has fallen significantly; in 2015/16 there were 6 permanent exclusions and 75 fixed term exclusions. However in 2016/17 there was only 1 permanent and 12 fixed term exclusions. Similarly, absence from school in 2015/16 was 3.4% but by 2016/17 it had fallen to 3%, well below the national average of 3.9%.
Secure timely admission of LAC pupils	ACHIEVED IN PART: In most cases, LACs were admitted to schools quickly without unreasonable delay. In a minority of cases where there were more complicated issues to resolve, for example SEN or poor mental health, there is evidence of significant delay in securing appropriate educational placements.
Raise school staff and other agencies awareness of Looked After issues	ACHIEVED IN PART: There is anecdotal evidence that some Middlesbrough schools have a good understanding of LAC issues, but this is not consistent across all schools.
Support LAC pupils at KS4 and Post 16 who are currently refusing/excluded or NEET to facilitate return to education and training.	ACHIEVED IN PART: Significant resource was invested in encouraging disengaged KS4 students to return to education, with some limited success.
Closer partnership with Pathways	ACHIEVED IN PART: A member of the VS team has a dual role within the Pathways team. This has helped VS and pathways to share information and highlight post 16 students in need of enhanced support. Impact will be quantifiable in 2017-18.
Develop partnerships with Stronger Families Team	NOT ACHIEVED: There is little evidence of progress or impact against this action.
Children in Care Council and mini ciccs to inform VS actions.	NOT ACHIEVED: There is little evidence of progress or impact against this action.

Looked After Children Population in Middlesbrough

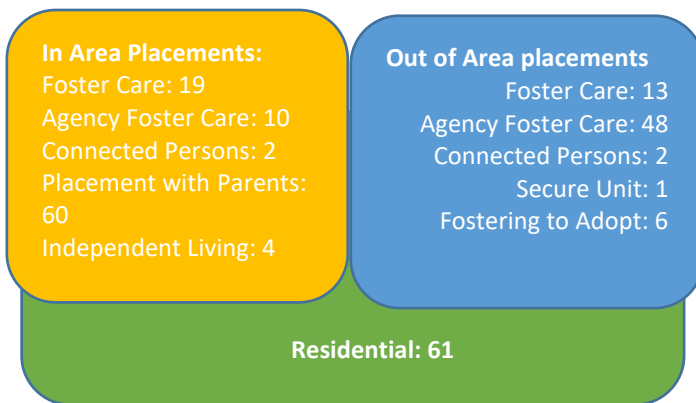
(from IRO Annual Report) January 2018

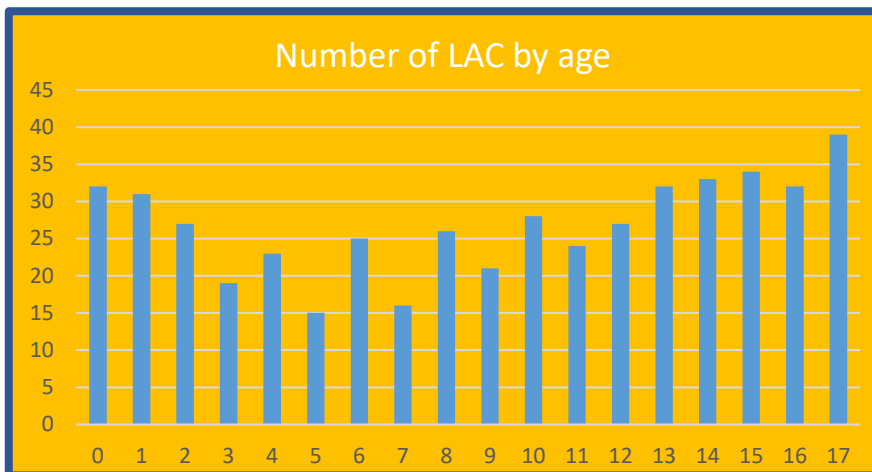


Short Term Care

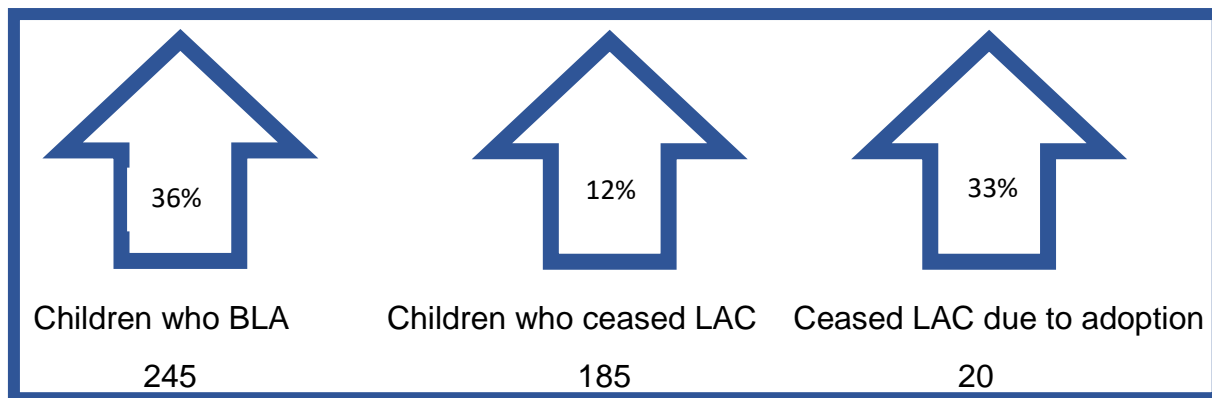


Long Term Care



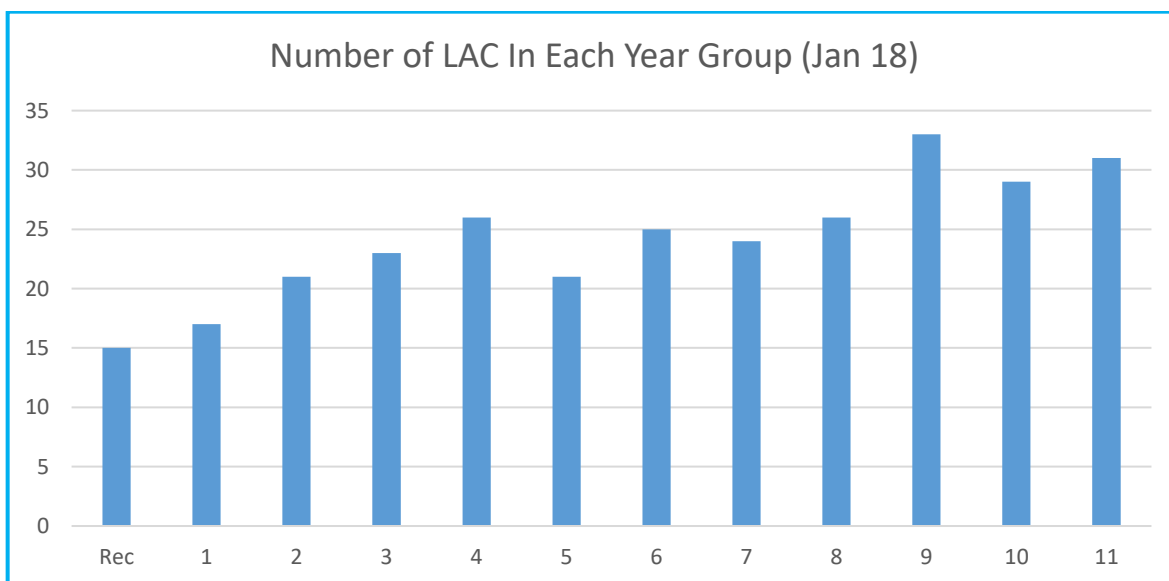


The largest age groups of looked after children in Middlesbrough is 0-3 and 13-17. Of those who are 17+, 31 will cease to be looked after during 2017/18 reporting period



Looked After Children by Year Group January 2018

School NCY	Cases
Rec	15
1	17
2	21
3	23
4	26
5	21
6	25
7	24
8	26
9	33
10	29
11	31



The distribution of school age LAC is reasonably even across the year groups, with a slight expansion in the size of the population in years 9, 10 and 11. This is a crucial time in terms of GCSE preparation, but often is the most challenging time for looked after children and their teachers and carers. It is this group that require the most significant support from the Virtual School.

Training for Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Foster Carers

The Virtual School plays a role in ensuring that professionals have the right knowledge, information and skill to enable them to fulfil their role in contributing to improving the educational outcomes of children in care.

i) Designated Teachers - Attachment Training

Following the successful presentation on attachment by Denis Ley Head Teacher of Holmwood at the MAP Vulnerable Learner event, in June 2016, and Awareness & Trauma Training Course provided by PAC UK, the Virtual School delivered attachment training to targeted schools and initiated a programme of training to Care home staff and carers.

An Attachment Friendly School programme was launched in 2017 by Virtual Schools Tees Valley with partners PAC UK, Kate Cairns Associates and Teesside University learning from the work of Bath University and the Attachment Research Community. The programme will provide the Tees Valley Virtual Schools the knowledge, training and experience to better manage the attachment needs of children in care and associated barriers to learning.

ii) Designated Teacher Forum

A key aim of Middlesbrough Virtual School is to deliver CPD to designated teachers. Work around completion of PEPs and attachment and trauma has been closely aligned to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Teachers and social care staff involved with children in care were invited to learning events following recommendations from Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children Board. Advice, where possible is given to senior leads in schools. Arrangements for a more structured approach to delivering DT training are now in place.

iii) Social Workers

Oxford University Rees Centre Research, “The Educational Progress of Looked After Children”.

The Attendance Team, school senior leaders, designated teachers, Social Care managers and case workers were invited to a seminar titled, “The Educational Progress of Looked After Children”. The seminar was delivered by Dr Nikki Luke who described her research into the educational gap between LAC and their peers, evidencing what variables impacted on looked after children’s progress and attainment.

Dr Luke concluded that young people who have been in longer term care do better than those in need but not in care and better than those who have only been in short term care- so it appears that care may protect them educationally.

Children whose final placement was in foster or kinship care, did better at GCSEs than those in residential care or other types of placement. To some extent this reflected the length of the final placement- the longer the placement, the better the outcomes.

However the data from Middlesbrough is less clear, but does show that placement change has a negative impact on academic outcomes.

iv) Care Home Staff

The Virtual School delivered a training programme, to care home staff. The course provided a deeper understanding of what young people need in order to engage with education, increased staff confidence to work with support strategies and help young people set personal goals for their education.

v) Foster Carers

Foster carer training on education is delivered by the Virtual School and the VSH attended monthly Foster Carer meetings at Easterside Hub Education Surgery. During the academic year two development days were held at Thorntree Community Hub. Carers were also invited to events at Teesside University and a, “who cares, we do” taster day in partnership with the Leaving Care team and Middlesbrough College.

Raising the Aspirations of Looked After Children

In conjunction with Teesside University, in the spring term of 2017 the Virtual School supported the delivery of a major conference targeting social workers, foster carers and professionals who work with LACYP. The 'Annual Raising Aspirations' conference included delegates from all tiers of education, social care and health. Moving forward Virtual School Middlesbrough will continue to strengthen the partnership with Teesside University, co-producing training events for education professionals, social care professionals and carers around raising the aspiration of LACYP.

Virtual School engaged year 10 and 11 pupils in 6 visits to local Universities taking advantage of the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership events "Choices" programme. The programme involved taster sessions, career opportunities, information on funding and the support available. The Student Ambassador programme ensures that LAC are encouraged to aspire to further and higher education by meeting students from similar backgrounds and of a similar age. The events informally explore University life and all the possible routes to higher education.

Virtual School encouraged year 11 pupils and their foster carers/residential care home staff, to attend the, "Who Cares - We Do!" event at Middlesbrough College. This included a tour of the college, course taster sessions and a presentation on the work of dedicated LAC pupil support team.

Higher education workshops were delivered by Teesside University in collaboration with the Virtual School, and every half term taster events for LAC of all school ages were delivered at Teesside University. These included a wide range of activities including Easter egg hunts, crime scene investigation, musical and arts events and using animation and the blue screen.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Progress and Development of Personal Education Plans

Ensuring the high quality of Personal Education Plans is a crucial priority of the work carried out by Virtual School Middlesbrough. In Middlesbrough, a Virtual School PEP Champion will arrange tri-annual Personal Education Plan meetings. When a young person's needs change or there has been a significant event in their life, Virtual School Middlesbrough will convene a PEP review meeting ensuring that the PEP remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of LACYP.

VSM PEP Champions chair the PEP review meeting and complete the PEP document, in conjunction with the young person's Social Worker, Carer, Designated Teacher and where appropriate the young person. VSM PEP Champions ensure that all statutory requirements of the PEP are met, give educational advice and guidance to Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Carers, signpost other sectors and professionals where needed, guarantee that the young person's voice is heard and hold the school accountable for raising aspirations for LACYP.

A key recommendation of the OFSTED report 2015 was to "Sharpen the focus of PEPs on addressing the specific actions that LAC pupils and their teachers need to take to improve progress, as well as on setting out in detail how the school will use the PP+ to improve behaviour, attendance and attainment"

To address this (July 2017), each PEP is now audited by the Virtual School Head and graded into one of three categories; red, amber or green. Green standard is awarded where a PEP has met all statutory requirements, encompasses best practice and clearly evidences high aspirations for LACYP. Amber is awarded to PEPs that meet statutory requirements. Red is awarded to PEPs that do not meet statutory requirements. Where a red grade is awarded the Designated Teacher and the Social Worker are contacted and required to rectify any incomplete sections of the PEP within a given timeframe.

The Virtual School encourages children and young people to attend the PEP meetings. Where this is not appropriate the child or young person's wishes are noted and considered in decision making.

Virtual School has invested in an ePEP platform for the academic year 2017/18 and as such will roll out a training programme for schools and social workers.

The Local Context

Education of Looked After Children in the Transforming Tees Local Authorities

Middlesbrough Virtual School contributed to the production of a report, 'Education of Looked After Children in the Transforming Tees Local Authorities' that provides the aggregated education outcomes for looked after children of statutory school age in the four local authorities that are part of the Transforming Tees project. These are Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees. Information relating to numbers of looked after children in the four local authorities and their care placements gives a context to the work of the Virtual Schools. The report also looks at how the Virtual Schools work with looked after young people and care leavers post 16, good practice and any barriers to improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

The outcome of the report suggested 4 main areas of good practice developed by the Virtual Schools;

1. Audits of personal education plans (PEPs) have been established in three of the local authorities and feedback is given to schools on the quality of the plan. Schools are asked to improve plans where the quality is not good enough. The ePEP which is being introduced in some of the local authorities will enable the Virtual School Head to audit Pupil Premium spend.
2. Virtual Schools involve looked after children in the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership and young people benefit from university visits and activities.
3. All Virtual Schools work very closely with their schools and social care teams and ensure that pro-active support is in place for individual looked after children.
4. The four local authorities are involved in a joint research project together with the other Virtual Schools in the North East region. They are working with University College London on a knowledge exchange programme called, 'Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children' (PALAC). The PALAC programme aims to add to the body of knowledge relating to the education of looked after children and improve their educational outcomes. The North East region project is in its early stages and the Virtual School Heads aim to use the findings in their schools.

The report also identified the 7 main barriers identified by Virtual School Headteachers and schools to looked after children's learning as;

1. The increase in the number of fixed term exclusions, particularly of secondary aged looked after children. Virtual School Heads report that this is due to academies with rigid behaviour regimes. The inflexibility of these regimes does not take into account the complex needs of some looked after children who have experienced significant trauma, neglect and abuse. These children often have repeat exclusions that exacerbate the problem and this can impact on their foster placement. In Middlesbrough fixed terms exclusion have decreased over the last two years.

2. While most schools are supportive of the work of the Virtual Schools, some schools do not attend training and do not have a good understanding of the needs of looked after children. Some schools do not participate in the opportunities for children provided by Virtual Schools.
3. The increase in the numbers of children coming into care during Years 9-11, often with poor attendance and a reluctance to engage. It is difficult to turn this round and secure good education outcomes when a young person becomes looked after at this late stage in their education.
4. Timely access to speech and language therapy for looked after children is an issue as is swift access to mental health services.
5. Post 16 there are a number of young people in supported / independent living who do not cope well, move frequently and thus struggle to remain engaged in EET which compounds their difficulties.
6. Primary schools visited as part of the looked after children project all raised the issue of the growing number of children with mental health issues, including children from reception upwards.
7. Staff in some secondary schools raised the issue of timely access to mental health services and the importance of providing this promptly at the time when the young person was ready to engage.

Pupil Premium

Using the Pupil Premium Plus to Improve Outcomes

The change in government policy and practice which now means that the Pupil Premium of Looked After Children is paid direct to LAs to be distributed according to need at the discretion of the Virtual School Head is providing an opportunity for additional support to key groups.

Pupil Premium Plus is paid by DfE at an annual rate of £1900 per looked after child aged between 4 and 16. No funding is provided for post 16 students. An amount of £302 per annum is paid for Early Years children.

The distribution of the £1,900 funding is broadly as follows:-

- £1,350 (as agreed by SMF) is sent directly to schools to facilitate the support that schools provide for Looked After Children.
- Schools can apply for additional funding where there is a legitimate need that cannot otherwise be met. The need must be detailed in the PEP with appropriate SMART targets associated with the outcome.
- The majority of the remaining PP funding is used to employ staff to provide targeted support in schools in a number of ways e.g.
 - Experienced teachers who attend a school that has recently been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate but is the only school equipped to meet the social and emotional needs of the student.
 - English/Maths/Science teachers on a part time basis to provide 1:1 support in school for children who need it – in terms of organisation these colleagues are being deployed mostly to secondary schools as appropriate including short term intensive, bespoke sessions to reengage challenging pupils.
 - Math/English/Science booster sessions are provided by qualified teachers.
 - PEP Champions are employed to ensure PEPs are of high quality, and that school staff can easily access expert advice and support.

Early Years Pupil Premium

In response to changes brought about by the new statutory guidance 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children' 2014 and the Pupil Premium for children in care in the Early Years, Virtual School appointed an Early Years PEP Champion to improve the learning outcomes of children in care within the Early Years sector. The Early Years PEP Champion is working with providers to accelerate progress and ensure appropriate use of the newly introduced Early Years Pupil Premium Grant (£302.10 per eligible child per year).

Summer 2017 Outcomes

GCSE Outcomes For Middlesbrough Looked After Children (12+ Months)

2017	Total Students	4-9 Eng	4-9 Maths	4-9 E&M (Basics)	5+ 4-9 inc. E&M	P8
All students	30	5	7	5	3	
In area	11	1	1	1	1	
Out area	19	4	6	4	2	
All students		16.7%	23.3%	16.7%	10.0%	-1.24 (nat -1.19)
In area	36.7%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	
Out area	63.3%	21.1%	31.6%	21.1%	10.5%	

2016	Total Students	A-C Eng	A-C Maths	A-C E&M (Basics)	5+ A-C inc. E&M	P8
All students	22	4	4	3	3	
In area	10	2	2	2	2	
Out area	12	2	2	1	1	
All students		18.2%	18.2%	13.6%	13.6%	-1.93 (nat -1.14)
In area	45.5%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	
Out area	54.5%	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	

2015	Total Students	A-C Eng	A-C Maths	A-C E&M (Basics)	5+ A-C inc. E&M
All students	30			7	5
In area	10	2	3	1	1
Out area	20			6	4
All students				23.3%	16.7%
In area	33.3%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Out area	66.7%			30.0%	20.0%

GCSE Analysis

- Group sizes are very low; for example in 2017 only 1 student educated in Middlesbrough achieved 5 passes including English and maths, so statistical significance needs to be considered carefully.
- In 2016 about half the cohort was educated outside of Middlesbrough. This rose to about two thirds in 2017. Whilst there is no single reason for this change, a lack of specialist provision locally was a factor. Broadly, those educated outside of the area did better than those educated in Middlesbrough. However with such small student numbers it would be unfair to conclude Middlesbrough schools are less effective at supporting LAC.
- In 2017 the cohort of 30 students was distributed between 24 different secondary schools. This creates logistical difficulties, in terms of providing appropriate intervention and support where it is needed, but also means that analysing the effectiveness of any individual school is difficult.
- In 2017 only 3 students out of a total of 30 achieved 5 passes including English and maths. Performance against this measure has declined year on year since 2015. Similarly performance in English has declined year on year. Performance in maths was slightly better in 2017. Performance against the Basics measure was marginally better in 2017 than in 2016.
- Progress 8 is the newest measure of student performance and is useful because it compares how each individual performed in their best 8 subjects, compared to all students nationally who had the same starting point (key stage 2 score). Nationally, LAC perform significantly worse than their non LAC peers; in 2016 the national P8 score was -1.14 and in 2017 it was even lower at -1.19. For Middlesbrough LAC a 2016 score of -1.93 was the lowest of both our geographical and statistical neighbours. However by 2017 this improved to -1.24. This was only marginally worse than national and represents a significant improvement for Middlesbrough.

GCSE outcomes in terms of progress and attainment are too low for Middlesbrough's looked after children, however progress has improved markedly since 2016 which suggests that the approach the Virtual School is taking is having a real and significant impact on outcomes.

2016 Key Stage 4 Progress 8 Scores

Geographical Neighbours

	Number of pupils included	Average Progress 8 score
ENGLAND	3770	-1.14
NORTH EAST	260	-1.22
Middlesbrough	20	-1.93
Hartlepool	10	-1.69
Northumberland	20	-1.59
North Tyneside	15	-1.51
Sunderland	30	-1.49
Darlington	10	-1.45
Stockton-on-Tees	15	-1.34
South Tyneside	20	-1.24
Gateshead	30	-1.07
Redcar & Cleveland	15	-1.01
Newcastle	35	-0.93
Durham	35	-0.50

Statistical Neighbours

	Number of pupils included	Average Progress 8 score
STAT. NEIGHBOURS	200	-1.13
Knowsley	15	-1.95
Middlesbrough	20	-1.93
Hartlepool	10	-1.69
Tameside	25	-1.45
South Tyneside	20	-1.24
Salford	35	-0.91
Halton	10	-0.85
Rochdale	30	-0.84
Kingston Upon Hull	30	-0.68
North Lincolnshire	5	0.22

The tables above give details about the relative Progress 8 performance for Middlesbrough's LAC, and those in other local authorities which are geographical or statistical neighbours. Middlesbrough performed relatively poorly compared to both of these groups of local authorities.

The gap between Middlesbrough and the national average is -0.79. This means that on average LAC in Middlesbrough achieved almost a full grade less in each subject than the average LAC nationally.

The gap between Middlesbrough and the average of its statistical neighbours is -0.80. This means that on average LAC in Middlesbrough achieved almost a full grade less in each subject than the average in these authorities.

The gap between Middlesbrough and the average of its geographical neighbours is -0.71. This means that on average LAC in Middlesbrough achieved almost three quarters of a grade less in each subject than the average in these authorities.

It is clear that Middlesbrough LAC are not making sufficient progress at GCSE and this needs to be urgently addressed by the Virtual School in the 2017 – 18 cycle.

[KS2 Results LAC 12 Months +](#)

2017 Reaching the expected standard (%)

	Total Pupils	Reading (test)	Writing (teacher assessment)	Mathematics (test)	Grammar, punctuation and spelling (test)	Reading, writing and mathematics
All	18	10	7	8	11	7
In	11	6	5	6	6	5
Out	7	4	2	2	5	2
All		55.6%	38.9%	44.4%	61.1%	38.9%
In	61.1%	54.5%	45.5%	54.5%	54.5%	45.5%
Out	38.9%	57.1%	28.6%	28.6%	71.4%	28.6%
Nat All 2017		71%	76%	75%	77%	61%
Nat LAC 2016		40.8%	45.9%	41.9%	44.3%	25.7%

2016 Reaching the expected standard (%)

	Total Pupils	Reading (test)	Writing (teacher assessment)	Mathematics (test)	Grammar, punctuation and spelling (test)	Reading, writing and mathematics
All	12	7	4	6	6	3
In	3	3	2	1	2	1
Out	9	4	2	5	4	2
All	100.0%	58.3%	33.3%	50.0%	50.0%	25.0%
In	25.0%	100.0%	66.7%	33.3%	66.7%	33.3%
Out	75.0%	44.4%	22.2%	55.6%	44.4%	22.2%
Nat All 2016		66%	74%	70%	73%	54%
Nat LAC 2016		40.8%	45.9%	41.9%	44.3%	25.7%

- In 2017 about two thirds of year 6 students were educated in Middlesbrough, whereas in 2016 three quarters were educated out of area.
- In 2016 and 2017, against most measures, children educated in Middlesbrough performed better than those educated outside of Middlesbrough.
- In 2016 and 2017, children performed better than (or the same as) the national average for LACs (subject to final publication) in all measures other than writing.
- In 2017, students performed at about the same level as in 2016 in Reading and in Writing. They performed better in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling, and in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined. Using the Reading, Writing and Mathematics Combined measure as a proxy, the gap between LAC and all students nationally narrowed from 29% in 2016 to 22.1% in 2017 which represents a good improvement.

GAPS Analysis – Middlesbrough Compared to National (for all students)

	Reading	Writing	Maths	GPS	Combined
2017 Gap	-15.4	-37.1	-30.6	-15.9	-22.1
2016 Gap	-7.7	-40.7	-20	-23	-29

The 'gaps analysis' table above compares Middlesbrough's LAC to all students nationally. The biggest concern is writing, though the gap has narrowed slightly since 2016. Overall, the position is largely unchanged between 2016 and 2017.

Performance at KS2 is broadly in line with expectation, though writing is an area in need of development.

KS1 Results LAC 12 Months +

2017 Reaching the expected standard or above (%)

	Total Pupils	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science
All	16	8	6	9	11
In	10	6	5	6	6
Out	6	2	1	3	5
All		50.0%	37.5%	56.3%	68.8%
In	62.5%	60.0%	50.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Out	37.5%	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%	83.3%
Nat All 2017		76.0%	68.0%	75.0%	83.0%
Nat LAC 2016		50.2%	38.6%	46.4%	46%

2016 Reaching the expected standard or above (%)

	Total Pupils	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science
All	9	4	3	5	3
In	5	3	2	3	2
Out	4	1	1	2	1
All		44.4%	33.3%	55.6%	55.6%
In	55.6%	60.0%	40.0%	60.0%	40.0%
Out	44.4%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
Nat All 2016		74.0%	65.0%	73.0%	64.5%
Nat LAC 2016		50.2%	38.6%	46.4%	46%

- In 2017 about two thirds of the children, and in 2016 about half the children were educated in Middlesbrough.
- Outcomes in 2017 and 2016 were broadly in line with the national for LAC.
- Those children educated in Middlesbrough performed better than those educated out of area.
- Middlesbrough’s LAC performed better in both 2016 and 2017 than the average for LAC nationally.
- The deficit in writing reported at KS2 is not apparent at KS1.

GAPS Analysis – Middlesbrough Compared to National (for all students)

	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science
2017 Gap	-26	-30.5	-18.7	-14.2
2016 Gap	-29.6	-31.7	-17.4	-8.9

The ‘gaps analysis’ table above compares the performance of Middlesbrough’s LAC to all children nationally. Most of the gaps have narrowed, or remained about the same with the only deterioration being in science.

The performance at KS1 is broadly in line with expectation, being at or slightly better than that for LAC nationally, with some evidence that gaps between LAC and not LAC narrowing slightly.

Attendance

Absence From School LAC

	2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Overall absence	Percentage persistent absentees	Overall absence	Percentage persistent absentees	Overall absence	Percentage absentees	Overall absence	Percentage persistent absentees
ENGLAND	4.4	10.1	3.9	8.9	4.0	9.0	3.9	9.1
NORTH EAST	3.6	7.1	3.2	6.0	3.4	7.3	3.1	6.7
Darlington	3.0	x	4.8	13.2	5.7	15.6	3.7	9.3
Durham	3.6	7.5	2.6	3.5	2.5	3.6	2.7	4.7
Gateshead	3.3	9.0	3.7	7.4	4.2	11.8	2.8	4.8
Hartlepool	2.9	x	2.0	x	1.9	x	2.8	x
Middlesbrough	3.7	6.3	3.2	8.1	3.4	9.2	3.0	9.5
Newcastle	3.1	5.1	3.2	6.3	3.6	10.1	3.0	6.6
North Tyneside	3.5	6.2	2.8	6.2	3.9	7.1	4.4	7.5
Northumberland	5.1	12.7	4.4	7.3	4.7	10.8	3.8	13.5
Redcar & Cleveland	3.0	x	2.5	x	2.4	x	2.7	x
South Tyneside	4.1	7.3	3.7	6.7	4.1	8.3	3.7	7.0
Stockton-on-Tees	2.9	5.3	2.3	x	2.4	3.9	2.4	3.6
Sunderland	4.5	10.4	3.5	8.0	2.8	4.7	3.3	7.0

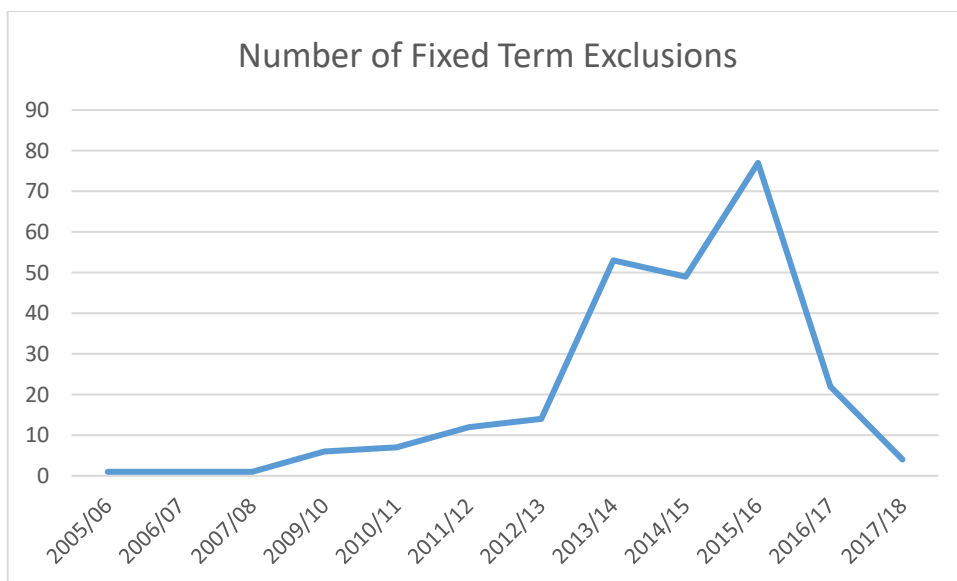
The table above shows that absence from school of Middlesbrough LAC matches the average for the North East at 3%. Absence rates in Middlesbrough have fallen year on year for the last four years. This is as a result of real time monitoring of attendance by the Virtual School and proactive intervention where attendance has been falling.

Persistent absence however is marginally above the national average, and marginally higher in 2017 than in 2016. Responding to persistent absence then is a key area for the Virtual School to address in the 2017-18 cycle.

Exclusion

Fixed Term Exclusions

Year	Number of FT Exclusions	Total Number of Days
2013/14	65	116.5
2014/15	50	81
2015/16	75	154
2016/17	12	18
2017/18	3	3.5



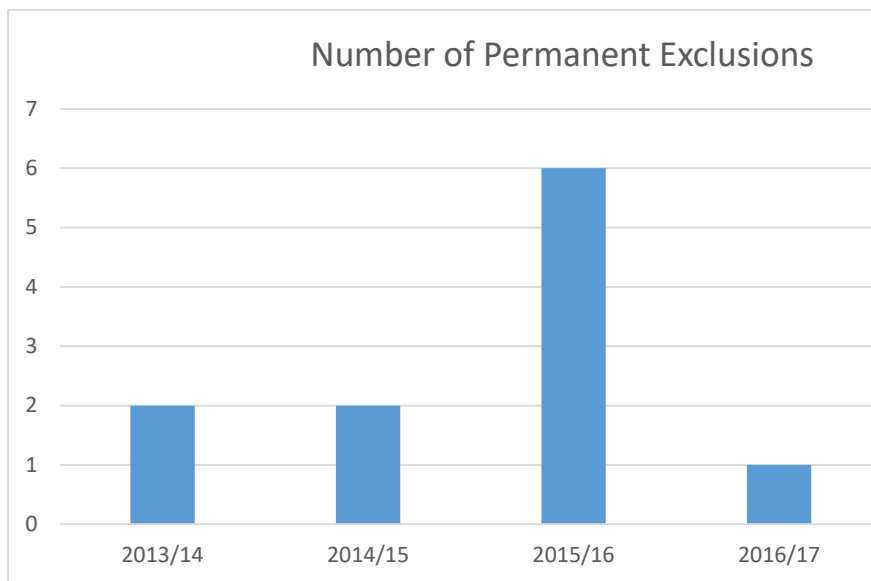
One or More Fixed Term Exclusions

Year	% 1 or more FTE
2013/14	11.4
2014/15	10.5
2015/16	12
2016/17	0.5

The tables above show how the rate of fixed term exclusion fell dramatically between 2016 and 2017. This success came about as a result of closer working between the Virtual School and its partner schools. The Virtual School intervenes whenever a school is considering exclusion, and supports the school’s leadership to seek out and consider alternative approaches to dealing with and correcting LAC’s behaviour. This approach has had a demonstrably positive impact.

Exclusion Cont.

Permanent Exclusion



Number of Permanent Exclusions

Year	Number of P Exclusions
2013/14	2
2014/15	2
2015/16	6
2016/17	1

The tables above show how the rate of permanent exclusion fell dramatically between 2016 and 2017. This success came about as a result of closer working between the Virtual School and its partner schools. The Virtual School intervenes whenever a school is considering permanent exclusion, and supports the school’s leadership to seek out and consider alternative approaches to dealing with and correcting LAC’s behaviour. This approach has had a demonstrably positive impact.

Appendix 1 Case Studies

Case Study Record 1 Virtual School Middlesbrough
Educational Event

Area: Virtual School

Evaluator: TD

Date: June 2018

Case Context

T became a looked after child at the age of 6 due to neglect. She attended four different primary schools and struggled to settle following her early trauma. She was an intelligent, lively child with no SEN. She was initially placed with foster carers but the placement soon broke down and T moved in to a children’s home. T eventually settled into a routine and completed her primary school phase successfully. She transitioned to the Kings Academy at age 11 and made a good start to her secondary education. Unfortunately this initial positive start was not to last and her attendance steadily deteriorated during KS3. By the time she was in year 10 her attendance was 46% and when she was in school there was repeated incidents of low level disruption. Most of T’s poor behaviour stemmed from her immaturity and in our view this was a result of her early trauma and lack of stable parenting. School responded to her poor attendance and behaviour by placing her in internal exclusion and by imposing fixed term exclusions. Unfortunately her behaviour and attendance failed to improve and school began to consider permanent exclusion. At this point T was predicted to achieve U grades at GCSE.

	Evaluation	Next steps
Virtual School intervention.	<p>The VS funded a tutor to provide T with one to one support to try to help her to make up the deficits in her knowledge and understanding that resulted from her poor school attendance. Although some improvement was noted, school felt that permanent exclusion was still the only way forward.</p> <p>The VS offered to take T into the Hub, and educate her there. She remained on Kings role but spent all of year 11 at the VS. Within two months of this move, her attendance at the Hub was 100%, she was in full school uniform every day and maintained excellent punctuality. As her attitude improved so too did her level of aspiration and ambition. When we first started working with her in year 10 she aspired to become a sex worker. By the time her GCSE exams started she wanted to be a forensic psychologist. She eventually achieved C and D grades in her GCSEs.</p>	<p>It is clear that carefully designed bespoke intervention by the VS can make a significant difference to the life chances of young people, and can contribute significantly to avoiding permanent exclusion. The challenge now is to strategically plan how the VS can maximise impact whilst staying within budget. The first part of this process is to agree and secure a sustainable budget share for the VS.</p>

<p>What made the difference?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a key worker who was able to take a pastoral lead and provide the one to one support that T needed. • Taking the time to listen to T and to try to understand the way she perceived the world. • Visiting her in the home so that she was able to make the link between educational participation and feeling happier, confident and more secure. • Using reward systems to praise everything positive that T did or said. • Managing her periods of crisis sensitively. • Taking part in Newcastle University’s ‘Raising Aspirations’ programme. • Setting clear boundaries and expectations and making sure they were consistently applied. • Creating a climate where failure was ok because it was part of the learning process. • Finding out what T’s interests and passions were and using them to engage her in learning. 	<p>Deliver training to schools to empower them to work with young people in a different way, incorporating some of the techniques illustrated here.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>T could very easily have been permanently excluded from school in year 11 and indeed came very close to it. Undoubtedly that final rejection would have signalled the end of her education and the start of her being NEET. However permanent exclusion was avoided and she ultimately embraced learning and made significant progress during year 11.</p>	<p>Permanent exclusion of looked after children can and is avoided, but often at considerable financial cost. A strategic review of Middlesbrough’s approach to alternative education may result in a more sustainable solution.</p>

Case Study Record 2 Virtual School Middlesbrough
Educational Event

Area: Virtual School

Evaluator: TD

Date: June 2018

Case Context

S became LAC when he was 15. He had been ‘home educated’ all of his life and so had never experienced attending school with peers of his own age. He spent most of his time alone in his bedroom and ultimately phoned child line in the hope of getting help. Following this call Social Care became involved resulting in him becoming looked after.

	Evaluation	Next steps
Virtual School intervention.	S came to the Virtual School Hub for initial assessment. It quickly became clear that he lacked the skills to be able to quickly integrate into year 11 in a mainstream school, and had huge gaps in his knowledge and understanding. Following a period of intense support from the VS, S reached a point where he understood what school was, knew how to follow a time table, understood what the various subjects and curriculum areas were about and so transitioned into Acklam Grange School. However S struggled with the social side of school – he found being in such a busy and bustling environment overwhelming. After two months he asked if he could come back to the Hub and finish his education there. This was arranged, but S did not sit any GCSE examinations because he had such massive gaps in his knowledge and understanding.	Although this is a unique case, the essential elements are not unusual – traumatic early life experiences, lack of caring and nurturing support, significant chunks of education missed and huge deficits in understanding and emotional maturity. It is clear that such cases will continue to surface and it is crucial that the VS has adequately trained and experienced staff ready to provide the bespoke support packages that are often needed.

<p>What made the difference?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a key worker who was able to take a pastoral lead and provide the one to one support that S needed. This was crucial due to the difficult and troubling life experience S had endured. • Taking the time to listen to S and to try to understand the way he perceived the world. Again this required particularly skilful intervention because S had no experience of expressing his emotions and found talking to adults extremely difficult and stressful. • Using reward systems to praise everything positive that S did or said. • Taking part in Newcastle University’s ‘Raising Aspirations’ programme. • Setting clear boundaries and expectations and making sure they were consistently applied. Again, as S had never experienced this it required time and patience to achieve successful outcomes. • Creating a climate where failure was ok because it was part of the learning process. 	<p>Ensure that the training of VS staff is good enough to enable them to design and deliver specialist intervention where needed.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Despite the support S has not yet successfully transitioned into post 16 study. He progressed to Prior Pursglove in order to study for his GCSEs but this was not successful, largely because S needed more support than was available. He chose to leave and is now NEET.</p> <p>It is clear that support cannot end at the end of year 11 because some vulnerable learners continue to require VS support beyond the age of 16.</p> <p>The focus from Social Care at this stage is on developing independence, but young people often need significant support with their learning before they are ready to consider developing independent living skills. Some young learners need considerable support</p>	<p>Review the support that is available to post 16 learners and ensure that it is ‘joined up’, appropriate, timely and offers value for money.</p>

	and encouragement to stay in learning – without it they all too easily become NEET.	
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Case Study Record 3 Virtual School Middlesbrough
Educational Event

Area: Virtual School

Evaluator: TD

Date: June 2018

Case Context

K was taken into care at the age of 9 following significant trauma and neglect. His primary school did not identify need, but he suffered from significant attachment issues resulting in the failure of his foster placement when he was in year 8 (attending a Stockton secondary school). He came back to Middlesbrough but was not emotionally able to take up a place at a secondary school.

	Evaluation	Next steps
Virtual School intervention.	<p>When K returned to Middlesbrough he was initially educated by the Virtual School as it was clear that immediately transferring to a new mainstream secondary school would be too much for him to cope with.</p> <p>The Virtual School worked with K, helping him to build self-confidence, learn to self regulate his emotions, improve his hand writing and accept that it was ok to make mistakes.</p> <p>During this period K displayed no challenging behaviour of any kind.</p> <p>After three months K transitioned to Macmillan Academy. The Virtual School provided one to one support for him in lessons but after six weeks the academy felt it was not required and asked for it to be removed. Since then K’s behaviour has become more difficult for the academy to manage and he is at serious risk of permanent exclusion.</p>	<p>Developing and funding appropriate support packages for students moving back in to mainstream provision should be given significant priority by the VS.</p>

<p>What made the difference?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a key worker who was able to take a pastoral lead and provide the one to one support that K needed. The various experiences of rejection K had suffered during his life had compounded and resulted in very low self-esteem and low levels of self-confidence. This impacted on every aspect of his life including school work and learning. Developing a trusting relationship with an adult was a key strategy in helping to overcome these obstacles. • Using reward systems to praise everything positive that K did or said. • Setting clear boundaries and expectations and making sure they were consistently applied. This consistency helped K because it made the world more predictable and less uncertain for him. Anxiety was a key barrier to progress so by reducing it we were able to make rapid progress. • Creating a climate where failure was ok because it was part of the learning process. K's lack of self-confidence made this a difficult concept for him to accept. Failure to achieve a task was regarded by him as a reflection of his failure as a person. We had to model and demonstrate failure and 'learning from mistakes' to show him how to process and manage negative feelings. 	<p>Ensure that the training of VS staff is good enough to enable them to design and deliver specialist intervention where needed.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>This case demonstrates the degree of complexity of need that some young people present with, and shows that with carefully targeted and managed interventions significant progress can be made in a short period of time. It also shows that often the level of support offered by the VS needs to be maintained when the child enters mainstream to prevent rapid failure. Often the level of support needed is more than the mainstream school is able to offer so finding the right balance between school</p>	<p>Plan strategically to enable more comprehensive in class support to be available where needed.</p>

	intervention and VS support is crucial for long term success.	
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Appendix 2

Virtual School Action Plan 2018 – 19

Improvement Plan 2018/19

This table sets out our improvement priorities as informed by our Self-Evaluation dated February 2018

Objective	Actions	RAG	By whom	By when	Intended outcomes	KPIs	Progress	Impact
Improve achievement	<p>Identify the cohort and create support plans for key students in yr. 6 and 11, including interventions and homework support.</p> <p>Amend PEP template so that revision plans for SATs and GCSE are more transparent.</p> <p>Allocate a named member of staff to oversee year 6 transition and maintain a 'transitions map' detailing offers, visits, etc</p>		TD / VB	Nov 18	Staff in schools and within VS have a clear understanding of what each child needs to do to prepare for GCSE or SATs.	<p>All relevant children have a plan in place.</p> <p>Year 11:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. P8 to be -1 2. Basics to be 25%+ 3. 5 GCSE inc M & E to be 20%+ <p>Year 6:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 40%+ RWM 	<p>Cohort identified.</p> <p>PEP template amended.</p>	
	<p>Improve progress and attainment data collection system by using Welfare Call.</p>			TD	Dec 18	Up to date data on progress and attainment for every child to be easily available.	System procured and in place.	Costs and scope are under discussion.

	Progress and attainment tracking system used to highlight areas of concern and action plans used to address.		TD	Sept 18	Every child who is performing at below target grade has a plan in place.	100% of children who require it have a plan in place.	Design of system started.	
	<p>Increase both expectation and support offered to foster carers, through training, direct intervention and producing a 'revision handbook' to support increased attainment.</p> <p>Attend the Foster Carer Forum Monthly meetings</p>		TD	Feb 19	Children receive more focussed support for their education from carers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four training sessions delivered 2. 10 direct interventions delivered 3. Revision handbook supplied to all carers of year 6 and year 11 children. 4. All Foster Carer Forum meetings include a VS representative. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four training events are booked in. 2. Representative attends the monthly Foster Carer meetings 	
	<p>Review primary and secondary school effectiveness re. provision for LAC, in terms of improved outcomes.</p> <p>Present review outcome as a 'score card'.</p> <p>Intervene where appropriate.</p>		TD	Jan 19	Schools are able to deliver improved support for LAC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All secondaries have a score card 2. At least half of primaries have a score card 	System designed and ready for testing in the autumn term.	

Build a strong and stable team	Recruit a team of permanent staff, who are highly trained, focussed and able to drive the educational agenda.		TD	Sept 18	Quality of support offered to schools will increase and outcomes for children will improve.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agency staff expenditure less than 10% of net PP. 2. Commissioning agree that staffing arrangements are in line with expectations. 3. Staffing model accepted by MBC. 4. Staff successfully recruited. 	Job descriptions submitted to HR.	
	Improve expertise of the team via 'supervision' style meetings (to be known as Case Review meetings) – on going over the next 12 months.		TD	May 18	<p>Motivation and commitment of staff will increase.</p> <p>Problems and difficult cases will be resolved more quickly.</p>	All PEP Champs to regularly take part in supervision - at least once per month.	All members of the team have had at least 1 Case Review meeting.	
Ensure budget is secure	Ensure appropriate budgeting and future financial projections are in place, so that consistency and quality of provision can be maintained.		TD	Sept 18	<p>Longer term planning will be possible.</p> <p>Quality of service offered to schools will be better.</p>	Expenditure does not exceed income.	Budget proposal to be presented to DMT on 21 st June.	

<p>Ensure Designated Teachers can access training</p>	<p>Provide training, advice and support to Designated Teachers for Looked After Children via termly network meetings hosted by VSM.</p> <p>Provide bespoke training packages to schools, e.g. Attachment Friendly Schools</p>		<p>TD</p>	<p>Feb 19</p>	<p>DTs to be empowered and confident.</p> <p>DTs will have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Termly network sessions delivered.</p> <p>3+ bespoke training packages delivered.</p> <p>Satisfaction rating of 80%+.</p> <p>Attendance rate 50%+</p>	<p>DT training programme is up and running.</p> <p>Two schools have requested bespoke full staff training.</p>	
<p>Ensure school governors can access training</p>	<p>Package of Governor training to be delivered both at individual school level and through training offered by SGSS.</p>		<p>TD</p>	<p>Feb 19</p>	<p>Governors will have a better understanding of their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Training delivered to 20%+ GBs.</p> <p>Satisfaction rating of 80%+</p>	<p>First presentation delivered to Governors Forum in May.</p>	
<p>Ensure every child has a high quality PEP</p>	<p>Improve the quality and usefulness of PEPs ensuring the expectation of Designated Teacher, class teacher, social worker and carer are clear.</p>		<p>TD</p>	<p>Feb 19</p>	<p>PEPs are used by schools to drive up achievement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of PEPs include SMART targets which are linked to progress. 85% of PEPs are fully completed by SW, VS and school 	<p>Template redesigned.</p>	
	<p>Embed the use of Pupil Premium Provision Maps, including clear and measurable impact as</p>		<p>TD</p>	<p>Feb 19</p>	<p>Pupil Premium funding is spent wisely to support the targets described in the PEP.</p>	<p>100% of PEPs include a Pupil Premium provision map.</p>	<p>Clearer provision map is now an integral component of the template.</p>	

	an integral part of the PEP.							
	Establish and maintain a clear system for the quality assurance of PEPs, with appropriate remedial actions an integral element.		TD	Sept 18	Quality of PEPs will improve.	Quality assurance system (red, amber, green) indicates 75% of PEPs are good or better.	QA process is underway.	
	Implementation of electronic PEPs.		VB	Sept 18	All children will have an electronic PEP in place.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of school age children have an epep. More than 80% of schools say epep has helped them support LAC 	System will be fully live by end of June.	
Support children's progression, especially at year 6 and 11	Provide tailored progression advice to year 10, 11, 12 and 13 LACs to promote successful progression, including a Career Progression Time Line as an integral part of the ePEP.		TD	Feb 19	LACs to have access to accurate information about progression, to enable them to make appropriate decisions about their future education and employment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> All KS4 and 5 LACs to have received progression advice. 75% of year 11 LACs make successful transition to appropriate post 16 setting. 80% of yr 13 LACs (in education) to 	Targeted advice has been provided to year 10 – 13, with a clear focus on year 11. All but 4 year 11 students have a viable destination for year 12.	

						make successful progression to HE, FE, employment or training.		
	<p>Improve the quality of Post 16 PEPs, and ensure they are part of the ongoing quality assurance system.</p> <p>Develop a NEET PEP to support young people who are NEET.</p> <p>Target post 16 students who do not have A-C in English and maths.</p> <p>Explore ePEPs for post 16 students.</p>		JM	Feb 19	<p>Post 16 students to have good quality PEPs in place that are used to drive their educational progress. This potentially could be electronic.</p> <p>For those students who are NEET, a specific NEET PEP will help them to reengage.</p> <p>Strong focus on those who did not achieve A-C in English and maths at GCSE.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post 16 PEPs in place for 75% + of students. 2. At least 60% of post 16 PEPs are good or better. 3. All of those who did not achieve A-C in E&M to have a PEP in place. 	<p>Two training sessions delivered to SWs.</p> <p>NEET PEP template has been designed.</p>	
	<p>Current destinations of all Post 16 LAC to be identified and support those who are currently refusing/excluded or NEET to facilitate return to education</p>		JM	Dec 18	<p>Closer monitoring of what post 16 students are doing.</p> <p>The number of post 16s actively engaged in education,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current destinations of 90%+ of post 16s to be known. 2. NEET figures to fall by 20%. 	<p>95% of destinations are known.</p>	

	and training (see action above re NEET PEP).				employment o training to increase.			
Improve attendance and reduce exclusions	Improve attendance tracking and analysis and use it to intervene in a timely way to improve attendance.		TD	Oct 18	Up to date accurate attendance records to be easily available. Trends in individual attendance responded to quickly.	Attendance to be 96%+	Not yet in place.	
	Reduce FT and perm exclusions through closer liaison with schools and providing emergency and respite provision. Research best practice nationally regarding accommodating fixed term excluded LACs by Virtual Schools. Work closely with Social Care to help reduce school change when placements are changed to maintain stability of education.		TD / EW	Feb 19	Fewer children are given a permanent or fixed term exclusion.	Perm exclusion to be 0. FT exclusion to be less than 20.	Emergency support is in place. Regular meetings with Social Care planned.	

<p>Embrace the new responsibilities for Virtual Schools from Sept 2018</p>	<p>Plan for the introduction of the new responsibilities for Virtual Schools for post LAC children, including securing the additional funding from DfE.</p>		<p>TD</p>	<p>Feb 19</p>	<p>New responsibilities to be fully implemented in accordance with the statutory guidance.</p>	<p>Fully compliant with regulations.</p>	<p>Funding secured. Planning for the new responsibilities is under way.</p>	
<p>Strengthen relationships with SEND, Social Care and Alt Ed,</p>	<p>Establish time table of monthly meeting with HoS SEND and HoS Social Care and HoS Alt Ed to review difficult cases.</p>		<p>TD/VB</p>	<p>Start Sept 18</p>	<p>All leaders to have a clearer understanding of the barriers to learning individual children may face and be better placed to work together to remove them</p>	<p>Meetings to take place monthly with all key staff attending.</p>	<p>Not yet in place.</p>	

