Middlesbrough Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23

MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
MATTER

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Open letter to Middlesbrough We Matter Group and all children in the care of Middlesbrough.

This report describes how Middlesbrough Virtual School works closely with foster carers, social workers and schools to help support your education.

We do this by:

- ensuring we are there to support you, your social worker, carer and teachers whenever educational support is needed

- ensuring that you are placed in Good or Outstanding schools

- ensuring the spending of the Pupil Premium grant supports your learning

- ensuring that you are quickly admitted to new a school or college when needed

- helping you develop the highest aspirations, skills and knowledge to prepare you for your future career and adulthood

What is working well?

- Middlesbrough looked after children continue to achieve improved SATS results in Year 2 and year 6.

- We have provided more training and networking opportunities for your teachers to learn more about how to support you well.

- We have started working with Teesside University, who will invite you to visit from year 5 onwards.

- We continue to work with all North East universities who will work with you from year 7 onwards.

- We have provided more trauma and attachment support in schools than ever before to help teachers to develop further knowledge with our PROCLAIM project.

- We ran our first face to face enrichment including the summer programme supporting over 130 looked after children to access over 50 enrichment opportunities.

- The majority of all out looked after children said they really enjoyed school last year.

What can we improve?

We want all children to make good progress in their learning and to reach their academic potential.

To help achieve this we will:

- continue to invest in reading materials for you to read at home

- continue to use extra tuition to support learning if you need support

- continue to provide training and networking opportunities for your teachers so they can support your learning better

- continue to find creative ways to collect, listen, hear and act on your views

We would love to hear your thoughts on how we can better help you, so please send us a message!

We will write back to you to tell you how we are going to help.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Banks

Virtual School Head Victoria_Banks@Middlesbrough.gov.uk Tel: 01642 201885

The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of children in our care during the academic year 2022/2023. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the key stakeholders, so they are given every opportunity to achieve the best learning outcomes, to explore some of the barriers they continue to face and includes the plans to overcome these. I hope you get from the Annual Report how determined we are to ensure children in our care get the very best experience from their early years providers, schools and Post 16 providers to make sure the best results can be achieved.

The Virtual School is very clear that schools also need to ensure that our most vulnerable learners are given every opportunity to succeed. This is not just about equality of opportunity but furthermore, equality of outcome. The report highlights the additional duties that the Virtual School has in raising the profile and offering advice and guidance of previously looked after children, care leavers and children known to Social Care.

Foreword

I am delighted, to be able to write this introduction to my third annual report taking the lead of a dedicated team of officers who are committed to supporting all those involved in meeting the needs of our children in care. The team's contributions, by way of compiling this report, clearly demonstrate the successes and challenges faced this past year and the Virtual School's continued commitment to ensuring that we all fulfil our responsibilities to the children in our care so that they are given access to the opportunities available to maximise their attainment and achievement.

In March Middlesbrough's Children's Service underwent an ILACs inspection and our high aspirations for our children was recognised, "Virtual school leaders have high aspirations for all children who are looked after to achieve and lead healthy, happy lives. They know the needs of the children and young people well and want them to have the same support as they would have from a parent. Personal education plans (PEPs) are completed jointly by the school, PEP adviser, social worker and carer. They consider all aspects of the child's experience, and targets are captured effectively. The voice of the child is paramount to this."

We continue to champion our children in care with the aim being to narrow the gap between our children and their peers. The start of this new academic year was again characterised by making sure that our children do not have any missed learning opportunities. This remains one of our most significant priorities and we are working hard to improve attendance figures by sharing data, identifying issues and barriers and providing early intervention. Latest DfE figures reveal that nationally, post pandemic rates of attendance are not improving despite huge focus from schools, local authority officers and politicians; the attendance gap continues to grow.

I am confident with strong partnerships we can support our children to access high quality education to support each child and young person to achieve their full potential.

Executive summary

The corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities include having a duty under section 22(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, including eligible children and those placed for adoption, regardless of whether they are placed in or out of authority or the type of placement. This includes the promotion of the child's physical, emotional and mental health and acting on any early signs of health issues.

The local authority ensures robust procedures are in place to monitor educational progress. This includes securing a culture of commitment to promoting the highest possible educational outcomes for children with a social worker. Achieving and implementing the above is monitored by the Virtual School Head (VSH), who is responsible for making sure their local authority promotes the educational achievement of its Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and from September 2021 all children with a social worker.

Over the 2022/23 academic year Middlesbrough Virtual School continued to go above and beyond in supporting our Looked After Children both inside and outside of the educational setting. This support varied broadly to ensure we met the needs of the children in our cohort, ranging from:

•   Providing training and resources to schools and other settings

•   Directly supporting children and young people

•   Organising events and trips to encourage disadvantaged learners to make the most of their education.

The Virtual School works closely with teams and multi-agency partners to improve the life-chances of our Looked after Children. Working closely with the Leaving Care Teams to support young people transitioning from care and providing Attachment Aware training to Middlesbrough Schools. With a constantly changing cohort, as children enter and leave the care system, one year's cohort is often considerably different to the next.

Context of outcomes

Children in care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions and possibly elective home education. For those children coming into care late in their secondary school journey, many have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties which impact upon neurological development. It is well researched and evidenced that the fight, flight or freeze response leading to the child often being hyper-vigilant will negatively affect their ability to focus in a school environment, until they feel safe and secure.

This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning. Children Looked After will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel very different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem, which again can affect confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges.

A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs. Children Looked After also experience changes in fostering arrangements, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling.

This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre (The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Nov 2015).

The Virtual School Head's interim Outcomes Report captures attainment information for all looked after children alongside the qualifying cohort (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as 31st. March 2023 in line with the DfE's reporting methodology). The Virtual School actively supports every child in care regardless of duration in care.

There has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in England this summer, with grading protection in place to recognise the disruption that students have faced. This means that allowances have been made where national performance is weaker than before the pandemic. This has been part of a two-year, two-step plan to return to normal grading arrangements after the pandemic.

Students sitting GCSEs also received support in their exams this summer. In maths, physics, and combined science exams, students were given formulae and equation sheets, so there were fewer things to memorise for the exams. In GCSE modern foreign languages, the exams did not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary.

Grade boundaries typically change each exam series to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the assessments. This means that some grade boundaries are lower than 2019, while others are higher.

The PEP is a dynamic document that is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs and goals of the child.
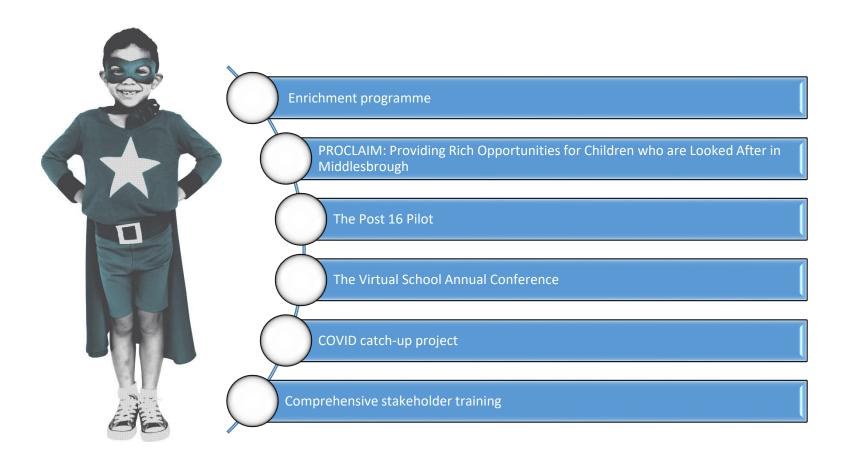
It is an ongoing process that involves regular communication and collaboration between the Designated Teacher (DT), the Social Worker (SW) and other professionals involved in the child's care. The PEP provides a clear framework for identifying the educational needs and goals of each child and for developing a plan to meet those needs and goals.

Summary Outcomes

- In EYFS 40 % achieved GLD. This is a 13% increase from 21/22. Of the cohort 44% had SEND (6% having an EHCP).

- At KS2, 32% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined

- At KS1 18% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined

- At KS4, 16% achieved grade 4 in both English and maths, 29% achieved a grade 4 or above in English and 24% in maths.

Highlights of the Year

Enrichment programme

PROCLAIM: Providing Rich Opportunities for Children who are Looked After in Middlesbrough

The Post 16 Pilot

The Virtual School Annual Conference

COVID catch-up project

Comprehensive stakeholder training

Challenges of the year

- Fluidity in school and social worker workforce
- Increased demand on mental health and wellbeing services
- Increased town wide exclusions
- Covid 19 impact
- Care experienced young people not in Education, Training or Employment

Purpose and role of the Virtual School
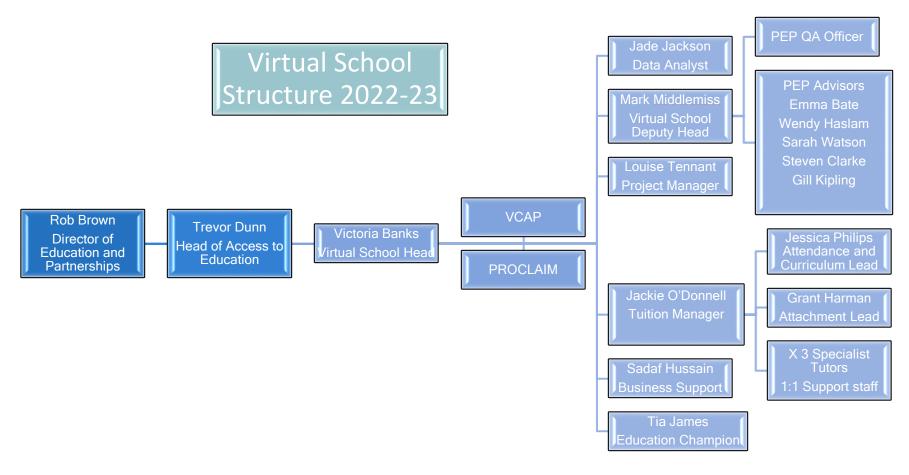
The core purpose of the Virtual School in Middlesbrough is to raise the educational achievement of Children in Care, promote their emotional well-being and improve the life chances of a traditionally vulnerable group of young people. We support our Children in Care both inside and outside of the educational setting. This support varies broadly, ranging from: providing training and resources to schools, social care and other settings, directly supporting children and young people and organising events and trips in order to ensure our disadvantaged learners have the opportunity to make the most of their education.

Virtual School Structure 2022-23

Rob Brown — Director of Education and Partnerships → Trevor Dunn — Head of Access to Education → Victoria Banks — Virtual School Head → VCAP / PROCLAIM

- Jade Jackson — Data Analyst → PEP QA Officer
- Mark Middlemiss — Virtual School Deputy Head → PEP Advisors: Emma Bate, Wendy Haslam, Sarah Watson, Steven Clarke, Gill Kipling
- Louise Tennant — Project Manager
- Jackie O'Donnell — Tuition Manager → Jessica Philips — Attendance and Curriculum Lead; Grant Harman — Attachment Lead; X 3 Specialist Tutors / 1:1 Support staff
- Sadaf Hussain — Business Support
- Tia James — Education Champion

Outside of school the Virtual School works with the wider children & families service, as well as external organisations to provide our Children in Care with the opportunities and experiences we would want for our own children. At the very heart of the Virtual School is the belief that children who enter care do so by no fault of their own, and that those working with them should strive to alleviate the adversity they have experienced – children should be empowered to achieve their goals and ambitions and given preferential treatment from the education settings they attend.

How the Virtual School supports and advocates for children and young people in our care:

➢ Providing direct educational support to children in care at school

➢ Ensuring the educational needs of children in care are well understood through ensuring children have an up-to-date detailed PEP

➢ Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported appropriately

➢ Ensuring that the socio-emotional, mental and physical health needs of children in care are understood and supported

➢ Providing training to schools to enable them to better support the varying needs of our Children in Care across the full spectrum of education

➢ Monitoring the attendance, engagement and attainment of Children in Care in the educational environment and provide support where needed

➢ Supporting children attending out of area schools to ensure that they are receiving a level of education that we would expect for our own children

➢ Working with designated teachers and social workers to support admissions to schools and transitions from one school to another

➢ Supporting children in receipt of part-time provision into full-time provision by supporting the young people's underlying needs

➢ Working with education settings to reduce detentions, isolations and suspensions and prevent permanent exclusions from school

➢ Running projects and initiatives to give children in our care opportunities to develop themselves both personally and academically

➢ Raising the aspirations and encouraging ambition for children in our care

➢ Facilitating meetings to connect education, health and social care professionals to promote multi-agency support for children

Virtual School extended duties

Following the announcement in July 2021, the role of Virtual Schools within local authorities will be further extended from September 2021. Local authorities received funding to resource Virtual School Heads to work with schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.

The key aims of the duties are to:

➢ make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.

➢ promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.

➢ level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Key activities that will be critical to the success of the Virtual School Head role include;

➢ enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together.

➢ identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress.

➢ offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions

Since September 2021 Middlesbrough has made good progress in meeting the aims of the extended duties. There has been a keen focus on attendance and awareness raising of children with a social worker.

Vulnerable children attendance project (VCAP)

It is widely recognised that education is a protective factor for many vulnerable children. If children are in school and engaged in education, they are not exposed to other risk factors.

It is therefore important that the focus should be on preventative early interventions of poor school attendance and the use of reduced timetables is kept to a minimum and are only used as an exceptional measure.

Middlesbrough is committed to every child's right to enjoy a full-time education and makes clear the requirement where there is poor school attendance. VCAP ensures that high-quality data identifies children with a social worker who have poor attendance, and incorporates sector lead quantitative intelligence to inform multi-agency responses to improve school attendance.

VCAP aims to;

- raise attendance of Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan pupils

- identify children with a Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan with poor attendance

- ensure that no children with a Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan is excluded illegally through the imposition by a reduced timetable

- secure a more consistent approach that supports good school attendance and restricts the use of a reduced timetable for an extended period, as this can impair a pupil's progress and attainment

- ensure that a child's unmet needs are identified and addressed so that they may access their entitlement to full-time education.

VCAP model

Data informed
- Daily live attendance data collected from schools
- Live access to attendance data dashboard
- Access to analytics dashboards

Local intelligence
- School level information on individual children of concern
- School level information on systemic barriers to good school attendance

Multi Agency working
- Weekly multi-agency attendance and safety planning meeting
- Review of children with low attendance
- Next steps agreed

Action
- Decision making tool triggered to ensure safe gaurding risks are reviewed and mitigated
- Family-centred education meeting arranged
- Attendance support plan created and reviewed
- Impact assessed in weekly attendance and education meetings

The PROCLAIM: Providing Rich Opportunities for Children who are Looked After in Middlesbrough

Children in care and those with a social worker are disproportionately likely to have undergone traumatic experiences and/or to have had difficulty building positive relationships with adults. Evidence shows adverse experiences can negatively impact on their educational pathways and outcomes (Luke & O'Higgins, 2018). This project is developed to support school-wide practice designed to ameliorate these circumstances and support positive life outcomes.

There has been a growth in the use of attachment aware and trauma-informed (AATI) practice in schools. There is no specific formula for AATI schools, but by adopting policies and practices that emphasise emotional regulation, trust and positive relationships, drawing on academic research from educational psychology and neuroscience schools can become AATI in a way that fits with the wider school ethos and needs. Growing evidence suggests that AATI schools increase engagement, reduce the use of sanctions and have stronger learning outcomes.

PROCLAIM is a three year school programme designed to embed trauma-informed practice via a school-wide approach to increase skillsets and capacity of staff to support pupils. It involves the equivalent of a full day of training for all staff in the principles of the ARC (Attachment, Regulation, Competency). PROCLAIM aims to support the continuing professional develop of staff while also highlighting the importance on supporting staff well-being.

PROCLAIM approach requires the commitment of the senior leadership and the wider staff body to adopt a trauma-informed approach, and ensure a consistent and sustainable implementation of trauma-informed practice.

PROCLAIM requires a meaningful investment of resources; primarily time and training opportunities to support our schools through their individual journeys. Having a named person responsible for each school will develop sustained and creative relationships. The PROCLAIM team and school staff can then build positive trusting relationships to support effective systemic change in schools. Staff must feel able to discuss challenges and the strengths they wish to build upon, while the PROCLAIM team will be able to offer targeted support as they understand the reality faced by schools.

Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all Middlesbrough education settings are Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed in their practice, for the benefit of their whole learning communities, by 2025.

Mission

Our mission is to have a universal language of attachment and trauma across Middlesbrough, underpinned by training, supervision, support and challenge which will drive excellent outcomes for all children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
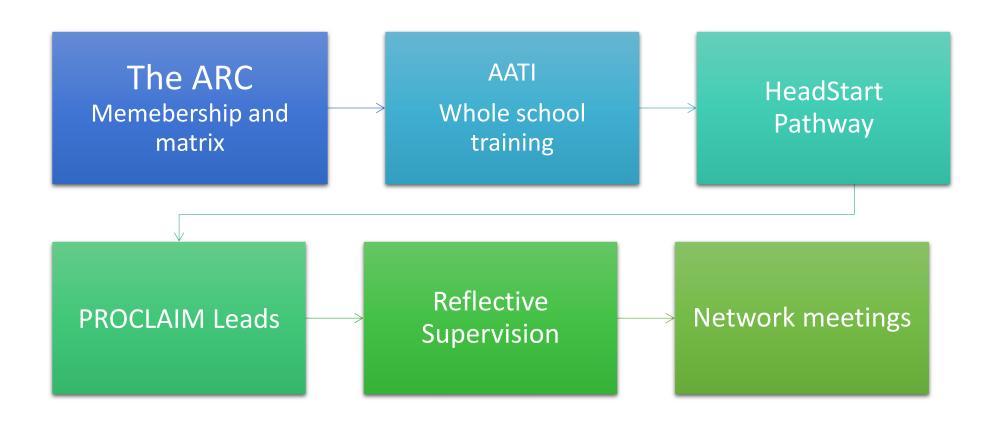
Purpose

Our purpose is to address the needs of children and young people in Middlesbrough. As professionals working in the fifth most deprived Local Authority area in England, with increasing levels of deprivation, we are acutely aware of the vulnerabilities experienced by many of our children, young people, families and communities. In education, we have witnessed further significant increases in children and young people requiring alternative provision, being referred for Education, Health and Care needs assessments, being persistently absent and being subject to the risk of permanent exclusion from our education settings.

The data, coupled with increases in children and young people requiring social care intervention, support from mental health services and the lasting impact of the global pandemic, highlights an ever growing need to provide environments that are rich in positive and nurturing relationships and one where our children and young people can achieve their potential, 'grow and prosper' (SEND strategy 2020-2024).

PROCLAIM: **6 Key Elements**

| The ARC
Memebership and matrix | AATI
Whole school training | HeadStart
Pathway |

| PROCLAIM Leads | Reflective Supervision | Network meetings |

Collaborative Working

Middlesbrough Virtual School is committed to working in partnership with council services and external agencies, as well as our young people and their families. We believe in the principles of co-production and striving to operate within the co-production framework placing the voice of the child is at the centre of all we do. We regularly work with partner services and agencies across the Local Authority and wider areas to support and challenge schools to improve outcomes for our children and young people in care. This might be initiated through the PEP process or through direct contact with carers, Social Workers, Designated Teachers, Future for Families Hub, the SEN Team or the Admissions Team. The Virtual School team routinely attend key meetings such as multi-agency resource panels and colleagues' team meetings. The virtual school is represented on fostering panels, gaining a greater understanding of foster carers' training needs, and have been able to ensure that educational needs featured strongly in placement planning. During 2022-23 the Virtual School regularly attended and contributed to multi-agency, corporate, regional and national meetings including:

➢ A range of Social Care meetings including; Placements Panel, NEET Strategy Group, Risk Management Group, National Virtual Head meetings and joint working and training with colleagues in attendance and safety planning meetings

➢ A range of meeting with the SEND and Inclusion and admissions teams to support children who have the most complex needs.

"I just wanted to thank you for all the support both you and your colleagues have offered us as a virtual school. …Middlesbrough is always the most professional, supportive and positive experience."

"I'm so grateful for everything you have done … over the last couple of years. You do a brilliant job and your good at it … you say something if you think something is wrong or not working"

"Having a dedicated PEP adviser for each child within the virtual school enables a personal knowledge and understanding of the children which is valued. It also offers both support and professional challenge when needed. This is not a common model within other local virtual schools but is the most effective from a school perspective and really sets you apart."

School work force
national context

The DfE's latest workforce data has shown that 39,930 teachers left the teaching profession in the 2021/2022 academic year for reasons other than retirement, which amounts to around 8.8 percent of teachers in the sector – this has increased from only 7,800 in the 2020/2021 academic year. The rate of teachers leaving due to retirement continued to decrease. The number of headteachers leaving for reasons other than retirement is also the highest since records began, with 1,694 leaving in 2021/2022 – this is up from 1,151 the year before and makes the third time since current records began that over 1,000 headteachers have quit the profession.

Also, 12.8 percent of early career teachers are leaving a year after qualifying and 19.9 percent are leaving two years after qualifying, compared to 12.5 percent and 17.3 percent respectively the year before. National secondary school vacancies are up by 12 percent this year, following a 28 percent rise between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, according to new survey data from Teacher Tapp and School Dash. Furthermore, 13 percent of secondary teachers responding to the survey reported unfilled vacancies in their school and 80 percent reported a decrease in applications compared to normal.

England		Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence	9.3
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	3,221,640
North East	North East	Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence	10.1
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	140,424
	Middlesbrough	Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence	11.2
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	11,934

Local context

In Middlesbrough the school workforce census notes good stability in senior leadership teams with only 3 teacher vacancies for all leadership posts within all Middlesbrough schools in 2021/22. Middlesbrough also continued to benefit from a lower pupil to teacher ratio compared to the rest of North East schools. However, it must be noted that the role of Designated Teacher for looked after children (DT-CLA) was significantly fluid throughout the academic year as in total, 43 schools have had at least one DT change. One school had 5 different DT's within the school year.

	No. of Schools with DT Changes (Mid'brough and beyond)	% of Schools with a Changes of DT
Primary Schools	14	32.6%
Secondary Schools	16	37.2%
Special Schools	13	30.2%

The role of the Designated Teacher

The role DT-CLA is demanding and one that when done well, will have the most significant impact of the outcomes of looked after children. The most effective Designated Teachers have a vital role in promoting the educational achievement of every Looked After Child and care experienced child on the school's roll. Schools and other settings must have a Designated Teacher, who is ideally a member of the senior leadership team with appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for championing the educational needs of looked after children and care experienced children in their school and, in the case of looked after children, play a key role in ensuring they have good quality PEPs.

It is imperative that Designated Teacher have training opportunities and sufficient time away from timetable commitments to fulfil their roll. This includes attending the Virtual Schools' Designated Teacher Training, which occurs half termly. The Designated Teacher should be the central point of contact regarding Looked After and Previously Looked After Children within the school. The Designated Teachers should also help raise awareness in the parents of Previously Looked After Children of the importance of making the school aware of their status so that they can offer the enhanced support they are entitled to.

The role of the Designated Teacher includes:

- ✓ Acting as an advocate for Looked After Children

- ✓ Taking the lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the difficulties affecting Looked After Children and how positive systems of support can help to overcome them.

- ✓ Promoting a culture of high expectation amongst all staff in the school and being a source of advice for staff.

- ✓ Making sure every young person has a voice in setting learning targets and ensuring their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised

- ✓ Developing and monitoring systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals and the Virtual School

- ✓ Supporting carers and communicating regularly with them

- ✓ Monitoring the educational progress, attainment and attendance of all Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

- ✓ Leading on the development and implementation of each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and intervening if there is evidence of individual under-achievement or absence from school

- ✓ Liaising with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register, ensuring all Looked After Children in school are safeguarded

- ✓ Making sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home

- ✓ Feeding back to the governors at least once a year

- ✓ Encouraging a whole school culture by making sure that all staff:

  - o Have high expectations and set targets to accelerate educational progress

  - o Are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation) from birth families (attachment and trauma awareness) and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their Adverse Childhood Experiences, and how this might affect the child's emotions and therefore their behaviour. (For more information see our Attachment Aware Schools section).

- ✓ The school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children should be aware of the Pupil Premium Plus+ budget that the school receives and be able to demonstrate how effectively it has been utilized for each child. A summary, without the ability to identify individuals, will be visible on the school's website.

Increased demand on mental health and wellbeing services

Childhood and adolescence are critical stages of life for mental health. This is a time when rapid growth and development take place in the brain. Children and adolescents acquire cognitive and social-emotional skills that shape their future mental health and are important for assuming adult roles in society.
The quality of the environment where children and adolescents grow up shapes their well-being and development. Early negative experiences in homes, schools, or digital spaces, such as exposure to violence, the mental illness of a parent or other caregiver, bullying and poverty increase the risk of mental illness. The consequences of not addressing mental health and psychosocial development for children and adolescents extend to adulthood and limit opportunities for leading fulfilling lives.

Education is the most important modifiable social determinant of health. Research evidence shows that education and health are closely linked throughout the life course. Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically and levels of educational attainment in childhood are positively correlated with adult health behaviours, illness, life expectancy, employment and wealth. School is a key setting for forming or changing health behaviours.

The most recent data estimates for Children in Care show 46% have a diagnosable mental health disorder. In addition, all Looked After Children are likely to have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that are likely to require emotional support.

Children's wellbeing is influenced by a range of factors and includes their subjective feelings as well as social, physical and psychological aspects of their lives. National surveys show that prevalence rates for mental disorders are increasing. In 2017, one in nine children aged 5 to 16 years were identified as having a probable mental disorder and this had increased to one in six in 2020. The increase was evident in boys and girls.

Children in the North are more likely to live in poverty than those in the rest of England – and increasingly so. Poverty is the lead driver of inequalities between children in the North and their counterparts in the rest of the country, leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes, educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic productivity. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this situation worse. Although the full impact is not yet known, modelling suggests that, without intervention, the outlook is bleak. To address the North-South productivity gap we must tackle the stark inequalities.

Successfully attaining GCSEs is strongly associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among young people. A UK study published by the Department for Education (DfE) found that pupil wellbeing predicted their later academic progression and engagement in school. For example, pupils with better emotional wellbeing at age seven had a value-added key stage 2 score 2.46 points higher (equivalent to more than one term's progress) than pupils with poorer emotional wellbeing. It was also found that pupils with better attention skills also make more progress across the four key stages. For example, pupils with no attention issues at age 13 had a total value-added GCSE score that was equivalent to more than one extra GCSE. (63.38 points higher). A systematic review of coordinated school health programmes (that promote health through explicit teaching in the curriculum and broader work to promote a healthier school environment) suggests positive effects on attainment. There is extensive research to demonstrate that risk factors in children and young people's lives can be mitigated, either wholly or in part, by the introduction of protective factors that improve resilience. Risk is cumulative; the greater the number of adverse experiences and level of disadvantage experienced the more protective factors are required. Education settings play an essential role in promoting resilience, particularly for those pupils who have less supportive and secure home environments. Schools should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems. All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes (DfE, Keeping Safe in Education Statutory Education).

South Tees had higher rates of SEMH with 4% in Redcar & Cleveland and 3.7% in Middlesbrough compared to 3.4% in England. Rates have increased both locally and nationally over recent years with the highest rates seen in 2022/23. The rates locally equate to 946 out of a total 25,858 pupils in Middlesbrough and 859 out of a total 21,330 pupils in Redcar & Cleveland in 2022/23. Evidence shows that children and young people from homes experiencing socio-economic disadvantage are more likely to experience emotional and mental ill-health. Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11) if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care. Middlesbrough has a much larger proportion of pupils in key stage 4 in 2022/23 who were classified as disadvantaged at 44.7% compared to England at 26.2%. Redcar & Cleveland's figure was slightly higher than England at 28.9%.

Nationally there is a greater proportion of boys who have SEMH compared to girls with 68.5% compared to 31.5%. The split is much greater for SEMH pupils compared to all SEN pupils. Locally there is a much greater proportion of boys who have SEMH compared to girls with 73.2% compared to 26.8%.

Wellbeing can be seen as a measure of positive mental health and a protective factor for young people, therefore Middlesbrough Local Authority has an established framework of quality assured providers who are able to offer a range of therapeutic services to children, young people and their families. All service areas refer directly to these services, with 258 looked after children in July 2023 accessing CAMHS or a commissioned therapeutic service to support with their emotional or mental health needs.

Across South Tees the iTHRIVE approach and framework is used to map and describe the children and young people's mental health system. The THRIVE Framework for system change (Wolpert et al, 2019) is an integrated, person centred and needs led approach to delivering mental health services for children, young people and their families.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust (TEWV) developed the single point of contact (SPOC). Children, young people, their families and schools have easy, streamlined access to the 'system' when they need help and receive the most appropriate support from the most appropriate service, based on their needs by referral into the SPOC. The aim is to have easy, streamlined access to services and reduce the burden on navigating a complex and complicated system. The SPOC comprises a team of TEWV, VCS providers and local authority representatives. This team aims to have a meaningful conversation with anyone who submits a referral in order to triage, assess where appropriate and discuss within the partnership the most appropriate service to support our young people.

All education settings across South Tees have access to whole school Getting Help mental health support. The Getting Help offer is a combination of service delivery by a strong local authority, voluntary and health sector partnership comprising: • Inside Out (MHST) • Getting Help VCS Collaborative • South Tees Public Health HeadStart • Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust.

Public Health South Tees HeadStart Service delivers a resilience curriculum across educational settings. An element of this is an accredited educational pathway called HeadStarters. HeadStarters is an incremental pathway that upskills pupils and students to become mental health champions within their setting, provide peer support and education, and harnesses the 'voice of a child' to design and deliver services. There are currently in excess of 2,500 HeadStarters from primary, secondary, special and post-16 settings across South Tees who have undertaken the pathway. The HeadStart service further provides primary to secondary transition support to all year 6 and 7 pupils in all schools across South Tees and a bespoke boys intervention.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education, particularly the most disadvantaged children. The term cultural capital is not new. It is a complex theory that comes originally from the field of sociology, which involves the study of society, including relationships, social interactions and culture. It is important to recognise that everyone has cultural capital – that is – knowledge, skills and behaviours, and that these accumulate over time through many different experiences and opportunities. Cultural capital is understood to contribute to 'getting on in life' or 'social status', i.e. being able to perform well in school, knowing how to talk in different social groups or societies, accessing higher education and being successful in work or a career. Children's experiences will be broadened through a wide range of opportunities.
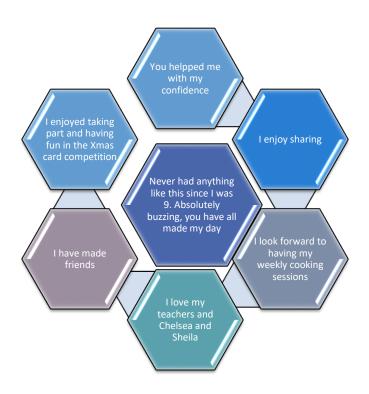
Encouraging and modelling language and vocabulary during play will help to build confidence and fluency, pretend and dramatic play which facilitates high-quality interactions will enable children to develop their language and ideas, to think critically, problem-solve and reflect ('sustained, shared thinking'). As well as creating opportunities to give positive comments that might be made about a young person. Children benefit from 'in-depth' learning experiences, i.e. time to become deeply involved and immersed in their activities, rather than just 'skimming the surface'. Short trips, visits or outings, e.g. to a nearby shop, park or city farm, help to deepen and enrich learning.

It is imperative that we acknowledge the challenges that children and young people growing up in care can face around socialisation, isolation, finances, stability, education, employment and training (EET) and their physical health and mental well-being. It imperative that there is a deep understanding how enrichment activities can increase cultural capital and can help to mitigate these challenges to enable children and young people who are looked after in whatever type of placement access a range of fun opportunities that support their ambitions, aspirations and personal development.

Virtual School Enrichment

The Virtua School has supported over 130 looked after children to access over 50 Enrichment opportunities.

Our young people told us…

You helped me with my confidence

I enjoy sharing

I enjoyed taking part and having fun in the Xmas card competition

Never had anything like this since I was 9. Absolutely buzzing, you have all made my day

I have made friends

I look forward to having my weekly cooking sessions

I love my teachers and Chelsea and Sheila

I enjoyed going really fast

I enjoyed Horrible Histories at the theatre

I enjoyed beating Emma in the go-cart race

I enjoyed the planetarium

I enjoyed the Swan at Bowes Museum

I enjoyed not falling over

I enjoyed exploring

I enjoyed making pizza

I enjoyed going to the park

I enjoyed sliding down theI hill on my bum

I enjoyed lifting a leg up from the ice

I enjoyed going in the sea

I enjoyed learning about the medication in the 1880's chemist

I enjoyed being here and seeing staff

Key stake holder training delivered by the Virtual School

Specific support for looked after children is essential if they are to thrive. Looked after children are statistically more likely to have complex social or emotional needs as result of the trauma, abuse or neglect they have experienced. The professionals working with them need to have the skills and resources to meet their needs. If looked after children's needs are not met by the professionals working with them it can compound some children's feelings of exclusion or isolation and low self-esteem.

The Virtual School provides influential and pertinent advice and training to key partners working with looked after children. The Virtual School offers bespoke 1:1 training alongside some small group sessions for key stake holders. Last year the Virtual School Team delivered over 35 personalised sessions. The Virtual School provided formal training events for professionals to support the education of looked after and previously looked-after children. All training events were provided for free and delivered both face to and remotely

Designated Teacher Training

The Children & Young Persons Act 2008 places a duty on school governing bodies "to designate a member of staff (the designated teacher) as having the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of CLA, including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at the school".
The designated teacher really is a key role in schools, here are a few of their key responsibilities:

- Helping to ensure that other school staff are aware of the individual needs of looked-after pupils (while maintaining appropriate confidentiality) and promoting high aspirations.

- Tracking the attendance, attainment and progress of their looked-after pupils.

- Putting together the PEP that all CLA should have, in partnership with the child, their carer and their social worker.

- Providing a consistent source of support to the child. That consistency alone can be invaluable. If things turn chaotic for the child, and other key adults in their life do change, school can provide the lifeline of a regular, reassuring voice.

Considering its importance, it is vital that the right member of staff is appointed to this role. They should have sufficient seniority to influence policy and practice where necessary, and to promote a positive and supportive ethos throughout the whole school. Given the nuances alluded to in the points above, it is also clear that they will need the right blend of experience, skills and personal qualities to make it work. There's a requirement for both strength and subtlety.

There will be variations in the position and make-up of that "ideal" person, of course, depending on the individual school. However, this shouldn't just be viewed as an additional add-on. There is a statutory requirement for designated teachers to keep up-to-date with appropriate training and they will need on-going support and supervision to help them manage the challenges of the role.

Designated teachers need to establish very strong and well-organised channels of communication, both internally and with external agencies. They have a role in ensuring, that their school's data-sharing protocols are robust and fit-for-purpose. They will need to know what to share, what not to share, and how to communicate it safely and securely. By ensuring that looked-after pupils have a high-quality education plan, for example, the designated teacher is not only helping to keep them on track, they are building a comprehensive source of pupil-level data. If the child does move schools unexpectedly, this information can be invaluable to their new setting. The Virtual School Middlesbrough ensures that all training is targeted by analysing the information provided on training and developing needs in EPEP.

To support our Designated Teachers in carry out their duties the Virtual School has provided the following training this year;

Annual programme				
Date and Time of Training	Name of training & where the training will be held	Overview	Name of Trainer	Number of delegates attended
07/12/2022 3:30pm – 5pm	Creative Ways to use Pupil Premium Plus Teams	This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs, and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	54
01/02/2023 4pm – 5pm	Creative use of PP+	This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	61
08/03/2023 4pm – 5pm	Supporting EYFS & Primary Inclusion Launchpad Literacy	How the Local Authority outreach and inclusion service can support you with early identification of need and a graduated approach to supporting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the Early Years Launchpad for Literacy has evolved from real-life issues and concerns in response to the challenges of practitioners and children. It will support you in delivering a whole school approach to the teaching literacy and phonics.	Georgina Camsell Wendy Haslam	45

25/04/2023 10am – 11 am	DT and finance joint workshop: PPP payments Thorntree Hub TS3 9JW	To support the communication of Pupil Premium Plus payment schedules to schools, the Virtual School Head would like to invite you to attend the Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus workshop, where we will explore the Pupil Premium Plus policy in detail and respond to any questions that arise.	Victoria Banks	35	
17/05/2023	Creative use of PP+ TEAMS	Our third and final session. This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	63	
23/05/2023	How DTs can support pupils who are NEET TEAMS	A Workshop addressing the issues around Young People who are NEET. Practitioners have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges before developing solutions based on the latest research.	Jack Newton	54	
08/06/2023	Emotionally Based School Avoidance (Assessment and Intervention with CYP, Schools and Families) TEAMs	Through this follow up webinar to the Middlesbrough VS Conference, Dr Jerricah Holder will present a number of CYP-friendly tools and assessment techniques to support Designated Teachers to keep the CYP voice at the centre of assessment and intervention. Evidence-based strategies at the level of the child, home and school context will be explored alongside environmental and systemic barriers to school attendance and wellbeing.	Dr Jerricah Holder		63

21/06/2021	The impact of trauma	This session will explore what trauma is and how we can recognise that a child or young person may be traumatised. The impact of trauma on a child or young person and how this can link to presenting behaviours will be considered. We will outline strategies for dealing with and minimising the impact of trauma within the school environment.	Dr Lowe	62

11th July 2023
 	
4pm – 5pm
	Child centred PEPs /PP+/SMART Targets
	
	Teams
		•By the end of the session you will:
		  •Understand what child centred means
		  •Understand what a SMART target is
		  •Be able to create SMART targets and PEPs that are child centred
		  •Know the difference between PP and PP+ and how to record PP+ spend on the epep.
		  •Know how to track PP+ spend.
		  •Know how to quality assure your own PEPs.
			Wendy Haslam	53

19th July 2023 4pm – 5pm	Attachment theory and children's learning in school. Teams	Attachment theory and implications in the classroom. Looked After Children may not have formed secure attachments with adults in their early years and can exhibit a variety of behaviours at school and in their wider life. If not recognised, it can lead to exclusion and educational underperformance. Attachment theory is based on the pattern of relationships between infants and primary carers. There is now a greater understanding of the influence of these very early relationships on later development. Evidence has emerged which links attachment style directly to expectations and responses in school and it is a useful lens to view behaviour difficulties.	Sarah Watson	61

The Virtual School Annual Conference: Language that Cares

It was a delight that Middlesbrough Virtual School was able to hold the 4th annual conference gathering over 350 key stakeholders including schools, foster carers, children's services and health professionals to learn, discuss thoughts, network, share ideas, create new ideas, and to ignite motivation to better support children with a social worker. The aim of the conference was to expand professional and personal development and provided insightful information delivered by an array of national and international pioneering Keynote speakers. The event was supported by all Directors and Head of Service with Middlesbrough's Director of Education, Rob Brown, comparing the event.

Mary-Anne Hodds a care experienced teacher, trainer, and advisor combines her lived experience and psychology to support delegates deeper understanding of and improved outcomes for children and young people in care. Mary-Anne addressed themes of connection, identity, and strengths-based, therapeutic care, on subjects such as language, recordings, childhood trauma, transitions, the care journey and more.

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Followed by **Mick Simpson** the Headteacher of Olsen House School, a school specialising in SEMH, ASC, ASHD and LS for young people aged 7 – 16 years old. He has been a teacher for over 30 years and has spent his entire career serving schools in challenging circumstances. Mick spoke to professionals of the benefits of non-confrontational behaviour management theory and techniques.

Within **Karen May's** keynote she focussed on the importance of language. With Karen we reflected on practice asking; What if we shifted language from 'special needs' to 'needs more understanding' or 'unacceptable behaviour' to 'understandable behaviour'? Exploring the evidence that when young people feel accepted and valued it leads to better social, emotional and mental wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Dr Jerricah Holder is an experienced Educational Psychologist, trainer and author of the School Wellbeing Cards. Jerricah spoke to delegates about a compassionate and child-centred approach to understanding and addressing barriers to attendance and school wellbeing.

Jerricha's shared some of her extensive experience of working with individual children and their family and school settings to increase resilience in school attendance, as well as developing more systemic approaches to Emotional Based School Avoidance shifting the focus onto early identification and intervention.

With 6 workshops to choose from delegate had the opportunity to choose two sessions that related best to their area of development and practice.

Joe Russo – Challenging perceptions

Liza Lomax - Kick Ass

Karen May – Relational Practices and the Importance of Language

Mick – AATI schools

Tia James – Middlesbrough Care experienced Young Person

Julie O'Connor- Restorative Practice

Middlesbrough's Virtual School Head, Victoria Banks, motivated delegates to become education Champions for children with a social worker. Victoria led the call to action by asking all delegates to become an Education Champion for children with a social worker by;

✓ Raising awareness for CWSW

✓ Challenging stenotypes of CWSW

✓ Advocate for CWSW as part of their daily practice

✓ Hold high aspirations for CWSW

✓ Ensure CWSW meet their potential

✓ Remove education barriers for CWSW

Over 200 delegates became Education Champions for children with a social worker.

Virtual School PEP Advisors

The delivery of high-quality PEPs is a crucial priority of the Virtual School Middlesbrough. A Virtual School PEP Advisor will arrange a minimum of 3 Personal Education Plan meetings throughout the academic year. When a young person's needs change or there has been a significant event in their life, the Virtual School is contacted to convene a PEP review meeting to ensure that the plan remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of the young person.

The role of a PEP Advisor is to:

- Drive a high quality education plan in conjunction with the young person's social worker, carer, Designated Teacher and the young person themselves

- ensure that all statutory requirements of the PEP are met

- give educational advice and guidance to Designated Teachers, social workers and carers

- signpost to other sectors and professionals where needed

- guarantee that the young person's voice is heard

- hold the school accountable for raising aspirations for looked after children and young people

It is important that the PEP is an accurate, detailed, living and useful document that is easily understood by carers, any school which subsequently receives it most importantly the young person.

Schools, other professionals and carers noted that they value the expert support and challenge from the Virtual School team who have high levels of credibility. The Virtual School team are well equipped to challenge key partners when necessary. Their powerful advocacy for children is underpinned by professional credibility and access to quality data. The Virtual School Head is well supported by the senior leadership team in accessing exceptional resources and fast-tracking systems to ensure children get the right support at the right time.

PEP Compliance and Quality

All looked-after children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. The PEP (pre-school, to age 18) should be initiated as part of the care plan. It is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked-after children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs, raises aspirations and builds life chances. The school, other professionals and the child's carers should use the PEP to support achieving those things.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. Virtual School, social workers, carers, designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals work closely together to ensure every pep meets the quality assurance criteria.

PEP Quality Assurance

Middlesbrough PEPs go through a number of Quality Assurance (QA) processes. There are a number of set activities carried out to ensure PEPs are of a good quality to ensure the PEP reflects the learning needs of each child.

Each PEP is initially audited by the social worker and the Designated Teacher. When both parties are assured the PEP is of good quality they notify the Virtual School PEP Advisor via the online EPEP system. The Virtual School PEP Advisor then applies the QA grade descriptors before giving an overall grade of either Gold, Green, Amber or Red.

Gold standard is awarded where a PEP is of the highest quality and details compressively areas of strength and development. The PEP has clear targets that will drive progress for the child and clearly supports the high aspirations. It will have met all statutory requirements and will encompass best practice. Green standard is awarded where a PEP has met all statutory requirements, encompasses best practice and evidence high aspirations for looked after children and young people.

Amber is awarded to PEPs that need amending and improving, but do meet statutory requirements and should be corrected within 10 school days. Red is awarded to PEPs that do not meet statutory requirements. Where a red grade is awarded, the Designated Teacher and social worker are contacted, and required to hold another meeting to produce a PEP document of a higher standard.

During the academic year over 1,500 PEPs were completed. PEP Advisors acted as a critical friend to partners giving supportive feedback on PEP improvements. Each month 20 PEPs are quality assured and at the end of the academic year a minimum of 10% of PEPs are benchmarked. It was found that 97% of PEPS were of at least adequate quality and 60% of PEPs were of good or better quality.

Improving the quality of PEPs

Middlesbrough Virtual School recognise that high quality PEPs are instrumental in supporting looked after children to thrive in school and to go on to live successfully in adulthood. Through robust quality assurance processes it has been identified that PEP targets are often not measurable or time bound. There has however been a good improvement in specificity of targets.

Attendance is well tracked, monitored and reported in the PEP. In order to improve quality further, where a student has below 95% clear multi-agency plans to improve should be detailed in the PEP.

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are a type of special educational need in which children/young people have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations. It is important that we demonstrate professional curiosity within PEPs to identify and address SEMH needs early.

It is recommended that in the coming year the following areas are addressed to further improve PEP quality:

➢ Training delivered to Designated Teachers (DTs) and all other relevant stakeholders around with a keen focus on SMART Targets and their link to PP+ spend, attendance and identifying early sighs of SEMH.

➢ PEP advisors to ensure IAG is given during PEP meetings with regards to SMART targets and their link to PPP spend, attendance and identifying early sighs of SEMH.

➢ Ensure there is explicit and robust feedback on the PEP with a strong focus on;

    i.   SMART targets and their link to PP+ spend

    ii.   Attendance

    iii.   SEMH and SEND

➢ Robust challenge should be given after the PEP meeting and before the 10 day QA deadline to enable DTs to sharpen targets.

- PEP Advisors further draw attention to specific/potential areas for targets, reinforcing Pupil Voice and attendance as these areas are often overlooked.

- Create a bespoke series of training for stakeholders that supports the creative use of PP+.

- PAs to facilitate high-quality discussions with DTs, carers and social workers so that their views reflect strengths and weaknesses regarding the child's education.

- The PEP QA officer ensures that all relevant SEND and Health documentation is uploaded to WFC.

- Training to be delivered on the meaningful collection and implementation of child's voice.

Exclusions and Suspensions

Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion is the most serious sanction a school can give if a child does something that is against the school's behaviour policy (the school rules). It means that the child is no longer allowed to attend the school and their name will be removed from the school roll (unless the exclusion is overturned). For the purpose of this report the data only includes permanent exclusions which have been upheld by the governing body or Independent Review Panel (IRP), and not those which are still ongoing.

Exclusions must be for disciplinary reasons only. All schools must have a behaviour policy setting out what the school rules are and this must be published on the school website. Schools vary in what they will permanently exclude for. However permanent exclusion should only happen:

- in response to a serious one-off breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy and
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school
- In practice this means that there are two likely scenarios for a permanent exclusion
- The student has had a history of persistent disruptive behaviour and the school feel they cannot do anymore.
- The student has committed a single serious one-off offence, even if they have never been in trouble before.

However, it is up to each school to define what counts as a serious offence.

Suspensions

Suspensions, previously known as 'fixed period exclusions', refers to when a pupil who is excluded from a school for a set period of time. A suspension can involve a part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous period. A pupil may be suspended for one or more periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. This total includes suspensions from previous schools covered by the exclusion legislation.

National Context

From 2012/13, there was a general decline in permanent exclusions, reaching a low point during this period however there has been a subsequent Increase in recent years.

Data Table

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 100 pupils)
2019/20	5,100	0.06
2020/21	5,800	0.07
2021/22	6,500	0.07

In 2019/20 there were relatively lower numbers of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. However, in 2020/21 there was a slight increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise. In 2021/22 the trend continued upward, reflecting ongoing behavioural challenges and possibly the long-term impacts of the pandemic on student behaviour and school dynamics.

The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions over the three-year period, with the rate per 100 pupils remaining consistent at 0.07 in the last two years. The Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened. The rising numbers suggest persistent or growing behavioural issues among students, necessitating enhanced support and interventions.

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Looked After Children data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for looked after children over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year.

National CLA Exclusions

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 1,000 pupils)
2019/20	1,200	78
2020/21	1,400	85
2021/22	1,600	97

In 2019/20: there was a relatively lower number of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. 2020/21 shows increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise and in 2021/22 the trend continued upward, reflecting ongoing behavioural challenges and possibly the long-term impacts of the pandemic on student behaviour and school dynamics.

Overall Increase: The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for looked after children over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year. Again, the Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened.

Local Context

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Middlesbrough has increased overall. The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for Middlesbrough over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year. The Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened.

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Middlesbrough

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 1,000 pupils)
2019/20	45	1.2
2020/21	50	1.3
2021/22	52	1.4

In 2019/20 had a relatively lower number of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. In 2020/21 there was a slight increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise and again by 2021/22 the trend of exclusions for all Middlesbrough children is increasing.

Both the Northeast and statistical neighbours show a positive trend with decreasing exclusions over the three years. Middlesbrough maintains no exclusion for looked after children.

Looked After children exclusion baseline comparatives.

Area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Middlesbrough	0	0	0
North East	5	4	3
Statistical Neighbours	7	6	5

Similar to the Northeast, statistical neighbours also show a decreasing trend in exclusions. This consistent reduction suggests effective interventions and support systems are in place. Middlesbrough had no exclusions for looked after children between 2019/20 and 2021/22, this suggests that efforts to support looked after children and prevent exclusions are having a positive impact on a backdrop of increased exclusions for their non-looked after peers. Continued focus on these support systems must be maintained to ensure we continue to drive down exclusions and improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

End of Key stage outcomes

Children in Care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions and possibly elective home education. For those children coming into care late in their secondary school journey many have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties which impact upon neurological development. It is well researched and evidenced that the fight, flight or freeze response leading to the child often being hyper- vigilant will negatively affect their ability to focus in a school environment, until they feel safe and secure. This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning. Children Looked After will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel very different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem, which again can affect confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges. A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs. Children Looked After also experience changes in fostering arrangements, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling. This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre (The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Nov 2015). The Virtual School Head's interim Outcomes Report captures attainment information for all looked after children alongside the qualifying cohort (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as 31st. March 2023 in line with the DfE's reporting methodology). The Virtual School actively supports every child in care regardless of duration in care.

There has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in England this summer, with grading protection in place to recognise the disruption that students have faced. This means that allowances have been made where national performance is weaker than before the pandemic. This has been part of a two-year, two-step plan to return to normal grading arrangements after the pandemic.

Students sitting GCSEs also received support in their exams this summer. In maths, physics, and combined science exams, students were given formulae and equation sheets, so there were fewer things to memorise for the exams. In GCSE modern foreign languages, the exams did not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary.

Grade boundaries typically change each exam series to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the assessments. This means that some grade boundaries are lower than 2019, while others are higher.

Summary Outcomes

As the new framework to attain GLD is embedding, year on year comparisons should be drawn with caution. In EYFS there were 18 children in the qualifying cohort and 40 % achieved GLD. This is a 13% increase from 21/22. Of the cohort 44% had SEND (6% having an EHCP).

- There were 11 children in the qualifying cohort at KS1 and 18% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined, 46% achieved the expected standard in Reading, 18% achieved the expected standard in Writing. Three children in this cohort were working at Pre-Key Stage Standards and consequently did not meet EXS in any area. Two of these had an EHCP and are at special schools. One has SEN Support and is at a mainstream school.

- There were 18 children in the qualifying cohort at KS2, 32% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined, 52% achieved the expected standard in Reading, 49% achieved the expected standard in Writing and 52% achieved the expected standard in Maths. Of the overall cohort 56% had SEND (26% with an EHCP). Three children with an EHCP were disapplied – two now attend a special school.

- At KS4 there were 38 children in the qualify cohort, 16% of those students achieved grade 4s in both English and Maths, 29% achieved a grade 4 or above in English and 24% in maths.

End of Key Stage Summary

	All National 2022	Total CLA Middlesbrough 2019 %	CLA 12M+ Middlesbrough 2019 %	CLA 12m+ Middlesbrough 2022 %	Total CLA Middlesbrough 2023 %	CLA 12m+ Middlesbrough 2023 %
Early Years GLD	40	40 (25)	**45 (11)**	**27**	39 (7)	**40 (4)**
KS1 R/W/M	29	48 (27)	**37 (16)**	**38**	28 (5)	**18 (2)**
KS1 Reading	40	59 (27)	**50 (16)**	**63**	50 (9)	**46 (5)**
KS1 Writing	34	55 (27)	**43 (16)**	**50**	33 (6)	**18 (2)**
KS1 Maths	44	55 (27)	**50 (16)**	**56**	44 (8)	**36 (4)**
KS2 R/W/M	32	48 (27)	**45 (20)**	**32**	44 (10)	**39 (7)**

KS2 Reading	52	74 (27)	**75 (20)**	**52**	48 (11)	**44 (8)**
KS2 Writing	43	70 (27)	**70 (20)**	**49**	52 (12)	**50 (9)**
KS2 Maths	45	63 (27)	**55 (20)**	**52**	52 (12)	**50 (9)**
KS4 Basics 4+	-	-	**11**	**18**	12 (6)	**16 (6)**
KS4 MATHS 4+	-	-	**22**	**21**	21 (10)	**24 (9)**
KS4 ENGLISH 4+	-	-	**30**	**30**	23 (11)	**29 (6)**

Pupil Premium Plus Policy

The pupil premium plus grant (PPP) was set at £2,345 per pupil for the financial year.

Middlesbrough Virtual School provides a wide range of services to schools to support looked after children, including advice and guidance, management of the PEP process and associated quality assurance, exclusion support, advocacy, in class TA and teacher support, one to one teaching support alongside key stakeholder training.

These services cannot be provided without the top slicing amount. The remaining amount is paid direct to schools.

The devolved portion of funding to school is £1,000 (£333 per term).
If schools have effectively mapped the £666 Pupil Premium Plus from the previous two terms within the PEP, the spring payment of £333 is released to school in May.

Schools can ask for additional funding where there is evidence that the £1,000 has been used to support the academic attainment of the students and further funding is needed to ensure students have access to the correct support and interventions.

Almost half the PP+ funding (47%) was devolved to schools. This year there has been a significant increase of PPP required to support the mental health and wellbeing of our students.

Cost	PPP %
Staffing	25
COVID recovery	7
Intervention Centre	9
Top UP PPP to Schools	9
Devolved PPP to Schools	31
Enrichment	1
EP Time 14 days a year	1
Professional commission & membership fees	1
Training, books & publications	1
Office expenses	0.3
Laptops	0.7
Mental health support	5
Celebration awards	4
Welfare Call	4
Post Looked After: ATV	1
Total	100