Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Virtual School for Cared for Children

Head Teacher's Annual Report 2023/24

Contents

Introduction

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2023/24. The role of the virtual school is clearly defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities 2018.* The Virtual School (VS) supports all children in care regardless of their length of time in care, however the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Data, including GCSE, attendance and suspension data is currently provisional/unvalidated. Once published, validated data will be provided with local and national comparisons.

During 2023/24, the virtual school has continued to support all cared for children to ensure it is meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support to children and young people, families, carers, schools, and settings. Every child and young person are allocated a worker within the virtual school to ensure effective oversight and support is in place. The head of service for inclusion fulfils the role of head teacher at the virtual school and leads on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). To ensure sufficient leadership capacity, a deputy headteacher of virtual school role has been developed to support with the operational running of the virtual school alongside the head of service for inclusion; currently with two interim deputies within this role during this academic year.

The overall number of cared for children has been relatively consistent at roughly 550 children and young people for the past 12 months. In order to continue to improve outcomes, targeted support is in place for all schools and settings to monitor and track attainment, progress and attendance of all children and young people through the virtual school and coordinated across wider teams and services.

All children have access to additional pupil premium funding, to put in place interventions which are additional to the normal school support and are linked to specific targets within personal education plans (PEPs), to ensure interventions are tracked and monitored for evidence of impact and accountability.

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared for child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given. There have been no cases of a cared for child being permanently excluded in 2023/24.

The virtual school works closely with other services across the partnership such as social care, SEN, school admissions, medical needs, attendance, and youth support. As a result of the partnership working, processes and procedures have been revised to become more efficient. The virtual school has delivered cross service training on how all services can support improving the educational outcomes of cared for children.

Inspired (it's cool)

It's cool to be inspired, even if it sounds hard
It's cool to have a dream
It's cool to listen to your heart

It's cool, no matter what
Always follow the dream, even if it's hard
You can always (as a friend once told me)
Persevere
Be inspired always!

Poem by Cared for Child (Aged 12)

Making a difference to education outcomes for every child

Below outlines the key focus areas for the virtual school regarding promoting the educational achievement of cared for children, wherever they live or are educated.

Progress and attainment

Admission without drift or delay (stability)

Attendance and Exclusions

Is every young person in an education provision that is right for them?

Provision is meeting any additional needs

Full time engagement

Aspirational pathways and careers – reduce NEET

Appropriate PP+ spending

"Navigating the school system, even as a retired teacher, is mind blowing at times. There are so many additional bits and pieces to learn, and I've learnt that Virtual School and DTs are the jigsaw makers. You fit the pieces together that don't seem to go anywhere or find the perfect part that was missing. I bet you never thought of yourself like that!"
Quote from foster carer

Remit and operation of the Virtual School in Cheshire East Council

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children. The local authority is required to appoint a virtual school head teacher (VSH) for the purpose of discharging this duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. Our head of service for inclusion holds the role of the virtual school head teacher.

The virtual school operates using a locality model. This has helped significantly in the development of relationships with schools and other professionals resulting in better working practices.

The Government guidance, Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children outlines the Statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities, including each Local Authority's Virtual School Head. The corresponding guidance, The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children outlines the statutory duties for education settings.

In 2021 the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) was extended by the Department for Education (DfE) to include a duty, as yet still non-statutory, to promote the education of children and young people, from birth to the age of 18 years, who have a social worker. These are children and young people who live with their parents and who are supported via a Child In Need (CiN) or Child Protection (CP) Plan. It is the young people's parents who retain parental responsibility for the children and young people and not the social worker. The information about these duties can be found in the DfE guidance document, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker

Staffing and Organisation

The make-up and nature of the virtual school team is kept under review to ensure that the skills available match the needs of the cohort. We continue to work in localities to facilitate improving support to schools and develop working groups within locality areas to develop training and share best practice.

The head teacher monitors and supports the team on a day-to-day basis to inspire and facilitate the best outcomes for all. As of the start of June 2024 this role was passed down to the two newly allocated deputy head teachers.

The team has evolved to provide more direct contact and support for children and young people so that the interventions can be more closely tailored to meet needs and monitored for individual impact.

Virtual School Team
- Head of Service for Inclusion (SEND and virtual school headteacher)
- Deputy headteachers (Currently two interim deputy headteachers)
- Education advisors (North, Central, South)
- Education advisor (YJS)
- Learning mentors (North, Central, South)
- Post 16 education advisor
- Post 16 learning mentor
- Post 16 tutor
- Two specialist attendance officers (to cover across all areas, including children out of borough)
- Data and administration manager
- Team administrator
- Personal Education Plan administrator

The virtual school head teacher and deputy head teachers are members of the Northwest virtual school head group which links directly with National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) and through this network the virtual school can keep abreast of current developments and to be updated on government guidance, attend workshops and training days, and share good practice.

At the end of the 2023/24 academic year there were 685 cared for children up to the age of 18 receiving various areas of support from the Virtual School. 67% of Cheshire East cared for children from reception to year 11 attended Cheshire East schools, with the remaining attending schools in different local authorities. Those children and young people attending schools out of authority is mainly due to placements being out of borough, 66% of these were placed within neighboring authorities such as Cheshire West, Manchester, Stockport, Warrington, Staffordshire, and Stoke on Trent. The chart below shows a break-down of age/school groups.

2023/24 Cheshire East Cared for Children Cohort

Category	Value
Early Years	162
Primary	132
Secondary	206
Post 16	185
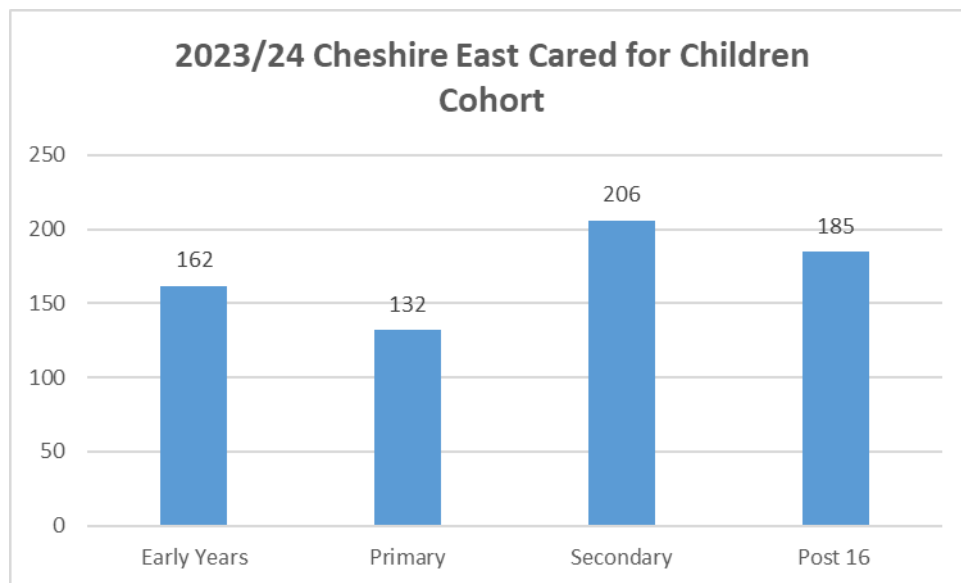
*Some school age will fall in the 0-4 categories due to their birthdays.

Partnership working

Partnership working is crucial to the efficacy of the virtual school, and we recognise our role in being part of a team with the child at the heart. We strongly believe that to be effective we need to have close working relationships with our partners in the name of being a successful 'corporate parent'.

As a virtual school we work with various teams across the partnership some of which include:

- Social care – social workers, care leavers, fostering and cared for support therapeutic teams, attending all resource and accommodation panel meetings weekly to support sharing information on education when placements move are being considered/sourced. Attending stability meetings with social workers and carers.
- Independent reviewing officers
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team
- Youth Justice Service (YJS), with a YJS advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team.
- Youth Support Service – monthly meetings to support interventions to reduce young people who are not in education, employment, or training.
- Early Years team

The Virtual School also work with the Independent Reviewing Officers and foster carers, providing training and support as needed. Through membership with education, headteacher and virtual school head regional groups, the Virtual School can keep abreast of all current events and news items both regionally and nationally to ensure best practice is shared and partners are aware of matters which influence their area to promote the educational outcomes of cared for and previously cared for children. Equally, virtual school advisors with particular areas of responsibility regularly attend regional meetings with colleagues from across various Local Authorities around topics such as: previously looked after children, post-16 education, SEND, extended duties etc.

Our key priorities are outlined in the cared for children and care leavers Strategy; **Pledge Two: We will improve education, employment, and training outcomes are:**

We will have high aspirations for every child and young person and will help them to achieve their ambitions, including using opportunities in the 'family businesses and our contacts so that they can be happy and successful in their education, training, and employment.

Every child and young person will have an education plan that is targeted, our ambition is to ensure they have the support in place to reach their full potential.

We will strive to ensure that ensure that every child and young person will have access to consistent, high- quality, well-matched opportunities in education, training, and employment.

We are also active members in the risk of NEET indicators (RONI) initiative spearheaded by our youth support team lead which seeks to identify young people who are at risk of being NEET at an earlier age.

Training and Support

The Virtual School provides training on educational issues relating to children in care. Head teachers and governing bodies are required to appoint a designated teacher, to champion the needs and support of cared for children and should ensure that the nominated member of staff has access to training. Wider school training has continued to be offered to all schools/settings. In Cheshire East this is provided in a variety of ways:

- Update/network meetings open to all schools and led by the Virtual School
- New Designated Teacher training in the autumn term
- Annual cross service designated lead training
- Bespoke training in individual schools which can be around a particular child or for all staff including attachment and trauma whole staff training
- Arranging outside speakers to provide 'expert' input.
- Training for social care and new social workers on improving educational outcomes of cared for children, statutory responsibilities, and PEPs.
- Locality cluster sessions held regularly throughout the academic year for all schools and settings
- Independent Reviewing Officer training that takes place in the summer term

The sessions held in 2023 and 2024 were well attended by school/setting representatives and provided a range of workshops delivered by a multitude of services. Sessions provided support on Higher Horizons, Springboard, Staying Close, Extended Duties, and Alternative Provisions. The sessions also included a presentation by a Cheshire East care leaver sharing her voice on her educational journey.

Positive feedback was received following the various training days:

"Hearing the Care Leaver speak about her experiences was so impactful and really quite emotional."

"It was really useful hearing about the Virtual School's new process around monitoring and recording Alternative Provision usage for Cared for Children."

"Loved being able to network with colleagues from other settings and also great to hear about training offers and plans for Extended Duties."

The universal training programme offered by the Virtual School for Designated Leads in schools

Date	Title	Objectives
November 2023	Training for those new to the role of Designated Teacher - Virtual	A range of topics were covered in various training sessions this year, the vast majority of which were suggested as areas our Designated Teachers felt they needed support in. · Introductions and meeting the team · Structure of the Virtual School and staffing updates · Statutory role of the Designated Teacher · Previously Looked After Children · Effective use of Pupil Premium+ · The support the Virtual School can provide to schools · Attendance monitoring lead by virtual school specialist attendance officer
Monthly drop in sessions	Locality Training - Virtual	· Sharing good practice for improving the quality of PEPS, pupil premium and safeguarding in post 16 education. · Drop-in opportunity with each Advisor within their locality teams
May 2024	Annual Designated Teacher Conference – Middlewich, Canalside	· Structure of the Virtual School and staffing updates · Statutory role of the Designated Teacher · Data analysis and outcomes for each Key Stage · Higher Horizons presentation around Higher Education · Social care updates from Service Manager around UASC/separated children · Springboard presentation on independent schooling for Cared for Children · Staying Close Cheshire East housing for Care Leavers · CWSW and Extended Duties · Expectations of Personal Education Plans · Post-16 pathways · Educational Psychology input on training opportunities for professional development · One Page Profiles for transition year groups · Alternative Provisions and reducing exclusions

		• Careers and preparing for adulthood

Extended Duties for Children with a Social Worker

The Department of Education announced an extension of the virtual school head teacher's duties to include all children and young people with a social worker in 2021. This extension continues to be supported by grant funding. The guidance outlines this as a strategic role rather than direct working with our key responsibilities to offer support/advice and guidance indirectly. During the academic year 2023/2024, enabling us to support as many schools as possible, we used the funding to implement a universal training offer. This training was available to all schools/settings with children with a social worker. We also offered targeted support for those schools with high numbers of children with a social worker.

By working closely with our Education Psychology and Safeguarding teams we were able to build a training package that could support children with a social worker, alongside our wider virtual school training offer.

Educational Psychology Service
- ELSA training
- Early Years ELSA training
- MeLSA
- Emotion Coaching
- Attachement and Trauma aware training
- Relational and Restorative Practice Part 1

Safeguarding Team
- Safeguarding Children in an Education Setting - Level 2
- Basic Awareness for Midday Assistants and support staff

A total of 40 schools requested training, with nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools all benefiting from this offer.

One of our popular courses was MeLSA - Mediated Learning Support Assistant training offers. MeLSA is a psychological evidence-informed approach to supporting the cognition and learning needs of pupils. The implementation of MeLSA helps to build the capacity of schools to meet their learner's needs and assist them in becoming skilled and independent learners.

Comments from this training were:

> *'I've learnt about how children learn and the different factors that impact learning'*
> *'How to mediate activities for children if they are struggling'*

As part of our ongoing vision for ensuring children have access to Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, this training was offered for school age and early years settings. ELSA is an evidence-based initiative that aims to give professionals working with children and young eople a strong level of psychological understanding. This enables them to support positive social, emotional and behavioural outcomes.

Feedback from these sessions found that delegates had:
- *A greater understanding of how psychological theory underpins and guides our way of working with children and young people.*
- *found the collaborative environment a useful space to share experiences of working with children and young people.*

- *learnt new information and felt this supported their professional growth and their confidence when supporting children and young people*

We worked with 6 schools to undertake some targeted work for those settings with a higher number of children with a social worker.

The impact of this work was seen throughout the summer term, with many of our schools continuing their work into the 2024/2025 academic year.

Counselling sessions within school	Animal Assisted Therapy for group sessions	Educational Psychologist input
Forest School Training	Mentoring Training	Attendance traded offer
Reading Interventions	Well-being support with a focus on raising attendance	Home - School Liason Support

One specific primary school was funded to undertake targeted intervention to help boost and accelerate reading and literacy; they were able to share the impact of the funding they received during this academic year for the identified cohort of CYP:

The outcomes in reading have increased from an average of 84.5 (Spring Scaled Score) to 93.6 (Summer NTS Scaled Score). This intervention supported accelerated progress, closing the gap on age related expectations. The CYP made 9.1 points of progress, in comparison to the rest of the cohort who made 5 points during this same time period. Attendance also improved as a result of the access to additional support through the programme as part of improving health and wellbeing, this also reduced persistent absence within the cohort from 45% to 35%.

One of our secondary schools was supported to undertake targeted intervention; impact made through the support they received outlined within the evaluation and assessment using the star scaling tool was used to track the impact of the program of support. The evaluation star looks at 9 different strands linked to a students' thoughts, feelings and well-being. A low score (minimum of 10) indicates significant concerns for students, whereas higher scores (maximum 90) indicate that the students' mental health and well-being is in a good state.

Each section of the star is scored between 1 and 9. 1 = I need lots of help, 5 = I have some worries, 9 = I am fully achieving in this area. *The Evaluation Star scaling scores show an average of +8.77% between the start and end of the intervention made to children's wellbeing having taken part in the Strengthening you program.*

Learning Mentor Evaluation Star

Evaluation star difference of students that completed 'Strengthening you' program
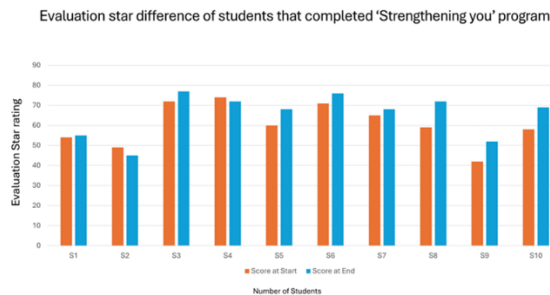
These duties have again been extended for 12 months by the DfE. We have reviewed our recent training offer to confirm next year's annual programme, developing on from the successes of this year to include targeted/funded work with Attachment Resource Community (ARC) and Raising attainment for disadvantaged youngsters (RADY) programmes during next academic year.

"The support we have had from your team has been amazing! The team are wonderful human beings and have made such a difference to my work. I spoke to my CEO of our MAT this week to tell what a difference it has made."
Please pass on my positive feedback because having another professional involved for me, as SENDCO/DSL/CFC teacher/teacher etc has been so supportive – both team members are just brilliant and worth their weight in gold."
Quote from a teacher sent to the attendance and children out of school team

Ofsted Ratings

The statutory guidance states that schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for cared for children. If any Cheshire East child is placed in a school rated below 'good' then virtual school advisors will visit every school prior to any child being placed to ensure that pastoral and curriculum support is of a good standard. Advisors will attend PEPs and track progress each term throughout the year of all children in schools graded below 'good' to ensure that children are well supported and are making progress. PEPs are completed immediately when schools' grades are moved below 'good' following Ofsted inspection to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. The chart below shows the proportion of pupils attending schools with identified Ofsted ratings.

* (16 schools) Unknown due to conversion to academy, out of area, independent, new schools, so they have not had their first inspection report.

Ofsted Ratings 2023/24

■ Outstanding ■ Good ■ Required Improvement ■ Unknown/blank
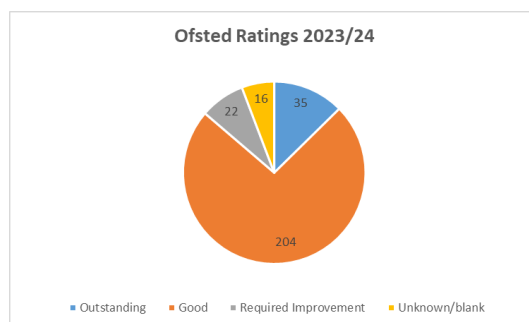
Special Educational Needs

**At the end of academic year 2023/24 there were:**
- 155 Cared for Children and Young People with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) across all years (0-18).
- None of our early year's cohort had an EHCP.
- 107 of our statutory school aged Cared for young people had an EHCP.
- 48 Year 12 and 13 young people had an EHCP.
- 16 of our Care Leavers (ages 19 – 21) had an EHCP.
- 123 EHCPs were maintained by Cheshire East for our Cared for Children and Care Leavers (0 – 21).

The virtual school has an identified SEN lead advisor who meets with advisors and the senior key workers from the SEND team monthly. This is to review cases to ensure effective timeliness and interventions are in place, plans are finalised, and advice received. The virtual school SEN lead also meets with advisors and feeds back to the SEND team on a half termly basis at present we are focusing on improving and strengthening Annual Reviews. This is to ensure annual reviews are taking place alongside the PEP and within statutory timescales, for both those young people with plans maintained in and out of authority. We continue to work closely with the SEN team and social care to make sure school moves are timely and well planned where possible, including those moves within a transition phase of education.

The virtual school has continued to embed cross-service working within the SEND team to ensure that children are in the correct school to meet their needs and making progress. Advisors are involved if an application for a needs assessment is made and are contacted by the SEND team to request any advice to be included in the assessment process. In cases where school moves are required for children with an EHCP there is support in place to ensure that all children have access to interim education whilst the consultation process takes place.

Pupil Premium Funding 2023/24

The virtual school's main budget is pupil premium plus, which is devolved to the local authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the virtual school head as to best promote achievement and progress of cared for children. The amount that was made available to the Local Authority for 2023/24 is £2,530 per child in care as reported on the March return. The guidance makes clear that while it is expected that the majority of this is used for direct support of children, it does not need to be allocated equally as some children will need less than £2,530 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also states that the pupil premium can be used to fund staff or central services such as training if they have a direct impact on improving the experience and outcomes for children.
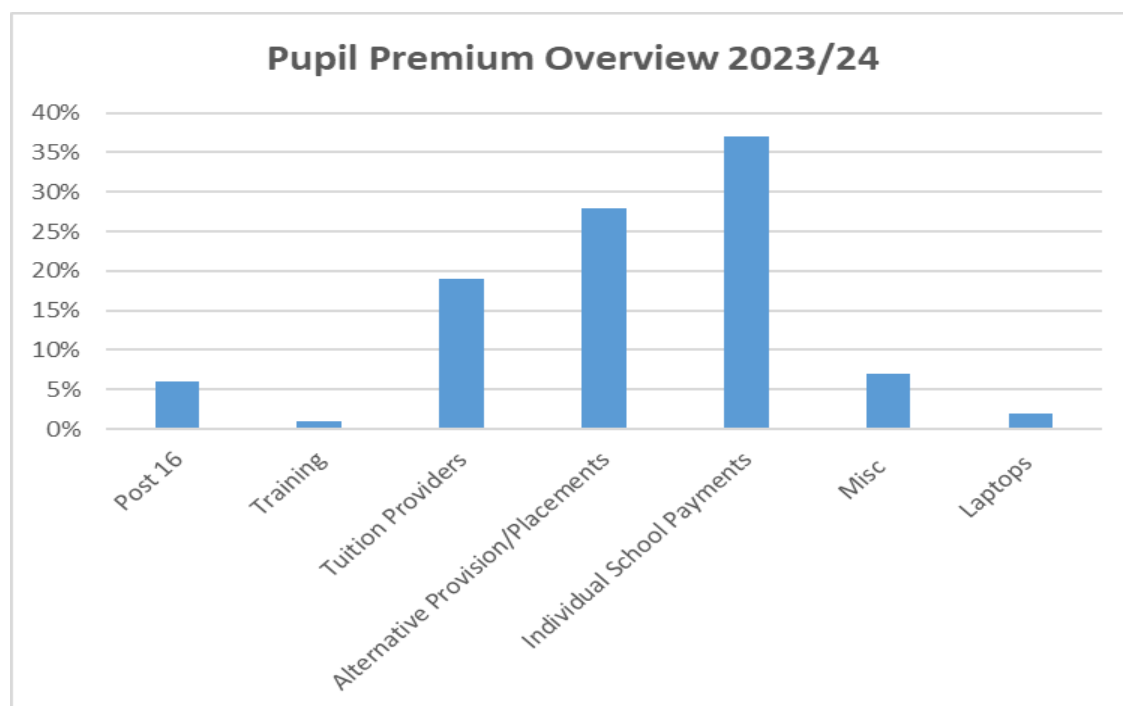
The main use of pupil premium plus was to fund intervention work and provisions delivered directly through schools/settings and identified through individual PEPs. The remaining funds have been used to provide support for children which is above and over what is offered as part of the usual school curriculum/ offer. These may include attending alternative provision sessions, as part of bespoke timetable packages for children who require additional support within mainstream school. These provisions offer a series of off-site support such as animal therapy or forest schools, having a weekly work placement to add variety, help with preparing for adulthood or funding specialist support such as counselling. Funds were also allocated to schools to support with remote learning, access targeted support or to prepare for transition. The aim of this was to ensure that children were supported regarding increasing their skills and knowledge before the exams/assessments and to support improving their preparation and confidence.

School age children in care are allocated pupil premium plus when a PEP is returned with a funding request form which outlines how this would be spent and the intended outcomes and, in some cases, funding was allocated to children outside this age range if the need was evident.

Case Study

Background:

Child A became cared for in September 2022 through a Police Protection Order. Child A started a level three two-year course in Applied Science at a local College in September 2022 following successful completion of GCSEs at a local high school. Child A does struggle with their mental health and is supported by CAMHS. Child A also has several other health needs and diagnosis. Child A has always had high aspirations to attend University after completing college, to study a science related subject, potentially infectious diseases. In November 2023 Child A was supported through a tier 4 placement.

Key Concerns during last academic year

There were huge concerns with Child A regarding mental health and the impact on next steps and education. We wanted to be able to support Child A to complete their course and fulfil their aspirations of going to university, whilst being mindful of the impact of this may have on his mental health.

Type of Intervention:

Access to PP+ funding to support 1-1 tuition at a local library. The tutor liaised closely with the tutor from the local college to ensure clear support and planning for course delivery and resources. There was a requirement for Child A to complete in person practical assessments in order to complete their course, it was arranged so that they were able to do this after their peers had finished for the day and was able to be supported by their foster carer. Their tutor from college also offered to meet with Child A weekly to support and discuss any concerns and progress. PP+ was also used to fund one day a week placement at a local work placement as part of their bespoke package.

Impact of Intervention:

Child A successfully completed their level 3 Applied Science course achieving three merits. Child A was offered a place at their preferred university to study a Biomedical Science Degree. Child A started their course in September 2024 and have shared that they are enjoying the start of their course and University life. Child A continues to have aspirations to work in the field of infectious diseases once they have completed their degree. Following on from their placement at the RSPCA Child A has started volunteering at an animal rescue centre.

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Below is an outline of some of the interventions supporting our children and young people.

Emotional literacy support assistant

ELSA (emotional literacy support assistant) is designed to build the capacity of schools, to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. This is achieved by training teaching assistants to develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of children and teenagers in their care. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. Within Cheshire east we have worked alongside our educational psychologists to fund delivery of ELSA for our three new learning mentors and additional places were allocated for designated teachers from Cheshire East schools to attend and to help support with their cared for children. This support will ensure that provision is in place for one-to-one or small groups with social, emotional, and mental health needs alongside school staff.

Letterbox Book Trust

The virtual school are supporting our children to have access to books and reading through funding Letterbox parcels; each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, math's games, stationery, and other high-quality materials once every month for six months. This year we have had a specific focus on signing up all our children moving into reception up to year 6 to receive the Letterbox Book Trust parcels to support them with their transition into their assessment years.

Recreational Activities

The virtual school has also supported children to access recreational activities which they may not normally be open for them to access. We have supported with additional funding for animal therapy, art therapy, residential trips, swimming lessons, music lessons for several instruments including piano, drums, singing, dance and performing arts including 1 CYP that attended and took LAMDA exams.

Our Space activities are based on the principles of Forest School. Their ethos is a holistic and inclusive approach that will empower individuals. Guided learning, review and reflection are key to their approach.

The private woodland site enables them to offer a wide range of activities for our young people. The aim is to boost their physical and emotional wellbeing by spending more time in the great outdoors!

Britannica

Britannica Digital Learning has been working in partnership with virtual schools across the UK since

2014 to help support the challenges that cared for children and young people face when online. We know it is important for parents/ carers to feel assured that children are using a safe, reliable website and one that they can explore independently and unsupervised. For 250 years, Encyclopedia Britannica's editorial team has collaborated with experts, scholars, and specialists to produce trusted content. Through working closely with authorities, carers, parents, and educators, we have been able to adapt this for the new generation of digital learners. Cheshire East virtual school has funded this to ensure that all children, parents, and carers have access to Britannica online digital learning platform.

Peak Pursuits

This past year some of our young people attended Astbury Watersports Centre as an alternative provision to supplement their education. Peak Pursuits and Astbury Watersports Centre offer a range of water and land-based activities including canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding and orienteering. Peak Pursuits specialises in working with schools and authorities to provide young people with the opportunity to develop their social skills and education through bespoke packages that aim to:

- Build resilience and self-confidence.
- Develop new physical skills.
- Reconnect with nature and promote mental health.
- Strengthen team-building abilities.
- Cultivate a positive attitude towards learning.

RSPCA

We commission animal based therapeutic work through the RSCPA exclusively for our cared for children for 2.5 hours per week. Some of the work and opportunities offered include:
● To see and learn about animals, their welfare and the work of a wildlife hospital and rehoming cattery
● Seeing and learning behind the scenes, for example, learn about how to help a poorly hedgehog
● Learn how to care for, and spend time with cats who need company while they wait for a forever home
● Learn about animal welfare and how we can all help
● Spend time outside in nature and in our garden spaces.
● Design, craft and practical activities

Work Based Learning Programmes

Within the virtual school we have supported funding children and young people to have access to structured work-based learning programmes which support children and young people with the transition from school to workplace. We ensure that all programmes are a structured employability pathway designed to ensure children are equipped with the tools they need to go into the world and become an independent employee, fully preparing them for adulthood. Alongside this the virtual school

also has an additional budget to fund a targeted programme for post 16 to support increasing engagement into education, employment, and training. For some young people with an education, health and care plan they have been able to access the step 16 programme which is work based learning alongside functional skills and other qualifications. This is a one-year programme to support them in readiness for their transition to education, employment and training.

Learning Mentors

The Virtual School had three learning mentors for school aged children last academic year. Each learning mentor is Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) trained or is currently receiving ELSA training. We also have a post-16 learning mentor who supports our young people upon leaving school and onto the next stages. Our learning mentors are an important part of our young people's journeys providing them with targeted sessions focusing on a variety of different needs as displayed in the diagram below. Each of our mentors has a dedicated caseload of children and young people and sessions are planned through linking with the designated teachers, social care, virtual school advisors and additional professionals.

Support available through the Virtual School Learning Mentors

- Transition support including visits
- Improving confidence and self esteem
- Discussing emotional wellbeing and feelings
- Developing relationships and social skills
- The venture with confidence program

My Feelings Iceberg
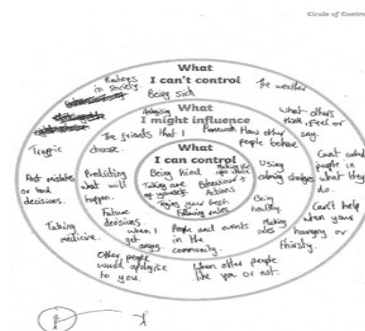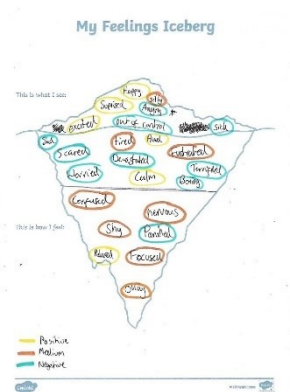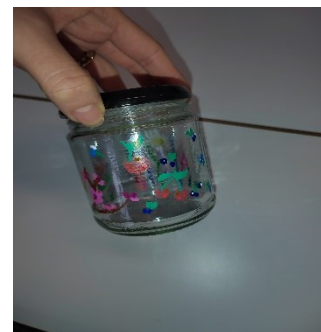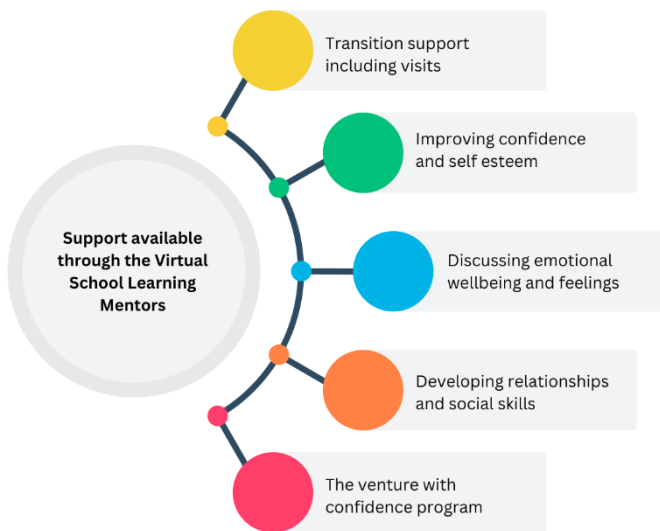
Virtual School Post 16 Tutor

The Virtual School Post 16 Tutor offers tailored 1:1 tuition for 16–18-year-olds, focusing primarily on young people who are currently not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET) and often lack formal qualifications. This personalised support extends to those under 16 and over 18 when there's a specific requirement for additional assistance, facilitating effective transition planning for these learners. The primary aim of 1:1 tuition is to help students gain qualifications, enhance their confidence, engage in positive activities, and progress into further education, employment, or vocational training.

Personalised Learning

The 1:1 tuition offer includes Functional Skills in Math's and English, with every student having access to an online learning resource tailored to their individual needs. Upon enrolment, students complete an initial assessment test to determine their current skill level, allowing for the creation of a personalised learning plan. During the 2023/2024 academic year, a total of 21 students were supported through this initiative. The qualifications achieved in Functional Skills underscore its effectiveness, with students completing various levels in Math's and English: 4 students attained Math's Entry 2, while others achieved qualifications ranging from Entry 3 to Level 2.

ESOL

In addition to core subjects, this initiative emphasizes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), specifically targeting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) who have recently entered care. These students work at their own pace, developing portfolios that cover 16 different ESOL topics. The primary aim is to introduce English to non-speakers at the Pre-Entry Level and enhance their language skills at Entry Levels 1 and 2. This year, 10 students received 1:1 intervention, preparing them for their upcoming ESOL courses and ensuring readiness to transition to college in September 2024.

Community Involvement and ASDAN

ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) initiatives are also included, where students plan, prepare, and deliver Community Projects to achieve an accredited Citizenship Short Course certificate. In the current academic year, 13 students successfully earned this certificate, thereby gaining valuable skills and experience in community involvement. Additionally, students were supported in completing an online Food Safety Level 1 course, with 10 students successfully attaining this qualification.

Volunteering and Personal Development

To bolster personal development, particularly for those whom are currently NEET, the initiative encourages volunteering. Participation in volunteer activities helps young people build skills and confidence, often facilitating trust and engagement with the Post 16 tutor. Notable volunteering experiences included working in care homes, where young people engaged in activities with residents and contributed to garden maintenance, and at a dog rescue facility, where they helped clean and refurbish outdoor enclosures. Such experiences not only foster a sense of community but also encourage students to consider engaging in 1:1 tuition.

Post 16 Learning Mentor

Virtual School post 16 learning mentor offers specific support to our young people with re-engaging back into education, employment, and training. There was a total of 33 referrals, which was an increase of 9 on the previous year. Below is a chart showing the reasons for the referrals she has had this year:
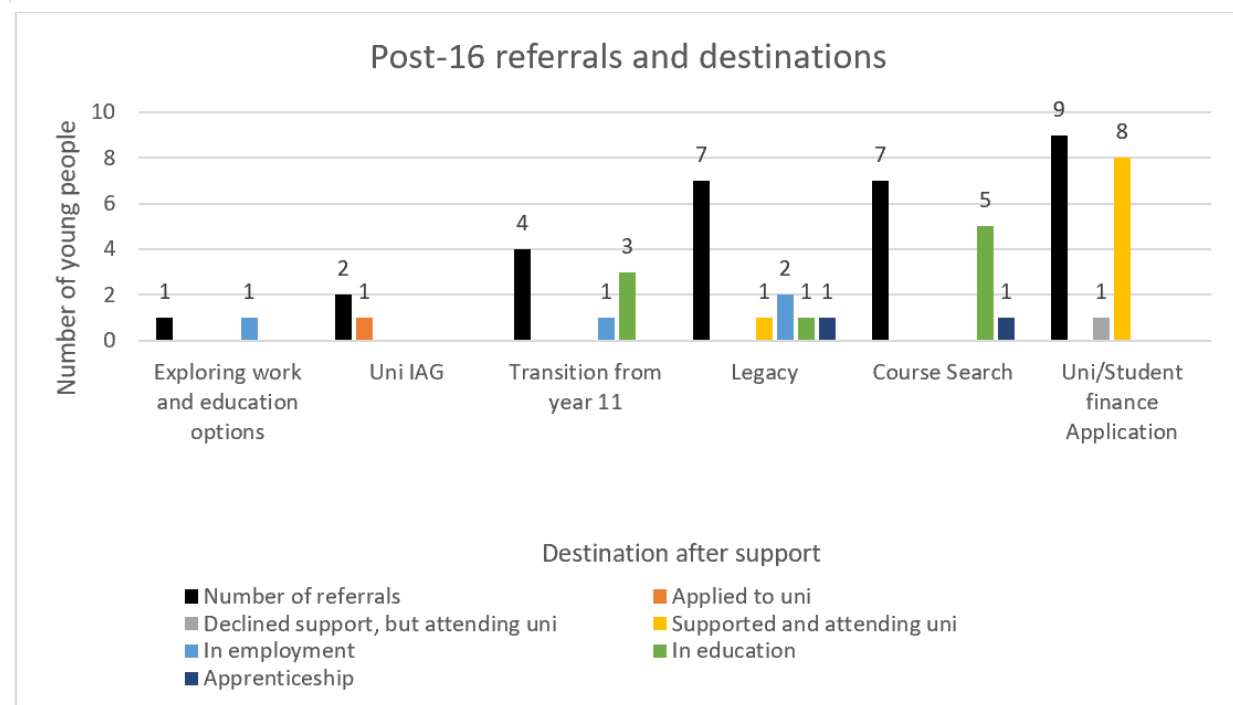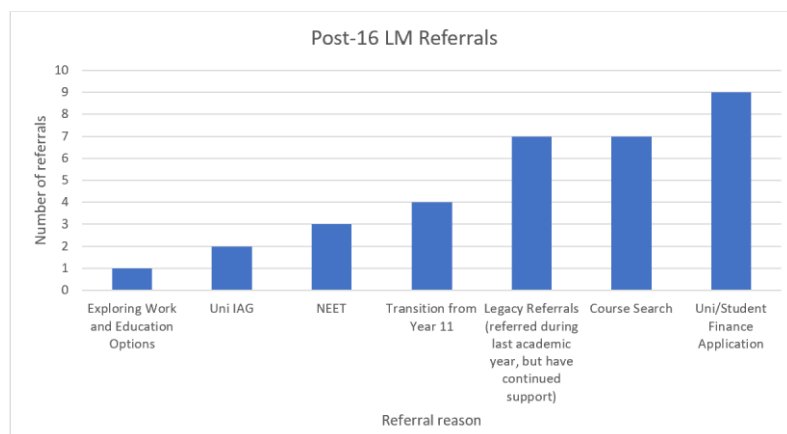
Case study

Case Study:

Child A was in year 11, in their last year at school
Was referred to Post-16 Learning Mentor for transition support

Key concerns:

New into care, and only recently enrolled in school
School unsure what GCSEs they would be taking
No current post-16 progression plan
English not their first language

Type of intervention:

Support from post 16 learning mentor to explore post-16 options and build a trusting relationship
Post 16 learning mentor to liaise with the school and young person to formulate a clear pathway plan

Impact of intervention:

Young person stated they wanted to become an air steward, so the learning mentor researched all available courses nearby. The learning mentor was also in regular discussion with the school and social care to see what exams would be taken, and whether there was the option for young person to stay on another year to take further GCSEs. However, Child A was open and honest about their wishes, and said that they really wanted to attend college, in particular, one in Manchester. The learning mentor researched all available options, public transport times, costs, and locations, but ultimately social care felt that it was too far for them to travel each day.

After researching other course options that Child A had suggested, they had a choice of courses at a different college, and a visit was suggested. Child A attended an open day, and realised the college was nice, and they were happy to apply there. They enrolled at college and started in September, where they are making good progress.

Venture with Confidence Programme

This year we worked closely with our care leavers service to run a joint programme for children who are not in education, employment, Venture with Confidence. The 12-week programme aims to help them into employment, further education, or training.

The objective of the programme is to support our young people to:

- Recognise their skills
- Develop further skills
- Build their confidence
- Explore ideas of what they might like to do in the future
- Arrange work experience
- Build relationships with local groups and organisations
- Do something for their local community

The young people also had the opportunity to achieve an ASDAN (Award scheme development and accreditation network) certificate in citizenship, and food safety Level 1.

The 'Venture with Confidence' scheme is run by members of virtual school team and care leaver service. The teams worked together with other services including Youth Support Service, Pure Insight, and Higher Horizons. During the 12-week course the young people took part in team building activities. They also enjoyed employability workshops and completed a community project. This year the young people organised and completed a 12-hour bikeathon to raise enough money to replace the cooker at the Lighthouse Church in Crewe. With support from the staff team, wider Cheshire East staff, external services and even members of the public, the team managed to raise nearly £900!

Comments from young people who took part in the programme……

 "I was feeling quite isolated in my flat and this programme has got me out of the house and spending time with others, which has supported my mental health"

"Doing Venture was great fun and helped me see what I am good at"

" The Bikeathon was hard work, but really good fun on the day and we raised money to help others, which I am proud of"

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and seeing the college helped me to make the decision to return in September"

12 young people were referred and took part in the programme. One young person was referred part way through the programme as they were new into care. Following the completion of the programme, of the 12 young people, 8 moved into education, 1 joined the Prince's Trust, 1 gained an apprenticeship, and 2 continue to be supported to look for work or education.

Bikeathon
20th June
Crewe Lifestyle centre

buckets for change
Speakers Music
Karieoke
busking
Job roles / Team leader / ride slots / Times of arriving
Safeguarding / risk assessments / Medical issues / hydra-
tion
Fancy dress
Face paint
glow in the dark sticks.
Rest area

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE

27

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The PEP is the document which records the children's education provision, achievements and how the school or other provider will help to improve their outcomes. It is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school to ensure that there are PEPs in place and the virtual school has the duty to monitor these and provide advice and support as necessary. The PEP should be reviewed each term at a meeting between school, carers, young people, and social workers. The virtual school attends all initial PEPs for children and young people between the ages of three and eighteen years old.

We have continued to develop the PEP following feedback from schools to further enhance the quality and content, with almost all primary and secondary schools now effectively using the PEP portal system. This year we have focused on getting the post 16 and early years settings onto the portal system and we will continue to do so across all ages to ensure we are using our systems in the most efficient way.

Virtual school advisors support all initial PEP meetings and complete the first PEP which will provide a template and standard for future support. This includes ensuring actions and targets are specific and measurable. These PEP meetings take place within 20 working days and are available for the first cared for review meeting. PEPs are subsequently reviewed each term with the education provider taking a lead alongside social care by reviewing the child's progress, the impact of the previous actions and updating the PEP targets where appropriate.

There is a quality assurance process in place within the virtual school team where each PEP is reviewed and categorised based on the level of support needs of the child. Those with the highest support needs are rated as red, in which case the advisor will attend all PEPs and will provide more frequent contact with the child, carer, school and social worker. Cases rated as amber may require less oversight from the advisor whilst those rated as green are monitored with attendance at one PEP per year. The virtual school criteria involvement in the PEP is:

- New into care
- School or placement move
- Moved out of Borough
- Red rated cases
- Repeat suspensions
- Attendance below 90%
- Need for independent chair.

Exemplar PEPs are shared across localities during training sessions to share good practice.
The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. As well as updates on their attainment and progress this should include discussion of their attitude, emotional state, friendships etc. During next academic year we will be having specific focus on improving alignment of the EHCP annual review and PEP meetings.

Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans

After the summer window for PEPs had closed the virtual school completed quality assurance to have oversight of the number of PEPs completed, how many PEPs were considered as 'satisfactory' or better, and how many young people we considered to be 'Red'. Equally, we completed a moderation of the PEPs from all advisors to ensure a consistent approach in quality assurance. This is a process we will

repeat in each subsequent term in the new academic year.

Below is the outcome from our PEP moderation for the Summer term 24 for our school aged Cared for Children (5% of completed PEP = 17 of the completed PEPs were moderated)

	Percentage of PEPs	Number of PEPs
PEPs that were moderated as Red	29.4%	5
PEPs that were moderated as Amber	41.18%	7
PEPs that were moderated as Green	29.4%	5
PEPs that were moderated as 'requires improvement'	0%	0
PEPs that were moderated as 'satisfactory'	70.6%	12
PEPs that were moderated as 'good'	29.4%	5

There is a quality assurance (QA) process which has been developed jointly by the virtual school and the designated teachers, this has ensured that the quality of PEPs continues to be strengthened to support schools to develop their own practice, this is reviewed each year to ensure the process is robust. Will have a specific focus this year on further strengthening this process with the virtual school headteacher/deputy headteacher undertaking moderation and deep dive audits and supporting to feedback to schools/settings and social care to ensure we are sharing good practice and further improve the quality and completion rates of PEPs; this will be monitored and tracked to evidence impact throughout this year.

99.5% of school aged children received at least one PEP within the school year.

Following the successful implementation of our integrated PEPs within Liquid Logic, we currently have 388 primary and secondary schools effectively using this system. We have further improved the content of the PEP following working with our schools and have developed a signs of safety approach with more emphasis on SMART targets ensuring pupil premium is reviewed in detail for impact. We have now continued with the development of our integrated PEP system to enable it to be used for post 16 and we have now 60 colleges using the system effectively. We are also continuing with the development to include early years to ensure consistency across all age ranges and currently have 46 nurseries using the PEP portal effectively. This year we will be further developing the PEP system to ensure that preparing for adulthood is included to support careers and aspirations for all children/young people.

PEPs completed academic year 2023-24

Primary school aged children Completed PEPs 2023-24		
Autumn Term 2023	**Spring Term 2024**	**Summer Term 2024**
94 Children in care	105 Children in care	134 Children in care
93 PEPs completed	103 PEPs completed	134 PEPs completed
99% PEPs completed	98% PEPs completed	100% PEPs completed

Primary school - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24		
1 PEP completed	**2 PEPs completed**	**3 PEPs completed**
25	106	91

PEPs completed academic year 2023-24

Secondary school aged children Completed PEPs 2023-24		
Autumn Term 2023	**Spring Term 2024**	**Summer Term 2024**
168 Children in care	181 Children in care	210 Children in care
167 PEPs completed	174 PEPs completed	183 PEPs completed
99% PEPs completed	96% PEPs completed	87% PEPs completed

Secondary school - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24		
1 PEP completed	2 PEPs completed	3 PEPs completed
23	160	148

PEPs completed academic year 2023-24

Post 16 Completed PEPs 2023-24		
Autumn Term 2023	Spring Term 2024	Summer Term 2024
168 Children in care	177 Children in care	183 Children in care
159 PEPs completed	153 PEPs completed	125 PEPs completed
95% PEPs completed	86% PEPs completed	68% PEPs completed
NCP 4	NCP 8	NCP 29

*Nb if a young person has turned 18 and they are NEET, they will be monitored through the NEET Challenge Panel monthly (NCP).

Post 16 - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24		
1 PEP completed	2 PEPs completed	3 PEPs completed
182	138	107

Attendance

The virtual school monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company who contact schools to collect a record of attendance. This data is then used to track and monitor all children to ensure effective and timely support is in place. Within the virtual school we have two specialist attendance officers that monitor attendance daily and work with schools and partners to ensure timely support is in place.

	2021/2022	**2022/2023**	**2023/2024**
Primary attendance %	86.2%	94.18%	95.55%
Secondary attendance %	86.3%	89.3%	89.06%
Children with 100% Attendance	13% (39 children)	7.4% (21 children)	18.86% (53 children)
Children with above 95% Attendance	55.4% (163 children)	58% (164 Children)	66.9% (188 children)

CLA Data from DfE publication Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK
This provides figures for children looked after continuously for 12+months *
All pupils data from DfE publication Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK
There is information available for All pupils Cheshire East, NW and National for combined August 2023 and Spring 2024 terms, but this is not available for cared for children.

% Attendance	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Cheshire East-LAC* Attendance	88.8	93.3	93.3	92.3%
Northwest-LAC Attendance	90.1	92.2	91.5	
England-LAC Attendance	90.9	92.2	91.7	
Cheshire East- All pupils Attendance	95.7	92.6	93.3	
Northwest-All pupils Attendance	95.3	92.5	92.7	
England-All pupils Attendance	95.4	92.4	92.6	

*LAC stands for looked after children which are known as cared for children in Cheshire East.

National Attendance data as in the table above for the academic 2023/24 has not been fully collected yet and as such comparative full year data will not be available until next year.

Multi- Disciplinary Team Meeting
At the end of this academic year, we started to pilot targeted MDT (Multi-disciplinary team) meetings focused specifically on improving attendance of identified children/young people. This is a new pilot and will be monitored throughout the year to show whether this is an effective way to support the individual child's attendance. MDT Meeting focus is initially to target children with below 75% attendance (figures for this data can be found below).

A meeting will be initiated by the specialist attendance officer to include school, social worker, foster carer/residential manager or key worker /parent and any other relevant professional involved with the child that could support attendance.
The meeting will run in 3 stages over a period of 6 weeks. Barriers are discussed and actions set to support the child.
- Initial meeting
- Update after 2 weeks
- Review after a further 4 weeks

	Number of Young People with attendance below 75%	Percentage of Young People with attendance below 75%
2021/2022	51	13.5%
2022/2023	53	14%
2023/2024	51	13.2%

Case Study

Background:
Pupil C was a reception age child with attendance of 68.5% at the time of the referral from their virtual school advisor,

Type of Intervention:
Following a statutory PEP meeting outlining concerns regarding attendance and the impact this was having on Pupil C's wellbeing and academic progress a virtual school advisor referred Pupil C for support via an attendance MDT approach to bring all services and teams together to provide a holistic approach and support for both the child and family.

Impact of Intervention:
During, and after, the MDT approach we observed many positive impacts. First and foremost, attendance and punctuality improved, and attendance raised to 84% (+20% on attendance at the beginning of MDT meetings). Pupil C's Mum commented how she was very proud of how much she has achieved and felt so much better in herself, Mum also began attending appointments for her mental health which continues to this day. She felt happy to see the difference in Pupil C's sleep pattern, playfulness, and a positive change in eating habits. Intensive support was beneficial and the changes in sleep, toileting and behaviour have greatly improved which has impacted on the positive rise in attendance, behaviour, and engagement at school. Equally, school have noticed a positive change in presentation, behaviour, and attendance. Pupil C now enjoys reading at home as books and toys have been provided. This has lead to Pupil C responding well within school, and they are noticeably happier and enjoys working with the teaching assistant. Pupil C has also been able to form positive friendships at school supported by his rise in attendance and confidence.
Both Mum and school continue to have good communication, and attendance has remained positive after

support was withdrawn.

Alternative Provisions

Recognising that Alternative Provisions are a key aspect of many young people's education package, this year we introduced our new Alternative Provision Guidance and Process. Underpinned by guidance from the Department for Education (Alternative provision - GOV.UK) we wanted greater assurances as to the quality of Alternative Provision attended by our Cared for Children, and a better understanding of how this impacted their weekly timetables. As such, we brought in a referral and quality assurance process to better support our schools we work with to effectively record, monitor and safeguard our young people.

Alternative Provision Referral Process

If a school was considering utilising Alternative Provision in the education of one of our Cared for Children, we asked that parents/carers, social worker, virtual school advisors, and the child themselves, were involved in the decision making and planning process. Once this has been agreed the school's Designated Teacher would complete our referral form that asked for information as to what strategies had been tried prior to commissioning AP, what the targeted piece of work for them to complete would be, when their place within the AP was planned for review, and copies of all quality assurance documentation that school had completed in advance of the referral.

All of this information then fed into our Alternative Provision tracker that allowed us to monitor the AP's role in their education more robustly. This data was managed by advisors individually but then reviewed on a monthly basis with our attendance team. Having this oversight and tracking in place meant we were assured as to the pieces of work being done with the children and young people, but this also meant we could ensure the use of Alternative Provisions were time-bound and students were reintegrated back into mainstream education in a timely manner (where appropriate). This process was presented to, and agreed by, our Board of Governors in December 2023.

Data around Alternative Provisions

Of the 32 young people who were attending an Alternative Provision at the end of 2023/2024, 20 were in Ofsted Registered provisions.

54 young people attended an Alternative Provision for at least part of their timetable in 2023/2024, and 40.7% of these then either transitioned back into their original home school or moved on to other full time education provisions once the work within the AP had concluded.

Only young people who were attending an AP that was Ofsted Registered were placed there on a full-time basis – no one attended an unregistered AP for more than 15 hours per week.

All Alternative Provisions were quality assured by a combination of the home school, the Virtual School, Ofsted, or the Local Authority.

Exclusions

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared for child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. During 2023/24 the virtual school has been quick in its response to exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and intervention required. If an exclusion was unavoidable then there were similar meetings held afterwards to try and avoid any repeat exclusions for children. Schools or carers are asked to inform the virtual school whenever an exclusion takes place. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEP meetings will be held to check that all necessary support is being given.

The virtual school has funded places at both the Fermain Academy and Cornerstones, and this has contributed to the reduction in some instances of repeat fixed term exclusions and ensured that the children have received the right support at the right time. The staff have accessed training through the virtual school on understanding the needs of cared for children and how to support children with insecure attachment; pupil premium funding has been used to help provide a mentor/key worker to support our children as a cared for champion.

There have not been any cases of a cared for child being permanently excluded in the academic year 2023/24.

Last academic year 2022/23 there were 8 suspensions (for a total of five children) of primary school age. This academic year 2023/2024 there were 15 suspensions (for a total of 7 children) of primary school age.

Last year 2022/23 showed a decrease in numbers to 65 suspensions for 22 secondary age children. However, this academic year 2023/2024 there were 121 suspensions (for a total 41 children) of secondary school age young people.

The table below outlines fixed term exclusion data from 2021-2024 which shows Cheshire East and are below both North-West and national figures. National Attendance data as in the table below for the academic 2023/24 has not been fully collected yet and as such comparative full year data will not be available until next year.

% Of pupils with at least one suspension from school	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Cheshire East % LAC*	8.43	8.10	13.26	12.46
CE all CYP	1.79	2.42	2.70	
Northwest % LAC* *	9.25	11.97		
England % LAC**	9.80	12.22		

CLA Data from DfE publication Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK
*This provides figures for children looked after continuously for 12+months
** This is the most current data available on these demographics within the public domain

Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

Participation of young people

The Virtual School recognises that young people are at the heart of all its work and that to be effective in helping young people to succeed in education, their wishes and feelings must be listened to. Each year we celebrate the success of our children and young people through our 'STAR' awards jointly coordinated and led across children's services.

All young people are invited to contribute to their PEPs, either by attending the meeting or by sharing their thoughts on the 'My Voice' form which can be presented at the meeting on their behalf. Specific interventions and plans are influenced by this input in a variety of ways such as:

- Deciding what subjects to have tutoring in and when/where this takes place based on aspirations
- Agreeing targets for improvement in attendance or behaviour
- Identifying any issues/concerns in school
- Deciding whether additional adult support, e.g., mentor is required

Where children are not attaining and are struggling in school the Virtual School Advisor works 1:1 to gain understanding from the child of what support can be put in place. The Virtual School has dedicated Learning Mentors who work 1:1 with children, they work closely with schools to empower and train staff to continue to support children/young people.

In addition to contributing to their Personal Education Plan meetings, our young people form an essential part of significant decisions made within the Virtual School. Last year, two of our care experienced young people helped us make our most recent appointment within the Learning Mentor team – on this day they interviewed the prospective candidates and spoke about their experiences of foster care and what they appreciated in adults who work with them. Similarly, we regularly attend events held by the Participation Team to present changes we hope to make in the ways we work, and the offer we have for our children. For example, our young people helped us to decide upon necessary changes to our new PEP (which will be coming in 2024/2025) to reflect what they want their PEPs to look like and decided upon which literature subscription we would be commissioning in the forthcoming academic year.

"I really enjoyed helping to interview for the new learning mentor. She is very good because she listens to what you say, respects it, and cares about it. We asked her lots of questions, played Jenga, and she was very kind and respectful to what we wanted to say."

Quotation from Cared for Young People in Year 7 and 8

Attainment

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments

The EYFS profile is a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). A new EYFS was introduced in September 2021 with revised early learning goals (ELG's) making data comparison with last year possible.

The EYFS profile is intended to provide a reliable, valid, and accurate assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS. It is made up of an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors.

For each ELG, teachers must judge whether a child is:
  • meeting the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (expected); or
  • not yet reaching this level (emerging)

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

There were 13 cared for children in reception as of July 2024 with 6 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months as of 31 March). Of the 6 eligible reception age children 3 reached a good level of development 50% which is an increase of 10% from the previous academic year.

Group	Pupils	% Of results received
Full Cohort	13	100%
Out of area	0	
Out of Age Range	0	
Results received for eligible Reception C4C	6	100%
Achieving GLD	3	50%

Key Stage 1

Year 1 Phonics

As of July 2024, there were 12 cared for children in total and 6 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024). We have received results for all 12 children. Of the whole cohort of 12 cared for children, 6 passed the phonics test. Of the 6 in the eligible cohort, 3 passed the phonics test and 2 were disapplied but can be entered in Year 2.
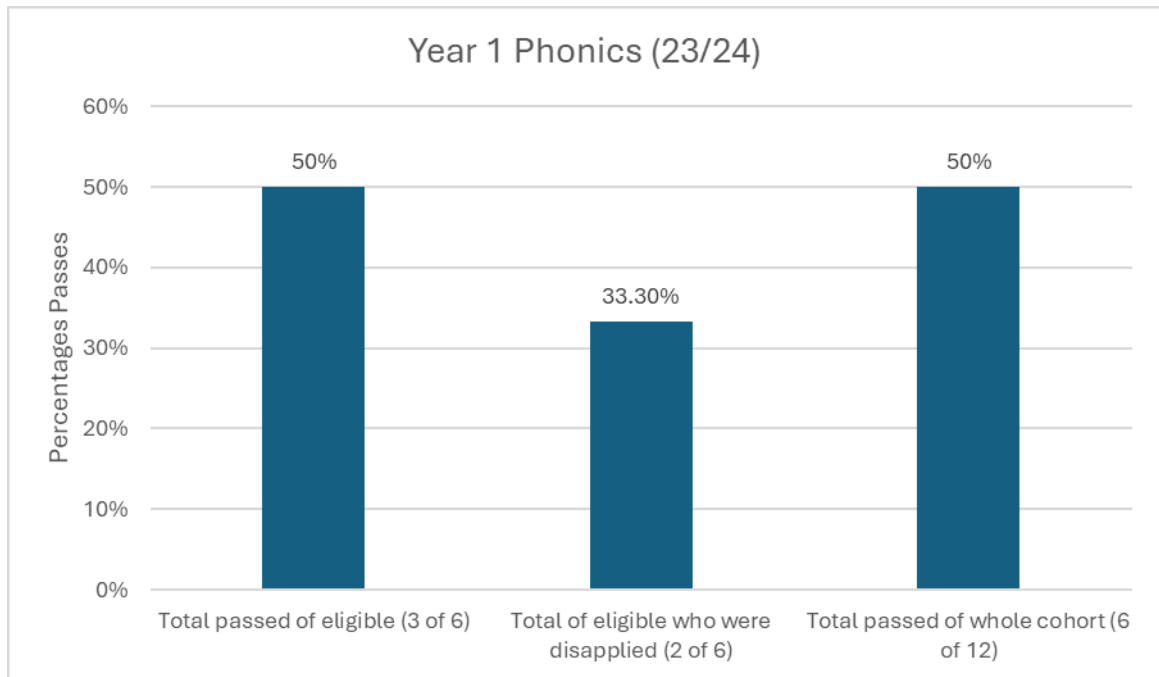
Year 2 Phonics

As of July 2024, there were 20 cared for children in total and 12 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024). We have received results for all 20 children from the Year 2 cohort.

Of the whole cohort of 20, 7 passed phonics in 2023, a further 4 passed in 2024. Of the 12 eligible cohort, 4 passed in 2023, and one further child passed in 2024. This means 11 of the 17 (64.7%) young people entered for their phonics test over the last two years have achieved the expected benchmark of 32 out of 40.

SATs

It is no longer a statutory requirement to report Key Stage 1 SATs results to the Local Authority and so this data is not available.

Key Stage 2

As of July 2024, there were 19 cared for children with 12 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

A total of 1 6 children (11 eligible children) were entered for the SATS tests meaning 84.2% of our Year 6 cohort were entered for their SATs this past academic year.

The 3 remaining children did not sit SATs as it was not appropriate for the child due to their academic profile and/or their specific Special Education Needs.

In whole cohort (total of 19 children, 3 whom we are yet to receive data on)	Cheshire East			All Children	
	All children (19)	Eligible cohort (12 children)	% Of eligible cohort (12 children)	National	Regional
Achieved expected standard or Greater Depth in Writing	4	3	25%	72%	70%
Achieved greater depth in Writing	0	0	0%	13%	11%
Achieved standard in Reading	12	9	75%	74%	73%
Achieved standard in Maths	8	5	41.6 %	73%	73%
Achieved standard in GPS	9	7	58.3%	72%	72%
Achieved standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	3	2	16.6%	61%	59%

Key Stage 4

At the end of the academic year July 2024, there were 47 Cheshire East cared for children. Of the 47 there were 30 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

Of the 47 cared for children, 26 were entered for GCSEs. Of the 30 in the eligible cohort, 17 of these were entered for GCSEs.

This year's cohort of young people – 25.5% (12 young people) of our Year 11 cohort were enrolled at a specialist provision, 6% (3 young people) attended a Pupil Referral Unit and 2% (1 young person) was an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child who was not entered for any examinations as they became a Cheshire East Cared for Child very late in the academic year. This means that roughly a third of our Year 11 cohort were either not entered for any examination, sat a reduced number of qualifications, or followed an alternative curriculum to the standard GCSE pathway. Of the children not entered for GCSEs, a number of these gained a range of other functional skills qualifications or awards.

	Number of eligible cohort 30 children	Number in full cohort 47	Eligible cohort %	Number of entered eligible cohort (17)	Entered eligible cohort %
Achieving Strong Pass (9-5) in English and mathematics	3	4	10	3	17.6
Achieving Standard Pass (9-4) in English and mathematics	5	6	16.7	5	29.4
Achieving Strong Pass (9-5) in English	5	6	16.7	5	29.4
Achieving Strong Pass (9 - 5) in mathematics	4	6	13.3	4	23.5
Achieving Standard Pass (9 - 4) in English	7	9	23.3	7	41.2
Achieving Standard Pass (9 - 4) in mathematics	7	10	23.3	7	41.2

% Achieved Level 9-4

	2023-24 (17 eligible entered)	2023-24 (30 all entered)	2022-23 (24 eligble entered)	2022-23 (39 all entered)	2021-22 (36 eligible entered)	2021-22(49 all entered)	National CLA 2022-23	North West CLA 2022-23	National CLA 2021-22	North West CLA 2021-22
English	41.2	23.3	54.2	33.3	58.3	42.9				
Maths	41.2	23.3	50	30.8	38.9	28.6				
Eng/Maths	29.4	16.7	41.7	25.6	26.2	24.5	20	19.8	22.1	22.6

English   Maths   Eng/Maths

% Achieved Level 9-5

	2023-24 (17 entered eligible)	2023-24 (30 all eligible	2022-23 (24 entered)	2022-23 (39 all eligible)	2021-22 (36 entered)	2021-22(49 all eligible)
English	29.4	16.7	25	15.4	44.4	32.7
Maths	23.5	13.3	25	15.4	19.4	14.3
Eng/Maths	17.6	10	12.5	7.7	16.7	12.2

English   Maths   Eng/Maths

Post-16 education, employment, and training

Year 12
At the end of the academic year 2023/2024, there were 79 students in total in year 12.
Of this, 14 were not in education, employment, or training (17.72%).
10 young people were re-engaged through various activities, including Venture with Confidence, Post 16 tutor and work experience opportunities.
Of the 79 young people, 68 had clear pathway plan for September (86.07%) These next steps and pathways included, employment, apprenticeships and further education and training or re-engagement activities.

Of the 11 young people who did not have a pathway for September, one young person is pregnant and concentrating on her pregnancy. The virtual school continue to support, working alongside social care and wider services to ensure that all young people have access to local support to explore their options for moving into a positive destination.

Of 79 young people in year 12, 48 accessed further education (although one young person left due to pregnancy after completing an exam), 2 were on an apprenticeship and 5 were working.

FE Education	Bespoke Provision	Vocational Entry Level	Level 1:	Level 2:	Level 3 (first year)	A Levels (1st year)
No of Students 29	1	1	6	10	7	4

ESOL	Pre Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
19	8	9	2	0	0
Maths	**Pre Entry**	**Entry 1**	**Entry 2**	**Entry 3**	**Level 1**
18		10		8	0

Year 13
At the end of the academic year 2023/2024, there were 104 students in year 13.
83 young people had a positive destination in place for September 2024 (79.81%). These pathways include university, college/training, work, and apprenticeships.
Of the 104 young people, 21 were not accessing education, employment, or training which equates 20.19%, this was a slight decrease compared to the same time last year.
All these young people will continue to be supported by the cared for and care leavers team collaborating with the virtual school advisor and wider services to ensure all support is in place.
NEET Challenge panel takes places monthly, where young people who are NEET and able to work are discussed and appropriate actions of support agreed.

Apprenticeships

Four young people in Year 13 are currently on an apprenticeship.
One is working towards a L2 in customer service.
Two are working towards a Level 2 in Early Years
One is working towards a L3 in Youth work.

Other destinations

There were 32 young people who were not in education at the end of year 13
Of these young people there were
11 in employment
2 in HMP
4 in re-engagement activities (2 on Venture with Confidence and 2 on the Cygnet programme)
15 young people were not in any form of education, employment or training.
Of the 15 NEET young people, those who were able to look for work receive support to explore options available to them.

Year 13 Educational Achievements

Students in Post 16 EET	Bespoke Provision	Entry Level	Level 1:	Level 2:	Level 3 (1st year)	Level 3 (2nd year)
36	1	4	4	9	4	14

ESOL	Pre-Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
32	7	12	8	5	
Maths	**Pre-Entry**	**Entry 1**	**Entry 2**	**Entry 3**	**Level 1**
28		10	10	8	

A Level results and HE destinations

Of the 11 young people who completed their A Levels/ Level 3 qualifications the following grades were achieved:
L3 Diploma in Applied science - Distinction*, Distinction
L3 Diploma in IT - Distinction
L3 Extended Diploma in Games Development- Pass
L3 Diploma in Creative Practice and Design- Pass
L3 Extended Diploma in Animal Management Foundation- Distinction*, Distinction*, Distinction
L3 Diploma in Digital Media- Distinction
L3 Diploma in ICT- Merit
L3 Diploma in Performing and Production Arts- Distinction
L3 Applied Science- Merit, Merit, Merit
A Level Psychology- B
A level Biology – B
A Level Maths- C
A Level Chemistry- C
A level PE- B
A Level English Language– B
A Level Biology – C
A Level English Language- D
A Level Sociology- D
A Level Media Studies- D

Destinations

One young person wants an apprenticeship, is currently NEET and actively looking and receiving support from the apprenticeship co-ordinator.

One young person has a high-level apprenticeship in Insurance.

One young person is working full time for an insurance company.

9 young people have gained a place on their preferred choice of university.

The following courses are being studied at different universities.

Popular Music Performance at BIMM

Law at MMU

IT at Teesside

HNC Media at Hopwood Hall

Wildlife Conservation at Salford

Media at Edge Hill

Dance at Milton Keynes

Bio Medical Science at Keele

Chemical Engineering at Newcastle

Oversight for young people moving on from year 13 will be by the care leaver EET manager and transition meetings have taken place between the Post 16 virtual Adviser and EET manager in the lead up to the new academic year to ensure smooth transition and support is in place.

During the next academic year 2024/25 the key priorities for the virtual school are:

1.   Work alongside partners to further strengthen the inclusive practice across all schools and settings to ensure children have access to the right support at the right time. This will include a key focus on improving the outcomes of the most disadvantaged children.
2.   Work alongside our attendance and out of school to team to support to embed 'attendance is everybody's business to ensure a key focus on improving attendance for all children.
3.   Improve the overall attendance of all cared for children with a specific focus on those who are persistently and severely absent and post 16 learners.
4.   Strengthen and monitor the offer for our extended duties for children with a social worker, monitor and track impact of both universal and targeted support.
5.   Ensure a clear focus on early years and primary children to support to ensure improvements in overall progress and gaps in learning.
6.   Ensure we continue to have a clear focus on tracking and monitoring attainment and progress regularly to ensure gaps in learning are identified early for access to support and interventions.
7.   Develop and further strengthen our training offer across all schools and settings, enhancing the opportunity to share good practice and peer support.
8.   Continue to work with schools and settings to further strengthen the quality of PEPs and ensuring clear focus on measuring impact and outcomes for our children and young people to improve the overall quality and content of PEPS
9.   Continue to work closely with our care leavers and youth support team to ensure we have a clear focus   on reduction of young people not in education, employment or training.
10.   Continue to strengthen the work alongside SEND service to maintain a focus on our CYP with special educational needs, ensuring they have access to the right support to meet their needs and achieve their outcomes.

The Lost Girl

Lost in the crowd
Lost in the noise
She thought she knew the way to go
She wandered clumsily
Wind swept across her face
Standing so still.

Lost in a world, that scares me to death
Her, not knowing what to do next
Her tears trickled down her face
She felt alone
Little did she know...

She was going to be found...

Poem by Cared for Child (A

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Attendance Data

2023/2024 ATTENDANCE

2023/2024 ATTENDANCE DATA	OVERALL ATTENDANCE
WHOLE COHORT	90%
YEAR 11 (47)	76.03%
YEAR 10 (44)	86.43
YEAR 9 (37)	86.12
YEAR 8 (39)	91.52%
YEAR 7 (31)	92.9%
YEAR 6(19)	96.32%
YEAR 5 (21)	95.82%
YEAR 4 (23)	97.07%
YEAR 3 (20)	97.23%
YEAR 2 (20)	92.29%
YEAR 1 (12)	92.01%
RECEPTION (13)	95.51%

2023/2024 PERSISTENT ABSENCE

2023/2024 DATA	PERSISTENT ABSENTEES, BELOW 90%
WHOLE COHORT	30.17%
YEAR 11 (35)	8.73%
YEAR 10 (15)	3.74%
YEAR 9 (17)	4.24%
YEAR 8(17)	4.31%
YEAR 7 (8)	2.03%
YEAR 6 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 5 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 4 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 3 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 2 (9)	2.24%
YEAR 1 (5)	1.26%
RECEPTION (3)	0.76%

SUSPENSIONS 2023/2024

	YEAR	EPISODES	CHILDREN	MALE	FEMALE
PRIMARY	REC	0	0	0	0
	Y1	0	0	0	0
	Y2	5	1	0	1
	Y3	1	1	1	0
	Y4	1	1	1	0
	Y5	7	3	3	0
	Y6	1	1	0	1
SECONDARY	Y7	22	6	6	0
	Y8	25	6	4	2
	Y9	12	8	5	3
	Y10	37	14	7	7
	Y11	25	7	2	5
	TOTAL	136	48	29	19

SUSPENSIONS BY COHORT EDUCATED IN CHESHIRE EAST SCHOOLS

	YEAR	EPISODES	CHILDREN
PRIMARY	REC	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	0	0
	Y3	0	0
	Y4	0	0
	Y5	6	2
	Y6	0	0
SECONDARY	Y7	11	2
	Y8	2	1
	Y9	7	4
	Y10	24	9
	Y11	5	3
	TOTAL	55	21

SUSPENSIONS BY COHORT EDUCATED OUTSIDE OF CHESHIRE EAST SCHOOLS

	YEAR	EPISODES	CHILDREN
PRIMARY	REC	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	5	1
	Y3	1	1
	Y4	1	1
	Y5	1	1
	Y6	1	1
SECONDARY	Y7	11	4
	Y8	25	6
	Y9	5	3
	Y10	12	4
	Y11	20	4
	TOTAL	**82**	**26**