

OPEN

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee

18 June 2024

Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report 2022/23

**Report of: Claire Williamson, Director of Education, Strong Start
and Integration**

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2022/23. 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 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 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 2 The Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report details the progress and achievements throughout academic year 2022-23 for cared for children and care leavers' education. It relates to the delivery of pledge two of the cared for children and care leavers strategy, that 'We will improve education, training and employment outcomes.'

Executive Summary

- 3 During 2022/23, the virtual school has continued to support all cared for children/care leavers 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 has an allocated 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).

- 4 Most of our cared for children are educated in good or outstanding schools (77% in September 2023). 14% of schools are without an updated Ofsted rating due to academy conversion or results not being published yet.
- 5 Most cared for children have good attendance at school (94% in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 figures of 92.2% for the eligible cohort in both the Northwest and national and 92.6% for all pupils in Cheshire East).
- 6 No Cheshire East cared for children have been permanently excluded for over four years.
- 7 40% of the eligible cohort in Reception have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD).
- 8 The percentages of Cheshire East Cared for Children in the eligible cohort in Year 2 (Key Stage 1) who achieved the expected standard or higher are as follows. The comparison is the estimated national for eligible Cared for Children from the NCER2.
 - o 54% in Reading compared to estimated national 46%
 - o 38% in Writing compared to estimated national 36%
 - o 69% in Maths compared to estimated national 46%
- 9 The percentages of Cheshire East Cared for Children in the eligible cohort in Year 6 (Key Stage 2) who achieved the expected standard higher are as follows. The comparison is the estimated national for eligible Cared for Children from the NCER.
 - o 57% GPS which is above the estimated national of 50%
 - o 35% RWM which is just below the estimated national of 36%
- 10 Our unvalidated data for summer 2023 indicates that 25.6% of the eligible cohort achieved a grade 4+ in English and Maths, with 41% who were eligible and entered for GCSE examinations achieving grade 4+ in English and Maths. This is in line with national comparative data for cared for children in 2019 (pre-pandemic used as comparator data for 2023 is not available yet).
- 11 6% of our care leavers are in Higher Education, which is the same as the 2023 national average.
- 12 18 young people have achieved a Level 3 qualification with 11 offers of university places; We have 14 young people currently at university.

- 13 Most 16–18 year old cared for young people and care leavers are in education, employment or training (EET) (91.4% in September 2023). 16 and 17-year-old cared for young people are tracked monthly ensuring targeted support is in place, in particular for those at risk of becoming NEET. There is a bespoke offer for post-16 cared for children, including our 'venture with confidence' programme, to promote and prepare young people for EET. A partnership challenge panel considers the support we can offer young people to re-engage them in EET.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee is recommended:

1. To endorse the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report 2022/23

Background

- 14 The annual headteachers report outlines the educational progress and update from academic year 2022/23, which has been subject to scrutiny through our recent inspection of local area childrens services (ILACS). The LA are required to develop an improvement plan following the outcome of our inspection which will include specific areas of focus and actions directly in relation to Education. The improvement plan sets out the actions we will take to improve services. What is most important is that what we do makes a difference, so each month we will assess progress and impact against the plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 15 The Cared for Children and Care levers Committee is an advisory group to the Children and Families Committee and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and care leavers.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 16 The role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) is set out in the statutory guidance for local authorities Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked after children.
- 17 The statutory guidance must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. The guidance sets out the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under s22 (3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. The guidance also sets the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duties under s23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 where a local authority must make available advice and information for the purposes of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children.
- 18 It is the role of the VSH to report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of looked after children through the authority's corporate parenting governance structure.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

There are no financial implications of the report. Finance advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 19 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood; the cared for children and care leavers strategy prioritises these areas, alongside our new improvement plan.

Human Resources

- 20 NA

Risk Management

- 21 NA

Rural Communities

22 NA

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

23 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding, additional needs not being identified and met and transition/preparation into adulthood; the cared for children and care leavers strategy prioritises these areas, alongside our new improvement plan.

Public Health

24 NA

Climate Change

25 NA

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Laura Rogerson Head of Service Inclusion
Appendices:	Virtual School annual headteacher report 2022/23
Background Papers:	N/A