

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Corporate Parenting Board
<b>Date:</b>	07 December 2022
<b>Title:</b>	Hampshire Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Virtual School's work and focus during the academic year 2020-2021, together with an analysis of educational outcomes, where published, for Hampshire's cohort of children in care. It sets out the priorities for securing improved individual and cohort progress, educational experiences, and outcomes for children in the care of Hampshire. In the academic year 2020 -2021, schools were subject to a partial lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic although they remained open for children in care and other vulnerable groups. Formal examinations at KS4 and KS5 and assessments at KS1 and KS2 were cancelled. Therefore, this report will not detail outcomes in some key stages due to the absence of available data.

### Recommendation(s)

2. The content of the report is noted and it is noted the absence of formal assessment and use of other assessment methodologies in 2021 requires a qualitative approach to reporting.

### Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to outline and analyse the end of key stage achievement of all children and young people from early years to 18 in care of Hampshire County Council (academic year 2020-21). It sets out the priorities for improving the effectiveness and impact of the Virtual School so that, together with schools, settings, and post-16 providers, we secure greater individual and cohort progress, better educational experiences, and better outcomes for Hampshire's children in care. The report celebrates the achievements of

children in our care and illustrates how their voice is beginning to shape the services provided.

### **Contextual information**

4. The Virtual School sits within the Education and Inclusion Branch but works closely with the Children and Families branch of Hampshire Children's Services Department (CSD) and the Access, Resources and Business Development Branch, in relation to data, information, and admissions
5. The Executive Head Teacher is responsible for the Virtual Schools in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Close working relationships are nurtured with all other services, including SEND, Early Years Advisory Team, Hampshire Futures, and wider health services.
6. The Virtual School in Hampshire is small in relation to the size of cohort. Therefore, ensuring that all teams prioritise this group of children and building capacity across schools and the wider children's workforce is a key component in our strategy to improve educational outcomes.
7. Accurate information is maintained on how children in our care are progressing in their education. The Virtual School intervenes when a child or young person in Hampshire's care is not achieving as well as they can. We provide training and information for schools, foster carers, and social workers. Furthermore, the Virtual School ensures resources, including the pupil premium plus, are distributed effectively and monitors the impact on the educational experiences and achievements of children in care.
8. Since the last VSH annual report, services and processes have been further developed, so that children, schools, and other stakeholders experience the same high standards and consistent approaches from the Virtual School.

### **Finance**

#### **Pupil Premium Plus**

9. In line with the DfE statutory guidance, the Virtual School published a policy document which makes clear the expectations and arrangements in place around pupil premium plus for children looked after. [Pupil Premium Plus and funding | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/pupil-premium-plus-and-funding)
10. For transparency, the Virtual School Head also reports specifically to Schools Forum on the use and impact of pupil premium plus. Arrangements for distributing the pupil premium plus grant are reviewed annually.

## **Performance**

### **Summary of performance for the academic year 2020-21 Attainment and progress of cohorts by chronological age**

11. The following analysis refers to children in care in the 'OC2' or 'published' cohort during 2020-21 academic year. That is children who have been in care for a year or more as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
12. Data is drawn from internal Virtual School data collections due to the cancellation of summer examinations and assessments across all key stages.
13. There may be some differences between the internal local authority and verified KS4 dataset, due to rounding and some unmatched data where not all children's results have been included. Where this is the case, it is clearly indicated on the datasets used
14. Please note that the analysis will rely on qualitative data to draw conclusions.

### **Outcome for Hampshire's children in care EYFS results**

15. A 'good level of development' or GLD is defined as having achieved the age expected level in Communication and Language (CL), Personal Social Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development (PD) Literacy and Mathematics. In 2019, there was an improvement in outcomes across all measures. In the early years, 51.5% of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) compared with 48% nationally as indicated by NEXUS data.
16. There were no formal assessments in 2019-20 for EYFS due to COVID-19 and therefore we are unable to include formal results in this report.
17. The Virtual School agreed a service level agreement with Services for Young Children (SfYC) to ensure expertise and support is provided to this cohort. A dedicated Education Adviser for Early Years leads our strategy and approach and works with a group of specialist advisory teachers to provide termly meetings and support work, including visits to schools and settings, moderation of PEPs and transition work.
18. There has been an increased focus on close working with the Admissions, Inclusion and Advisory Teams to ensure that information is shared on applications in a timely way and that good schools are identified. Support provided in schools was reviewed so that priority focus could be given to specific PVI settings.

## **Key stage 1 and key stage 2 performance**

19. There are not DfE national published outcomes available for children in care at key stage 1 and 2 as a result of the cancellation of tests and assessments.
20. As identified in the previous VSH annual report, one impact of the current curriculum and assessment methods in place is that there are parts of the curriculum that many children in care, due to the turbulence in their lives, have simply not had time to learn securely by the end of the key stage. This implies that their final scores may reflect the lack of time they have had to learn the content rather than their capabilities.
21. This needs to be very carefully considered this year, considering the Covid-19 impact, and given that formal assessment did not take place in 2020 - 2021. The Virtual School, alongside its national association, is working with OFQUAL to raise awareness of the likely impacts on this cohort of children and will ensure that any findings or recommendations are shared with our schools and colleagues across the Education and Inclusion branch.

## **Key stage 4 performance**

22. Education outcomes for children in care improved continuously in Hampshire from 2015 to 2018, rising from 16.7% achieving a grade 4 or above in English and maths in 2016 to 19% in 2017 and 21.6% in 2018. The results disappointingly dipped in 2019 (falling to 13.7%) but rose significantly in 2020 to 28.1%.
23. In 2021, the improvement seen in 2020 has been sustained in GCSE results for our cohort of children in care. Of the 128 children who had been looked after continually for at least 12 months, 13 children (10.2%) achieved English and maths at grades 9-5 compared to 18 children (15.8%) in 2020 and 3.2% in 2019. In the 'basics' measure, grade 9-4 in English and maths, 33 (25.8%) achieved this compared to 32 children (28.1%) in 2020 following the significant rise from 13.7% in 2019.
24. We had an increased number of pupils achieving the EBACC at 9-4 (four pupils, 3.1%) and at 9-5 (1.6%) and more pupils who sat any exam (97 pupils, 75.8%) up from 73.7% in 2020.
25. There were 128 in the OC2 cohort for Year 11 in 2021, 14 more than the previous year. There were an additional 46 whose results will not be published as they entered care after the end of March 2021.

26. Of these 128 pupils, 63 had been in care for five years or more. This is higher than the previous cohort where 46 had been in care for five years or more in 2020. Length of time in care is a known factor which impacts on educational outcomes (University of Oxford 2013).
27. The remaining 65 pupils entered the care system during their secondary school years and 25 of the 65 entered care in Key Stage 4. The time preceding this is likely to have been chaotic and unstable, with significant risk of gaps in learning.
28. In terms of special educational needs, there were 18 children placed in maintained special schools which is higher than 2020 and nine in non-maintained special settings which is significantly lower than 2020. Four pupils were in a Pupil Referral Unit or Alternative Provision.
29. In the overall cohort in Year 11, there were 47 with EHCPs and an additional two at the assessment stage in May. Of the 47, eight were in other local authority areas. In the OC2 cohort, 39 had an EHCP.

In the OC2 Year 11 cohort, the designations were as follows:

ASD	HI	MLD	PD	PMLD	SEMH	BESD	SLCN	SLD	N/K
2	1	17	1	2	10	2	1	1	2

30. In the OC2 Year 11 cohort, the SEN settings were as follows:

Education Centre	EOTAS (LA)	Other independent	Secondary School	Special School	No school
1	1	4	4	25	4

31. As would be expected, the Virtual School were actively involved in intensive casework with 24 of the children in the Year 11 cohort either in view of their complexity or as a result of them experiencing delay in terms of securing admissions or the required packages of assessment, intervention and support.
32. The 'Strength and Difficulties' questionnaire (SDQ) is used with every looked after child as an indicator of need, with an 'abnormal' score indicating a significant level of need. Forty of the 128 children had 'abnormal' scores, six more than the previous year. Five of these children did achieve the 'basics' measure. Twenty nine of the 40 did sit an exam.

33. In terms of care placement stability, 40 of the 128 children experienced a change of care placement at some point during Year 11. This is significantly fewer than in 2020 which is a positive trend. It is notable that seven of these still achieved the 'basics' measure (grades 9-4).
34. In terms of school placement stability, 26 children experienced a change of school during Year 11, a slightly higher number than the previous year although improved care placement stability suggests school changes were more planned and supported. Four of these children achieved the 'basics' measure. The reduction in school changes in key stage four remains a priority for the Virtual School and our local authority partners.
35. Those children placed in schools rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted achieved the best outcomes. There were nine children placed in schools requiring improvement and one achieved the 'basics' measure.
36. There were six UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) in the 2021 cohort. No child in this cohort achieved the 'basics' measure although five sat an exam and one child achieved maths GCSE (9-4).

## **Attendance**

37. The DfE published data 'Outcomes for CIN (including CLA) for the 2021 reporting year, sets out the published data for children in care for 12 months as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, the OC2 cohort.
38. For Hampshire's children in care, the overall absence rate was 8.8% whilst the equivalent national figure was 9.1%. The persistent absence rate for Hampshire's children in care was 30.1% with the equivalent national figure at 30.4%.
39. The impact of Covid on attendance of our children and on the reliability and accuracy of data and recording to provide a narrative is significant. For the previous year with data available (2019), the cohort was 759 and the overall absence rate was 5.6% and persistent absence was 13.2%.
40. The Virtual School will continue to monitor and track attendance carefully to ensure that we target children and young people who are at risk of persistence absence. This is especially important in the context of supporting our most vulnerable students to transition back into school following the pandemic

## **Exclusion**

41. No Hampshire child in care was permanently excluded in 2020–21 whilst in care. In relation to exclusions, the DfE's 'Outcomes for CIN (including CLA) sets out published data for CLA 12 months as at 31 March 2020.
42. For Hampshire's children, there were 827 in the cohort and there were 93 fixed term exclusions which is 11.25%. The equivalent national figure was 9.38% indicating we have a concerning increase in the number of fixed term exclusions for our cohort of children.
43. For the previous year with data available (2019), the cohort was 803, there were a low number of permanent exclusions, and the fixed term exclusion rate was 12.58%.
44. The reduction in fixed term exclusions will remain a key priority for the Virtual School in this academic year.

### **Consultation and Equalities**

45. Consultation, not applicable.
46. The work of the Virtual School impacts positively on Hampshire's children in care.

### **Our aspirations for children and young people looked after**

47. The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a lead role in promoting the educational achievement of children in its care. However, to meet our aspirational targets, we require all schools, the local authority and partner agencies to share the responsibility and to prioritise their needs as corporate parents.
48. Education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievements, with minimum disruption and maximum stability, is central to improving short and long-term outcomes for children in our care. This is strongly reflected in our joint work across schools and services and in our current service plan.
49. In line with DfE statutory guidance for local authorities, our aspiration is that all children and young people attend a good or outstanding school which meets their individual needs and have good school attendance.
50. We want every child in care to:

- Enjoy their education and become positive and resilient learners who know their own strengths and talents.
- Benefit from the protective factor of being in care and make improved progress and achieve better educational outcomes once they feel stable and secure.
- Be prioritised by schools and services in line with the collective corporate parent duty
- Receive the same support from their foster carers as they would from any good parent.
- Have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive.
- Have stability in their care and education placements.
- Receive good advice and guidance to ensure they can progress into further education, employment, and training and, when appropriate, university.
- Know that their achievement and successes will be celebrated.

### **Reporting arrangements and accountability**

51. The Virtual School self-evaluates against the overarching Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). It is expected that key priorities are also identified by Hampshire Corporate Parenting Board which scrutinises the work of the Virtual School and holds it to account. The Virtual School Head reports annually to departmental management teams across both Education and Inclusion and Children and Families branches, with regular updates and reports through the year, including within the Inclusion Management Team.

### **Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

52. The Virtual School uses an internal (non-commercial) Personal Education Plan (PEP) template which has been developed over time. The process is managed by the Virtual School team in collaboration with social care and school-based colleagues. The current PEP format is set up to draw relevant data into Virtual School datasets so we can fulfil our duty to monitor the attainment and progress of our children in care. It is a requirement for this data to be presented to Ofsted during an inspection of Children's Services.

53. In the last two years, the Virtual School has driven forward joint work with designated teachers and social workers to improve the percentage of PEPs completed and submitted to the Virtual School. This focus has led to an improved annual return rate in 2020-2021.

54. As a Virtual School, we recognise the priority need to improve the compliance and quality of the PEP process, as it is a key tool to drive forward progress for our children and young people.



55. The VSH presented a report setting out key concerns and challenges to CFMT and EIBMT in April 2021. This led to a PEP review project being initiated with Children's Services Transformation Practice (TSC) in June 2021. The project included a rapid stakeholder engagement exercise, interviews with 15 designated teachers across all settings, focus groups with colleagues from social care, education, DAIT, HIEPs and foster carers and a survey with 279 responses, including over 160 school and 65 foster carer responses. This helped to identify the key areas of improvement and the short- and long-term actions required across the multi-agency partnership, including by the Virtual School.
56. The findings of the PEP review project concluded there needed to be clarification on purpose and role in relation to PEPs, given that it is a multi-agency activity, dependent on shared accountability and ownership between social workers, schools, Virtual School and the IROs (Independent Reviewing Officers). The Virtual School is in the process of re-evaluating the more substantive training offer to both foster carers and social workers in preparation for roll out in the next academic year.
57. The Virtual School does not have the capacity to routinely attend or contribute directly to all PEP meetings of statutory school age children. The quality assurance and audit process is therefore key to fulfilling our duty to raise standards and is delivered dynamically through 'Corporate Parent' visits and by regular themed audits. In this financial year, the VSH has strengthened the relationship with HIAS and commissioned more dedicated time to enable more PEP auditing and feedback to schools to be undertaken as part of 'Corporate Parent' visits.
58. The Virtual School uses a PEP audit tool developed in line with expectations from statutory guidance and best practice from other local authorities. In relation to school age children, the Virtual School currently undertakes a retrospective termly audit of around 10% of PEPs returned. The Virtual School identify a specific focus for the PEP audit drawing on themes and concerns that may arise from data analysis, training and operational casework.
59. The focus for the spring and summer term 2021 audit in Hampshire was the transition of pupils in reception classes, year 1 and year 7. The audit found evidence of some high-quality work to promote the education and well-being of children, particularly in the Early Years cohort. In most plans, there was evidence of a good knowledge of the child's care needs and educational progress. The most prominent finding of the PEP audit was that the quality of target setting and action planning was not consistent. The evidence of the child's and carer's voice and the impact of the outcome from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) also needed strengthening in a significant number of PEPs.

60. The key findings and themes in the PEP audits are used by the Virtual School to inform our practice, planning and priorities in a number of ways. We use it to inform the content and focus of our training programme for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers.

### **Previously looked after children (PLAC)**

61. Previously looked after children are those who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship (SGO) or child arrangement (CAO) order.

62. DfE statutory guidance requires Virtual Schools to promote the educational achievement of this group of children by providing advice and guidance to those with parental responsibility as well as to schools and services as part of their statutory duty. The DfE provides a time limited grant to support this work and our activities have focused on building capacity and developing an information and resource base which will be sustainable once the funding has ceased.

63. In Hampshire, the grant has been used to fund a specialist Education Officer focusing on providing advice, guidance and support to previously looked after children. The post holder has built a wide network of local and regional partners, including Adopt South and Hampshire's Fostering and Adoption Team, and has successfully developed the offer to schools and parents jointly across the region.

64. Whilst there is no requirement, or capacity, to provide direct casework, inevitably this has been part of the work, with the post holder supporting a range of queries from parents expressing concerns around individual children, and has proactively signposted them to appropriate services, such as SEN, school transport and the Inclusion Support Service. These queries have also helped shape the resources and information that are being offered centrally to parents via the Virtual School website and Moodle. This has contributed to a constant flow of information and helped to reduce frustration whilst parents seek the help they need for their children.

### **Post-16 The Virtual College**

65. The Virtual College is the post-16 arm of the Virtual School and supports our care experienced young people on their post-16 journeys. Introduced in 2018, the Virtual College ensures that looked-after young people have access to high quality, post 16 education, employment and training. Specialist post 16 advisers deliver advice, guidance and face-to-face support for young people as they transition from Year 11 onwards, raising their aspirations and attainment, creating new opportunities and enabling progression into 'good jobs'

66. As part of the Children's Services post 16 Careers and Participation team, the Virtual College is fully integrated into the wider RPA (Raising Participation Age) statutory functions supporting all young people to participate successfully in formal education and training in year 12 and 13.
67. All young people in England are required to participate in formal education or training until their 18th birthday, under Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation. Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to support young people aged 16 and 17 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs).
68. The Council is held to account by the Department for Education (DfE) for its performance against this duty, including the proportion of young people in education, employment and training (EET) or not (NEET); and the proportion of young people whose activity is unknown.
69. As part of the Council's corporate parent role, there are additional duties for the Virtual School to support the participation and educational achievement of looked-after children and young people from pre-school up to age 18. Support for post 16 (AY12-13) is delivered through the Virtual College managed by Hampshire Futures.
70. The Virtual College model uses a robust and wide-ranging dataset to target resources effectively and provides a dedicated 'Education Participation Adviser' to each young person in Hampshire, to support and enable effective transition from year 11, monitor and track their progress and to ensure they sustain their post 16 placement. An update on educational achievement of looked-after young people, post 16, participating in formal education and training programmes in academic year 2020-21 is provided below.
71. The participation rate in post 16 education and training for looked-after young people has increased since the introduction of the Virtual College support through specialist advisers, prioritised at key stages of the academic year.
72. Intended Destinations in year 11 are identified earlier and college applications are submitted ahead of the overall cohort (by the end of February each year). The September Guarantee (statutory duty on LAs to ensure a guaranteed place in education Year 12-13) is also secured earlier for young people being supported by the Virtual College team. Table 1 below shows Hampshire September Guarantee performance in 2021, comparing Virtual College with overall cohorts.
73. In Hampshire, the percentage of looked-after young people securing a place in post 16 education is higher (97.9%) than the overall cohort (97%).

<b>Table 1: Virtual College RPA compliant offers in comparison to wider cohort (Source: November MI CCIS Submission to DfE)</b>			
<b>HCC</b>	<b>Yr 11</b>	<b>Yr 12</b>	<b>Combined</b>
Virtual College Cohort	108	85	193
Positive Offer	107	82	97.9%
Negative/No offer	1	3	2.1%
Hampshire Cohort	14,115	14,516	28,631
Positive Offer	13,825	13,944	97.0%
Negative Offer	290	572	3.0%

74. September Guarantee performance for the overall cohort in Hampshire is significantly above national and regional averages, which are 94.3% and 90.9% respectively.
75. Table 2 below shows the Hampshire participation in education, employment and training for the Virtual College cohort at the end of AY2020-21, including three-year trend and comparison with national and regional averages.

<b>Table 2: Looked-after participation in education, employment and training (Source: NCCIS June 2021 LA Tables)</b>						
	<b>HCC</b>					
<b>Destination</b>	<b>June 19</b>	<b>June 20</b>	<b>June 21</b>		<b>England</b>	
EET Total	84.0%	83.4%	84.4%		74.6%	
NEET	12.0%	15.0%	14.4%		22.4%	
Not Known	3.6%	1.6%	1.2%		3.0%	
Combined NEET and Unknown	15.6%	16.6%	15.6%		25.4%	

76. Participation of looked-after young people in post 16 education and training is increasing in Hampshire. All measures are above national averages and NEET/Unknown is comparatively low.
77. Post 16 options were affected by the pandemic during 2020-21 (and continue to be). Progression into an apprenticeship, or employment with training, often the preferred choice for young people in this cohort, have reduced significantly.

78. Virtual College advisers are supporting access to alternative options, for example 21 young people from priority cohorts (Looked-after, SEND and BAME) have started six month paid work placements on the HCC Kickstart scheme, and new placements are currently being agreed with the Cabinet Office at ONS Titchfield as part of the government's Care Leaver Covenant.
79. In August 2021 the Virtual College cohorts (Yr12/13 resident cohort) were 184 young people in Hampshire
80. Table 3 below shows FE data for AY2020-21 for the Hampshire Virtual College cohort. Information has been provided by schools and colleges from Hampshire and neighbouring local authorities.

<b>Table 3: Hampshire Virtual College FE achievement data AY2020-21</b>			
<b>Virtual College</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>Change %</b>
Cohort	186	184	
FE	111	114	+2.27%
Completed/Passed	70	71	+3.11%
Withdrawn	15	12	-3.19%
On programme	26	31	+3.77%

81. There were 114 young people from the Virtual College cohort who attended college courses in AY2020-21. This represents a 2.27% increase compared to AY2019-20.
82. There were 71 young people who completed courses and 12 young people who withdrew. This represents a 3.11% increase in the number of successful completions and a 3.19% decrease in the proportion of young people who withdrew from courses.
83. Across all levels, 31 young people remain on their programme of study and are expected to complete courses in AY2021-22, including 21 young people on 2-year courses. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of qualification levels.

**Table 4: Hampshire Virtual College breakdown of qualifications AY2020/21**

Qualification	Complete/ Pass	Withdrawn/ Not Passed	Total	Ongoing
Entry Level	11	2	13	5
Level 1	14	2	16	0
Level 2	25	5	30	3
Level 3 Vocational	14	2	16	9
Level 3 Academic	4	1	5	12
GCSE	1	0	1	2
ESOL	2	0	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>31</b>
	<i>85.54%</i>	<i>14.46%</i>	<i>100%</i>	

84. The overall qualification achievement rate 85.5% is a 3.2% increase compared with the previous year. The proportion of students who completed Level 2 courses increased by 11%, 25 compared to 16 in AY2019-20. Level 3 courses dropped by 4%, 18 compared to 22 in AY2019-20. Vocational/technical options were more popular than academic, broadly 75/25 split.
85. Five young people have successfully progressed to Higher Education in AY2021-22, with an additional two deferred places for AY2022-23. University destinations are:
- Business & Marketing at Bournemouth University
  - Philosophy, Politics & Economics at Kings College (UoL)
  - Criminology at Loughborough University
  - Engineering at University of Portsmouth
  - Paramedic Science at St Georges (UoL)
86. There has been a significant reduction in apprenticeship opportunities, only one young person in the Virtual College completing in 2020-21 compared with nine in the previous year. This is indicative of the wider impact of the pandemic on work-based opportunities. There has been an increase in the number of young people supported by re-engagement provision through the ESF STEP programme.
87. Hampshire County Council has a strong Virtual College post 16 programme which is having a tangible impact supporting young people to participate, achieve and progress in formal education and training. Participation across Hampshire is above national and regional averages, and educational achievement showing improvement.

88. The Virtual College has enhanced the level of resource for looked-after children and young people, utilising Virtual School funding and external grants such as the European Social Fund to enable an increased level of support. The Council is well placed to access new funding opportunities in 2022 through the UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) and DfE/DWP.
89. More can be done to increase the reach of the Virtual College, through the Virtual School and local college partnerships to further improve Year 11 transition and post 16 PEP support (including the extended responsibility to children with a social worker). Expanding employer networks through Hampshire Futures Employment and Skills Hub will provide more high-quality progression opportunities.
90. The Virtual School collects an update from Hampshire and neighbouring local authority colleges annually around their specific offer for children in care, so this is visible to young people and their carers as they make their post 16 choices. The 2022 edition of 'What's Next' is now available online <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/cic-virtual-college-what-next.pdf>

### **The Virtual School's approach to improving educational outcomes**

91. There are several factors which impact on the educational outcomes of children in care. A study by the Rees Centre (Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford) noted that, controlling for all factors, there are several which consistently contribute to low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools. These include the length of time children are in care, the number of changes in placement (with each additional change in placement after age 11 associated with one third of a grade less at GCSE) and the number of school changes (with young people who change school in key stage 4 scoring over five grades less than those who did not). School absence and exclusion are also significant factors as are placement and school type with young people in residential settings, special schools or pupil referral units scoring lower than those with similar characteristics in mainstream schools.
92. The Virtual School ensures that these factors inform the practice and priorities of their work as outlined in this report. We place significant focus on ensuring, through training, that designated teachers and schools have a better understanding of children's social, emotional and mental health needs to ensure they can be supported to remain in the best mainstream schools wherever possible.
93. We monitor attendance and exclusion data for all our children in care to identify young people at risk of non-engagement and to ensure appropriate

assessment, intervention and support packages are in place in a timely way where needed.

94. The Virtual School also works closely with social work colleagues to ensure that, where placement moves are essential, school moves are avoided especially in the final years of schooling.
95. We also ensure that our children and young people are prioritised to attend schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. We ensure that the network around children focus on progress over time in recognition that many children take longer to make significant progress.
96. The progress of children in care does, of course, show much variation, which suggests that interventions do need to be tailored to the characteristics and experience of individual children and should be reflected in the needs analysis and actions plans in their PEPS. It is important to remember that children in care will also experience multiple factors simultaneously and will feel the impact of these vulnerabilities in individual ways. It is evident that a number of children enter care during their secondary school years, so important that our schools can identify and address gaps in a timely way.
97. During 2021-22 and beyond, the Hampshire Virtual School and College will consolidate its approach as an 'all through' integrated service with a view to ensuring consistency of approach and promoting collaborative working to improve educational experiences and outcomes. Priorities are summarised below but captured in more detail within the service plan:
98. Raising awareness of corporate parent duty: The Virtual School will continue to work with a range of teams and services to explore what good corporate parenting looks like in different contexts, raising awareness, developing the evidence base of good practice, and developing increased accountability around the statutory duty, so children in care are consistently prioritised.
99. High quality training and development in relation to designated teachers for children in care: The quality of bespoke training and support for designated teachers in their statutory role has contributed significantly to the capacity and expertise that exists in our schools in meeting the needs of care experienced children. This core element of the Virtual School's work has featured strongly in recent inspections. An ambitious attachment and trauma aware schools programme commenced in April 2019, led by the Virtual School following co-construction with schools and local authority services. The Hampshire programme is part of the Alex Timpson national programme of attachment aware schools and is being externally evaluation by the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford. There are 78 schools currently on the ATAS Programme and a further cohort will begin during this academic year. Our plan is to



involve social workers as participants alongside designated teachers. The Virtual School is continuing to provide support through termly network meetings and bespoke school support where appropriate. The Virtual School has also responded to training needs identified by schools and has for example facilitated sensory integration training (delivered by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychology Service) as well as an introduction to attachment for higher level teaching assistants (HLTA). The emphasis going forward is on designated teachers disseminating their knowledge and expertise widely within their school community through training, development, and peer support. It is expected that approaches, such as emotional coaching will be shared with key members of staff to promote a whole school ethos. As a result, designated teachers can influence what happens in the classroom in real time, supporting colleagues to co-regulate with children who struggle with their emotions, which may de-escalate situations which could result in sanctions, such as a fixed-term exclusion. We will continue to develop our virtual offer to designated teachers and increase those accessing the Virtual School Moodle

100. Training and support for all social worker and carers: The Virtual School is collaborating with colleagues across Hampshire to develop our online training offer for social workers, foster carers and residential workers.
101. Early Years: The partnership with the Advisory Teacher Team within the Early Years Advisory Team (EYAT) has been strengthened, as a result of our specialist Education Adviser in the Virtual school working in partnership to drive a joint approach, targeting intervention at those children most vulnerable at point of transition into year R. We hope this will continue to build professional knowledge across settings and schools, around the impact of attachment and trauma on our youngest children and how to best meet their development needs.
102. Maintaining school stability: The Virtual School continues to work closely with social workers and their managers on maintaining school stability. Wherever possible and appropriate, children have continued at their school whilst care placement changes have taken place. This work is underpinned by the Virtual School's protocol around school provision.  
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/virtual-school/guidance>

## **Conclusion**

The Virtual School remains committed to removing the inequality in educational outcomes between children in care and the wider population of children. This means working in partnership with the whole system for children across schools, education and inclusion and social care, returning constantly to the question for us as corporate parents – *'Would this be good enough for my child?'*

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document

Location

None

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.