Virtual School for Cared for Children

Head Teacher's Annual Report 2019/20

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Cheshire East Council
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Introduction

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.*

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the Virtual School during 2019-20. The Virtual School (VS) supports all children in care and relevant care leavers regardless of their length of time in care but the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from March 31st, 2019 to March 31st 2020. This is the cohort reported in national data which is supplied to external agencies such as Ofsted. National comparative data, where quoted, is that published in Nexus and the Statistical First Release of the Outcomes of looked after children

During 2019/20 the Virtual School has continued to support all cared for children and to continually review its operation to ensure it is meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support. This is delivered by an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), primary, secondary and post 16 team. The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) is currently also undertaking an Interim role as Head of Service for SEND (Statutory Assessment and Monitoring); therefore, we have appointed and Interim Deputy Head of Virtual School to support with the operational running alongside the VSH.

The overall number of children has continued to rise; this increase is an average that is experienced elsewhere. There are also a higher number of children with high level of Special Educational Needs (SEN), which means that the overall population is more complex as well as larger in number.

Cared for Children are making good progress overall. In order to continue to improve outcomes targeted support is needed to challenge some secondary/independent schools where Cared for Children have underperformed in previous years.

We have a dedicated advisor who also works part time for the Youth Justice Service this is supporting to ensure the mechanisms are in place to increase attendance at the end of orders.

The make-up, operation and funding of the Virtual School has been reviewed. There has been an increase in core staffing to include x2 specialist attendance officers to support increasing overall attendance of all Cared for Children and will continue to support reducing persistent absence during 2020/21 academic year. There have also been three new learning mentors employed to ensure that each locality has their own learning mentor to offer support to individual children as well as supporting schools; we have further developed our offer of support for post 16 by recruiting a dedicated Post 16 learning mentor with a specific focus on re-engagement back into Education, Employment and Training. Some core staffing is now funded through the Pupil Premium. The impact of these changes is currently being monitored.

All children have access to additional Pupil Premium funding to put in place actions and interventions which are additional to the normal school support and which will help them achieve targets. Funding is allocated through individual funding requests linked to children's' PEP targets, this has ensured accountability and allows the impact to be monitored through individual PEP meetings each term.

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 not been any cases of a permanent exclusion in 2019/20.

The Virtual School has commissioned places at the Fermain Academy Alternative Provision in Macclesfield, and this has contributed to the reduction in repeat exclusions and total number of sessions lost for identified children. The use of good quality alternative provision (AP) has increased and has had good outcomes for children who have previously been unable to sustain or access full time mainstream school. The Virtual School are further supporting having champions within Fermain and Cornerstones (our primary assessment provision), we will be supporting to fund a Teaching Assistant (TA) within each provision who will have sole oversight of Cared for Children to offer 1-1 support, we will be offering regular CPD for staff.

The Virtual School works closely with other services within the local authority: Social Care, SEN, School Admissions, Medical Needs, Attendance and Youth Support. In some cases, this is through panels and working groups such as the 16+ NEET challenge panel or Resource and Accommodation panel, but is often through joint working and collaboration of individual staff. As a result of these collaborations processes and procedures have been revised to become more efficient. The Virtual School have delivered cross service training on how all services can support improving the educational outcomes of cared for children. Other services have delivered training sessions alongside the Virtual School at Designated Lead training days.

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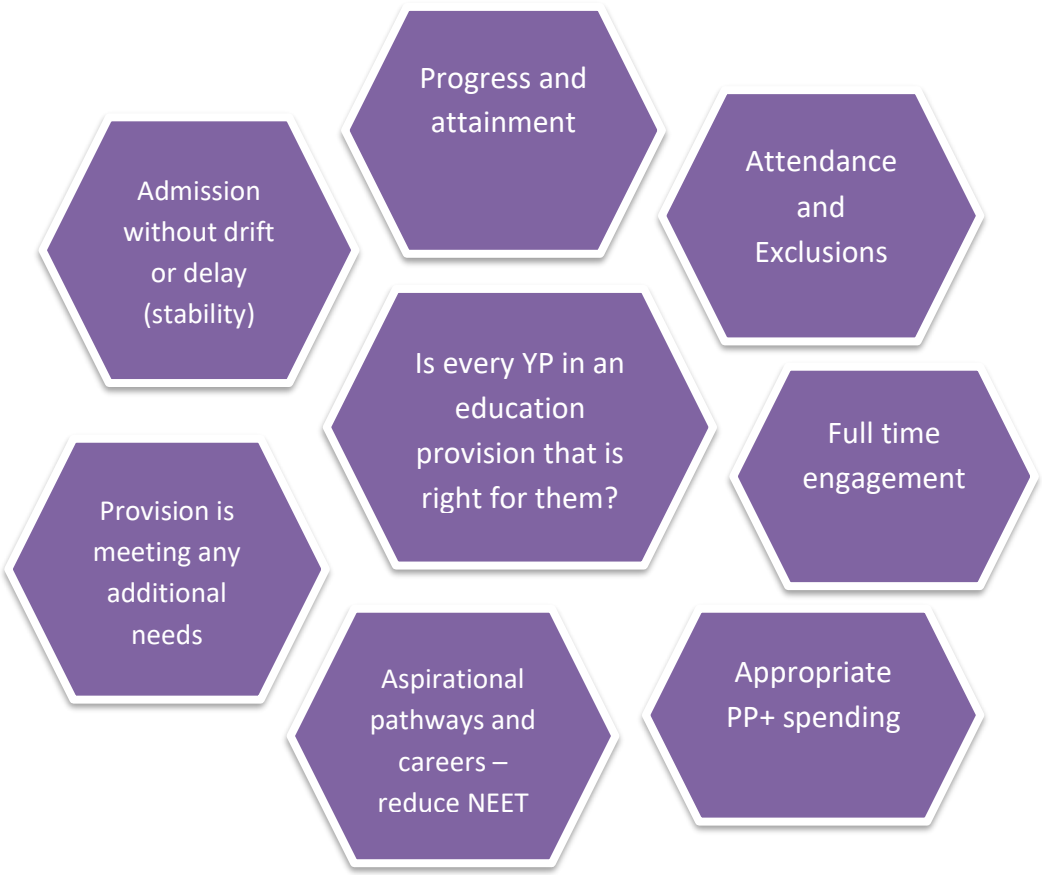
Self-Evaluation

Area	Self Evaluation			Priorities for 20-21
Foundation Stage				Track and Monitor attainment and progress throughout academic year 20-21 to support to identify any gaps in learning due to Covid 19. *no grading on SEF due to no formal assessments taken place this academic year
Key Stage 1				
Key Stage 2				
Key Stage 4				
Post-16				
Higher Education				
Outcomes for cfc engaged with YOT				
SEN				
Admissions				
Attendance				
Exclusions				Still higher numbers in secondary
Leadership and Management				
Staff Training				To develop virtual training sessions further for wider staff and partners
Finance				
PEPs				To work within localities to further share good practise across schools to further improve quality of PEPs
Partnership Working				
Monitoring and Evaluation				
Participation by children and young people				Children/young people have continued to participate with virtual meetings with positive feedback
Safeguarding and promotion of wellbeing				

Green = Area doing well **Amber = further work needed** **Red = High priority for action**

Ensuring all children and young people in care are in an education provision that is right for them

Key focus areas



Remit and operation of the Virtual School in Cheshire East

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 duty to promote the child's education 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 Headteacher (VSH) for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated.

The maxim of the Cheshire East Virtual School is to "Engage, Achieve and Progress". The Virtual School operates in such a way as to follow the Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities in the document "Promoting the education of looked after children" (DfE, Feb 2018). This requires the local authority to ensure that there are systems in place which promote good education provision for cared for children and to monitor that these are in place. In Cheshire East every young person in care has a

named Virtual School Advisor linked to their case who can provide support and challenge to schools, carers and social workers. This in turn helps to ensure that there is suitable education in place, champion the needs of the child and challenge and support education providers to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to allow the child to reach their full potential. This is carried out through termly PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings with additional meetings and activities put into place for those with the highest level of need. The service is provided to all children in care up to the end of the school year in which they become 18; we have a dedicated post 16 advisor who works closely with our care leavers team to ensure the smooth transition and planning into adulthood.

During Ofsted's focused inspection of Children's Services visit to Cheshire East at the end of October 2019 inspectors stated:

- Children are well-supported with their education through the Virtual School Team
- When children's placements change, the head of the virtual school has proactively secured funding and appropriate education placements for children. This ensures that children, including those in placements out of the local area, have continuity of provision.

Partnership working

Partnership working is crucial to the effectiveness of the Virtual School and we recognise our role in part of a team with the child at the heart. The Virtual School is one part of the corporate parent body that works to look after children in care and we recognise that in order to be effective we need to have close working relationships with our partners. Teams within the council with whom the Virtual School works are:

- 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 moves are being considered/sourced. Attending stability meetings with social workers and carers. Supporting the organisation of annual STAR awards to celebrate the successes of our children.
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities Team
- Youth Justice Service, with an YJS advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Youth Support Service – monthly meetings to support interventions to reduce NEET
- Early Years Team, with an advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Educational Psychology Service, with a senior EP who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Corporate Parenting, with the Virtual School Headteacher attending all Corporate Parenting Committee meetings

As part of the Corpororate Parenting Strategy (Priority 2) we have committed to the pledges below:

We will improve education, employment and training outcomes
We will have **high aspirations** for every child and young person and will **help them to achieve their ambitions**, using opportunities in the 'family business' 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 to enable them to reach their full potential**
We will strive to that ensure that every child and young person will have **access to consistent, high quality, well matched, full time opportunities.**

In order to achieve our targets we have a multiagency workstream group in place which consists of: A SPEED (Sixteen plus education and employment destinations) cross service working group which is well established as a forum for action planning for post-16 cared for and care leavers. This group uses the latest data to identify young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or likely to be so and what can be done to address this. Through good collaboration of managerial and operational staff much work has been done to continue to support reducing NEET and to ensure all young people have timely and effective actions and interventions in place to re-engage back into education. One of the key focuses of this year is to develop council apprenticeships and futher increase our offer for post 16 young people.

A parallel group for school age children has now been established called RAIC, (Raising achievement in care). The aim of this group is to ensure that all parties share the responsibility for promoting aspirations and achievements and are active in their efforts. Areas to be addressed by this group have been identifed as; improving attendance, minimising the time between school moves, reducing exclusions and development of PEPs content ad quality.

The Virtual School also attends or arranges other regular meetings which result in improved support for children. These include:

- SEN tracking meetings to maintain momentum on cases with a VS SEN lead now in place within the team
- Children missing out on education to plan with joint services and ensure timely interventions and support is in place for any children not accessing full-time education
- Preparing for adulthood to ensure smooth transition to adult care

The Virtual School also works with the Independent Reviewing Officers and foster carers, providing training and support as needed. Through membership of Education, Headteacher and Virtual School Head groups the Virtual School is able to remain in touch with all current events relating to cared for children and also to make sure that other teams are aware of matters which influence their area.

The other team who are closely linked to Virtual School are Special Education and Disabilities Team (SEND). The Virtual School Headteacher is also part of the induction process for new social workers and IRO's.

Both social care and SEND supported training held at the end of last academic year (Nov 2019) for designated leads delivering workshops to over 90 school representatives, feedback was extremely positive from all attendees.

"Some of the best local authority training I have attended"

"Other services should adopt the cross-service training style"

The Virtual School also works with the Independent Reviewing Officers, foster carers and governors providing training and support as needed. Through membership of Education, Headteacher and Virtual School Head groups both regional and national the Virtual School is able to remain in touch with all current events relating to cared for children and also to make sure that other teams are aware of matters which influence their area. We have also now changed to locality working meaning that each area has changed to sit under an advisor rather than this being done by ages. This has helped massviely in the development of relationship with schools and other professionals as it means that the team can really get to know their area on a better level to develop better working practices, as part of this the advisors are running termly locality get-togethers with designated teachers so they can share best practice and get to know eachother better. Throughout COVID these have still been happening through Microsoft Teams online and they will continue to do so in September until there are less restrictions and they are able to meet face to face again.

I feel that the VS advisers I have involvement with have done everything they can to gain access to resources to support all young people. The pandemic hasn't stopped them from supporting YP and ensuring that they have everything they need, they have been supportive when I have needed help communicating with schools etc. and I couldn't be more grateful for the consistency across the board (Quote from Social Worker)

Training Provision

The statutory duties of the Virtual School include providing training on education issues relating to children in care and Head Teachers and Governing Bodies are required to appoint a Designated Teacher to champion the cause of cared for children and also to ensure that this teacher has access to training. Wider school training has proved harder this year due to the pandemic. In CE this is provided in a variety of ways

a) Update/network meetings open to all schools and led by the Virtual school
b) Bespoke training in individual schools which can be around a particular child or for all staff including attachment and trauma whole staff training
c) Arranging outside speakers to provide 'expert' input.

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

Date	Title	Objectives
November 2019	North & South Designated Teacher Network	SDQ workshop Market place – support and advice on using PP+ effectively Careers and post 16 PEPs – what makes an outstanding PEP
March 2020	Reginal Conference	Ofsted National updates (attended by all Virtual School team and a number of designated leads representative from our schools)
July 2020	Online Designated teacher locialty sessions	Virtual locality sessions were held on teams for: Meet and greet Sharing important information - concerns and impact of Covid PEPs updates – focus on return to school

The network events held in November 2019 were attended by over 90 school representatives. This provided information and workshop sessions from a range of services. Feedback was positive with delegates stating that the sessions were useful and would help them to better support children in school.
During COVID the designated teachers training was held online in July 2020 and 42 designated teachers joined us online for training through Microsoft teams and more of these sessions have been arranged online for the Autumn term.

The Virtual School contributes to the Foster Carer training programme. Sessions have been planned on curriculum changes and attainment, preparing for tests/supporting learning at home, SEN and post-16 progression

COVID Update:

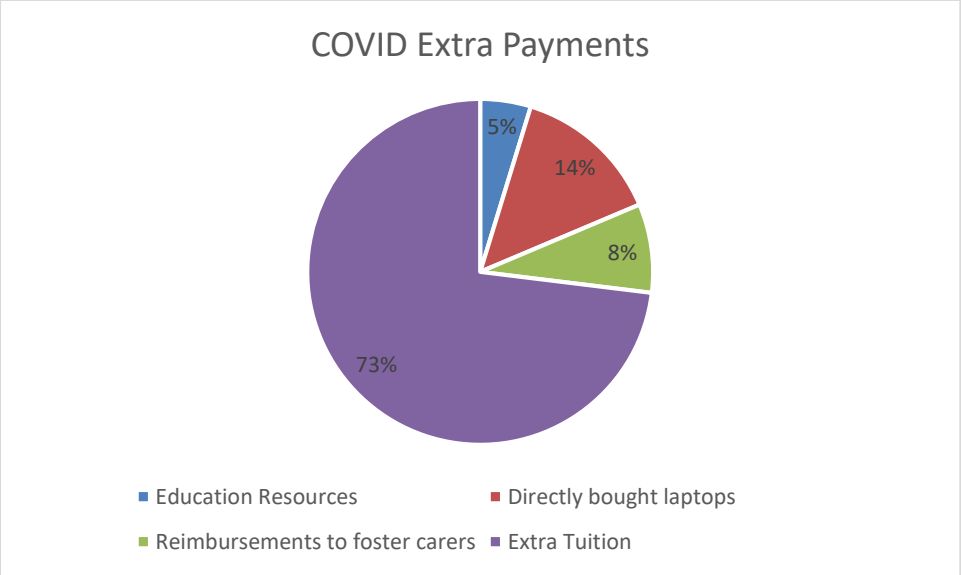
During this year the virtual school team have had to adapt to new ways of working due to the national pandemic. Throughout this period we have continued to develop new ways of working and we are continuing to deliver a good level of support to all of our children and schools.

Staffing:

- Bi-weekly team meetings have taken place online to deliver any updates and share best practice.
- New equipment has been supplied by the local authority to all staff members to ensure that we are still able to offer effective remote support; therefore, PEPs have been carried out via Microsoft teams.
- Where visits have been deemed essential/critical robust risk assessments and protocols are in place to ensure the safety of staff and children/families/carers and schools.
- Monthly advisor meetings are in place to ensure tracking and monitoring.

Pupil Premium Plus Funding:

Spend during March to July (COVID) equated to £25,300:



Due to delays in the government scheme we supported children/young people with the appropriate ICT equipment required to ensure remote learning could continue by supplying individual children and young people with laptops/iPads where needed.

PEPs:

During March – July during lockdown period we requested that there was a specific focus on transition year groups to ensure that clear plans were in place to support our children/young people who would be having school/placement changes. We developed a one-minute guide to support schools and social care to have clear process/procedures of how to undertake PEPs virtually at the start of the lockdown period.

The team were able to attend more PEPs than usual while completing them online as they don't have any travel time restricting them and they are able to coordinate their diaries to attend more, which has been of significant benefit. The feedback from all parties including social care has been positive and they agree that this could be a way we can be flexible with completing PEPs in the future, in particular for those living/educated out of borough.

Attendance:

During COVID our schools were on enforced closures for an average of 92 days, during this time 20% of our children were still attending school. The VSH worked closely alongside the Director of Education and other Heads of Service to support with the education recovery throughout this period. The Virtual School Headteacher and Advisors ensured communication throughout with schools, carers and social care and supported any children to access on site provision where this was deemed necessary by professionals.

Education recovery and support:

Throughout August the virtual school advisors, specialist attendance officers and learning mentors contacted children/carers and families to encourage them to return into school in September and ensure any support required was in place.

There will be a priority on completion of PEPs in the first term to ensure that all children have clear SMART targets to support with the return to school, gaps in learning and to identify where specific support is required. We will ensure that appropriate catch up arrangements have been put in place by schools/settings.

Virtual designated teacher training took place in July with leads from across each locality and out of borough schools, we received positive feedback for all schools that attended. We will be continuing to run virtual sessions during the first term:

October - December 2020:

- New designated lead training/network sessions
- North locality leads network session
- South locality leads network session
- Central Locality leads network session
- Out of Borough leads network session

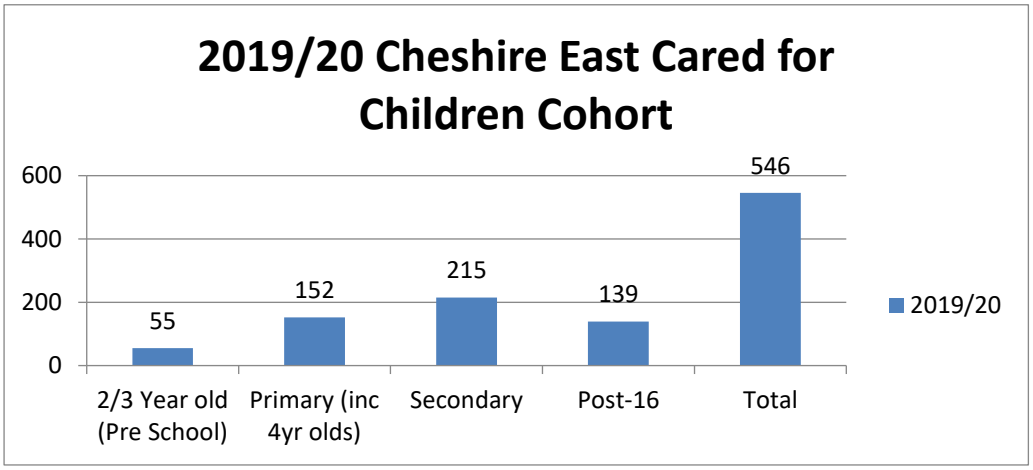
During these sessions will be gaining feedback from schools to identify training needs for this academic year.

Intervention	Impact
Pupil Premium funding: 1. ICT equipment 2. Tutors 3. Carers	1. Supported to purchase ICT equipment where needed to ensure that all children/young people could access remote learning. 2. Funding in place for individual children to ensure where needed they had access to extra tuition. 3. Funding for carers to support continued access to education/activities whilst at home.
Advisor/learning mentor support	Throughout the pandemic the virtual school advisors monitored and tracked each child/young person to ensure clear communication/support was in place. Advisors kept in communication with social care to support with access to on site school provision where this was deemed necessary. One Minute Guide was created to support how to complete virtual PEPs to ensure that schools and social care were consistent within the process. During the summer holidays advisors contacted all children/young people and carers to support with return to school and identify any areas of concern/support required. Learning mentors supported to work directly 1-1 with any children who were anxious regarding the return to school, in particular those from transition year groups and when moving to new schools.
Education Recovery	Virtual School Headteacher worked closely with the Director of Education and Heads of Service (Education and Social Care) with clear and robust planning for the education recovery throughout.
Training & Resources	Virtual training/network sessions took place for designated lead teachers within each locality: North, South, Central and Out of Authority. Sessions focused on sharing good practise and

	how to further support children/young people's return to school. Virtual School Headteacher created resource guides for carers/children and young people across all age groups (early years to post 16), these included advice and links to a wide variety of education, mental health and wellbeing resources.
Post 16	The Virtual School Post 16 tutor continued to run 1-1 virtual sessions for a cohort of young people who successfully gained a range of functional skills qualifications. Post 16 Learning mentor and Advisor have continued to support throughout the lockdown period: - No Year 11 moving into post 16 has been unable to access the courses they identified. - Reduction in the number of young people 16-18 Not in Education, Employment and Training at the start of the academic year. - Successful planning and implementation of programme for Autumn term for post 16 young people identified as NEET.
Early Years support	During lockdown early years advisor contacted all the carers of our 2-4-year-old children at least once each month providing advice, guidance and support on learning activities and useful websites. We made sure that all children transferring to school had school places and had a handover of cases. We supported 2-year olds to access a nursery place when eligible

School Roll

At the end of the 2019/20 academic year there were 546 Cared for Children on Cheshire East Virtual School roll this was an increase from 496 recorded for the same time 18/19, of these 407 were of school age. Cheshire East Cared for Children from Reception to Year 11 attended 172 different schools in 31 different Local Authorities. 79% of our children attended Cheshire East schools.

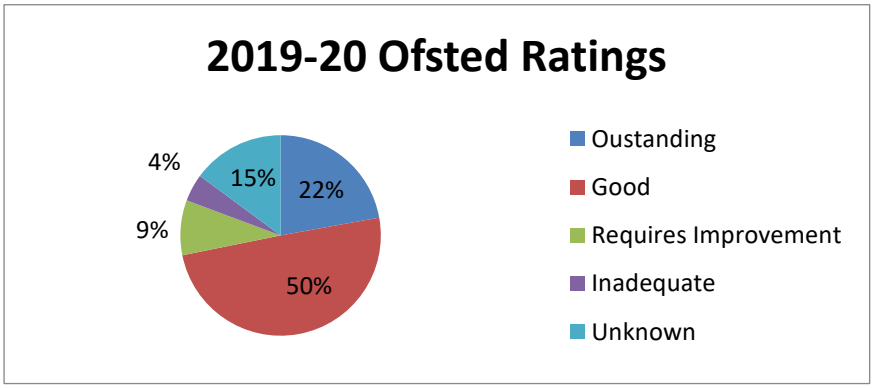


Ofsted Ratings

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 making progress. Risk assessments 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:

* 15% (8 schools) Unknown due to conversion to academy or new schools so not had their first report yet.



Special Educational Needs

At the end of academic year 2019/20 there were 170 children with identified SEND needs; 35% within Reception to Year 11 cohort. Of these 96 had an EHCP, and 40 with either a School Support or a School Focus Plan. There were a further 30 Post-16 learners with EHCPs which equates to 22% of Post-16 cohort.

The Virtual School has an identified SEN lead advisor who meets with the cared for keyworker lead from the SEND team every 2 weeks. This is to review cases to ensure effective timelines and interventions are in place, plans are finalised, and advice received. The primary focus is to ensure timeliness within the Needs Assessment process, Annual reviews are aligned with PEPs and to ensure that moves between schools are timely and well planned. This is particularly important if school moves are out of county.

There is also a focus on children where Needs Assessments are being agreed to ensure that plans are formed within the statutory timeframe and children can access specialist support where needed. This has been in place since August 2018 and already consistency and collaborative working across teams has shown improvement. A tracking document is in place to store and monitor information which is reviewed and updated following each meeting. A checklist has been created to ensure that protocols are procedures are clear and in place for individual children. At present the VSH is also Interim Head of Service for SEND therefore chairs the SEND panel weekly and is working with the teams to ensure that the developments across the service continues to also support our cared for children as well as all SEND children within Cheshire East.

The Virtual School has continued to embed cross-service working within the SEND team to ensure that children are in the correct school and making progress as quickly as possible. Advisors are involved if an application for a Needs Assessment is made and are contacted by the SEND team to request any contextual data which may impact on the decision. If a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), their school are asked to review the EHCP at a PEP meeting so that the targets can be aligned; although these are not the same targets as actions are usually quite short/medium term and specific while the EHCP outcomes are more generalised or long term, we can ensure that they complement each other and support the holistic outcomes.

If a school or carer feel that needs are not being met, the Virtual School will work with school to ensure that due process is followed, and all necessary documents are submitted as required to the SEND keyworker. There can be a delay when finding a new school for a child with SEND, particularly if placed out of Cheshire East while consultations take place. Protocols and procedures are in place to ensure that all children have appropriate interim educational support whilst this process takes place.

For children/young people with SEN the following additional support mechanisms are in place:

- Virtual School to inform the SEND team of planned moves for cared for children at the earliest point
- Advisors to provide summary of history to be included in consultation documents
- Virtual School Head Teacher to support the consultation process at each stage ensuring this is sent and responded to in a timely manner to ensure there is no drift or delay
- Advisor/social care to provide names of possible schools for consultation as well as those identified by the SEND team
- Advisors/social care to support visits/observations and communication with potential schools
- Cared for Children not to be placed in school without agreement of Virtual School/social worker to ensure that the setting is correct and can fully meet the needs of each child
- A named SEN worker assigned to oversee cases of cared for children
- Guidelines for other councils produced to speed up process of finding schools for children living outside Cheshire East
- Liaision with SEND staff on how to record needs of children not attending or frequently changing schools
- Virtual School to put in place tuition/provision while awaiting a new school place to support ongoing learning and stability within placement
- Where required support is put in place during the Needs Assessment stage through the Virtual School to ensure that childrens needs are being met

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. During this academic year school age advisors have been working in localities to facilitate improving support to schools and develop working groups within locality areas to develop training and share best practice.

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 needs and monitored for individual impact. Through Pupil Premium Funding tuition is made available to young people to provide additional after school sessions to help prepare for exams and offer identified 1-1 intervention for targeted support. Three new Learning Mentors have been employed to work with children in schools with a specific focus on social, emotional wellbeing or high levels of anxiety or are at risk of exclusion and who require support in addition to that which the school can provide. The learning mentors can offer

targeted support within a range of specialist areas also supporting to empower and train school staff to support children.

The Virtual School Headteacher is working alongside the Head of Service for Education and pupil participation and senior Educational Psychologists to further develop the support, advice and guidance to schools around children with challenging or complex behaviours.

Monthly staff supervisions are in place for all staff to discuss their own wellbeing and workload and support with case supervision. In addition, there are regular team meetings, where the team can receive updates from Senior Managers and the performance/development of the team can be discussed. All staff are invited to identify training needs which will allow them to be more effective in their role or any specific area of interest. In addition to this the Virtual School Deputy Head teacher meets with advisors every 3 weeks to review attendance, attainment, exclusions and children causing concern to allow for swift intervention at all stages.

During 2019/20 all staff have been offered courses on attachment and signs of safety, all attended development days and all staff have been offered access to Mental Health First Aiders within the council to support their own emotional wellbeing. All staff have access to all council training including our learning lounge with a range of online courses such as GDPR to support their own professional development. All three of our learning mentors are completing their Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training/accreditation.

The VSH is a member of the North West Virtual School Head group and the National Association of VSH, (NAVSH) and through this network the Virtual School is able to keep abreast of current developments such as new guides for previously looked after, adopted and special guardianship children. This group are work together on a regional development plan.

The VSH has regular supervision with the Director of Education and Skills and completes a monthly scorecard to monitor progress. This gives a detailed breakdown of the performance of the Virtual School and key indicators are extracted to be included on the Corporate Parent Scorecard. The Virtual School Headteacher is a core member of the Corporate Parenting Committee who have oversight of scrutiny and governance of the scorecard data each quarter.

The team are a very highly motivated and committed group of professionals who always act in the best interests of the child. During 2019/20 there has been a very low level of absence amongst the team with no long-term sickness or stress. The Virtual School Headteacher uses the Council's behaviours toolkit effectively to support 'conversations' and team meetings/activities.

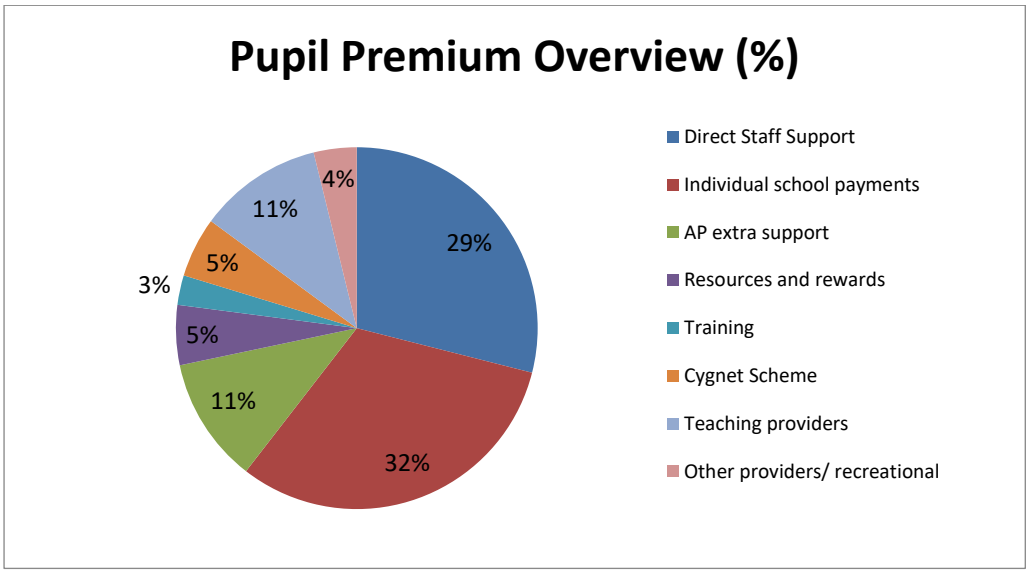
Virtual school are always contactable and on the ball. They are a fantastic source of support for our young people. (Quote from Social Worker)

I think VS are excellent. Very supportive and always give advice and good support to schools and myself. (Quote from Social worker)

Post 16 advisor is doing everything with my 16+'s from colleges to apprenticeships to support ensuring they do not become NEET (Quote from Social worker)

Funding

The Virtual School's main budget is the Pupil Premium Plus which is devolved to the Local Authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the VSH as to best promote achievement and progress. The amount which is made available to the LA is £2300 per child in care as reported on the March return but 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 £2300 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 was to fund 1:1 or small group teaching, support to enhance social and emotional skills and purchase of specific resources. The remaining funds have been used to provide high cost support for children with particular needs. These include; attending high cost alternative provision for children without SEN who cannot manage mainstream school, providing a series of off-site support such as animal therapy or forest schools, having a weekly work placement to add variety and help prepare for the world or work or funding specialist support such as counselling. Significant funds were also allocated to schools and children to prepare for exams, access targeted support or to prepare for transition. In almost all cases this helped children to increase their skills and knowledge before the exams but always improved their preparation and confidence. In 2019/20 the total amount received was £851,000.

All school age children in care were allocated Pupil Premium (PP) once the PEP was returned to describe how this would be spent and, in some cases, funding was allocated to children outside this age range if the need was evident. For example, a nursery child with the need for additional speech and language support or a post-16 young person not in education who wished to take up a work placement to gain skills and confidence. Some school age children did not have a basic allocation if the school felt it had all the resources needed, such as an independent special school which already receives a high level of funding or if the Virtual school was arranging and funding provision such as tuition or off-site learning. In most cases funding is transferred to the school but in some cases, funding is used centrally, for example purchase of laptops and book parcels for young children to

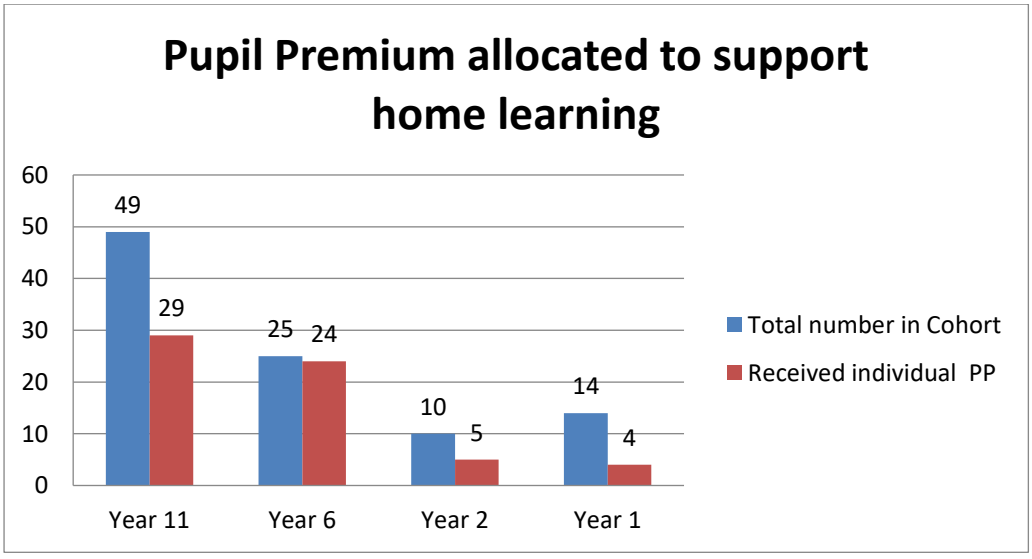
encourage love of reading and improving literacy. Although the funding formula is based on the number of school age children, requests for children in pre-school or post-16 are also considered. We have funded speech and language intervention within several our pre-school nurseries following analysis of our attainment which clearly shown this was an area of need within our younger children.

The virtual school have also used pupil premium to fund Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training/accreditation for our three new learning mentors so that they can meet with our children and support them on a one to one or group basis with social, emotional and mental health needs. This is also being used to support schools to develop and enhance their offer and support to children with developing their skills within identified staff.

The Virtual School have also supported children to access recreational activities where they would not normally have access such as: Horse riding, Music lessons such as Flute, Piano and Guitar, singing lessons, Swimming therapy, Pony camp and Drama/Acting lessons.

The Virtual School also has an additional budget to fund the Cygnet programme for post 16 to support to reduce NEET figures. This year some of that was used to run an October NEET programme which consisted of activities for team building and life skills such as interview preparation and community projects.

In April 2017, a system was introduced which moved away from a standard allocation but asks schools to give a spending plan for each child. All requests are then considered by the advisor and the Virtual School Head Teacher and funding allocated accordingly. The average amount paid per child was almost £1980 and the most frequent support requests were for 1:1 session to focus on social and emotional support or tuition such as maths, English and science. Funding was also requested when children were at risk of exclusion and this was used to provide additional support or fund alternative provision/off site provision. Funding was made available to schools when a new child joined (following a placement move) so that they could implement an integration plan which involved having regular review and observations to identify any areas of need. In total, requests were received, and funding allocated for 223 children and 73 were given laptops.



Impact of Pupil Premium

Monitoring systems within the Virtual School mean that the impact of Pupil Premium can be observed, although it should be recognised that cared for children are subject to so many changes, such as placement moves or changes in contact arrangements that it is difficult to draw any absolute causal links. Following our last inspection and feedback received PEPs have been adapted and now include a section to review each target linked to funding specifically. Within every PEP schools are requested to review and show clear impact of funding allocated. This allows us to monitor interventions and support each term for individual children. This year we have had a significant number of children needing tuition due to home/remote learning and in some instances, placement moves during COVID.

Case study of a young person that has received pupil premium funding

Background:

Child B came into care in June 2018. School had identified some Special Educational Needs, ADHD and difficulty forming and maintaining relationships. This meant it made it difficult to build trust in adults/professionals. The first PEP identified that there were difficulties engaging in a mainstream curriculum in school. Attendance was poor, and there was a history of truanting or leaving school premises. Child B stated that they found written tasks difficult and lacked focus in lessons. Child B was given a full-time nurture curriculum and it was identified that they required a 1-1 Key Person to support them full time. Child B also responded well to praise and rewards of their own choosing, so a small Pupil Premium Plus budget was allocated for them to choose an appropriate reward for improved attendance in school and starting to reintegrate into some mainstream classes.

The introduction of the 1-1 Key Worker was immediately successful and this led to an improvement in attendance and engagement. Over time as Child B was able to share more about how they liked to learn, favourite subjects / activities and what they found difficult. This enabled a more bespoke and personalised curriculum to be developed, and new targets were set in her PEP including the reintegration into mainstream classes for core subjects and a vocational placement to the RSPCA (sourced through the virtual school) each week where they enjoyed participating in the care of injured or abandoned animals.

Targets also included therapeutic interventions to support them develop confidence, acquire life skills and maintain relationships with adults and other children. Child B was also allocated a learning mentor each week from the Virtual School who was ELSA trained to work on emotional well-being and they were given a laptop to support with written work.

A Needs Assessment was applied for which eventually led to an EHCP. This enabled the 1-1 support to remain with them in all lessons and over time the time spent in nurture group reduced significantly.

Key Concerns Identified in the Initial PEP meeting

- Reluctance to engage with the school (poor attendance, poor engagement in lessons, reluctance to complete homework, difficulty building relationships, truanting and leaving school premises).
- Possibility of an EHCP being required
- Impact of non-attendance on attainment, self-esteem
- Managing anxiety
- Difficulty building peer relationships
- Finding specific subjects / pieces of work difficult (writing, maths)

Type of Intervention:

- Educational psychologist assessment beginning leading to EHCP
- Nurture timetable
- 1-1 Key Person
- Allocation of personal laptop
- PP+ allocated for self-identified rewards for improved attendance and participation in mainstream lessons
- ELSA support sessions with a learning mentor funded by the Virtual School for emotional well-being.
- Therapeutic interventions for self-confidence and relationships
- Vocational work placement funded and sourced by the Virtual School
- Regular meetings and communication to review progress and unpick any barriers to learning.

Impact of Intervention:

- Excelled in the RSPCA placement showing the required maturity and responsibility to work independently on hedgehog care tasks, building relationship and trust with a wider range of professionals/adults.
- Attendance improved from 77.8% to 98%.
- Time in the nurture curriculum reduced from 100% to 20% (sometimes less)
- Built up a strong relationship with her Key Worker and other adults in school.
- Improvement in self-confidence.
- Attainment in all subjects has improved and they have been awarded a number of praise postcards and star of the day awards
- Completion of homework on time has improved significantly
- Enjoyment of school has improved
- Enjoyed choosing books and games as rewards for attendance
- Developed good friendships

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 two and eighteen years old.

While the PEP document is mainly to support children of school age, Cheshire East also provides a similar service to children of pre-school age and those between 16-18 who are included in the Raising of the Participation Age cohort, (school years 12 and 13) although advice and support is available on request to children under 2 and young people in care or care leavers over 18.

The completion rate of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) was over 85% as was the percentage completed to a good or better standard this is due to the robust quality assurance process that is in place within the Virtual School team and training offered to schools through the Designated Lead teachers network events which allows staff in all schools to access practical working sessions to look at outstanding PEPs to allow self-evaluation and development of their own systems at the start of each year. However, the percentage was then impacted due to COVID where we had requested that children within the transition cohort must be prioritised.

We have continued to develop and embed the ePEP following feedback from schools to further enhance the quality and content, with almost all primary and secondary schools now effectively using the ePEP system. During this academic year we are further developing to introduce a new ePEP design for early years and post 16 providers.

Within Cheshire East the Virtual School takes an active role in the PEP process and the cases of all the children which means that prompt action can be taken when issues arise that require specialist education input.

Virtual Schools attend all initial PEP meetings and complete the first PEP which will provide a template and standard for future PEPs. This includes ensuring actions and targets are specific and measurable. These PEPs should be held within 20 working days and be available for the first cared for review meeting. The Virtual School also takes responsibility for ensuring that PEP is provided to the Social Worker in readiness for the initial review. PEPs are reviewed each term with the education provider taking a lead in these by reviewing the impact of the previous actions, update the PEP and return to the Virtual School. Support and training are available to assist schools, settings or colleges with the PEP process.

There is a robust Quality Assurance process in place within the Virtual School team where each case is reviewed to establish its support needs. Those with the highest support needs are rated as RED, in which case the advisor will attend all PEPs and probably have more frequent contact with the child, carer, school and Social Worker. Cases rated as AMBER have slightly less contact with the advisor whilst those rated as GREEN are monitored with attendance at one PEP per year. Virtual School are unable to attend all PEP meetings, therefore the criteria for Virtual School involvement is:

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

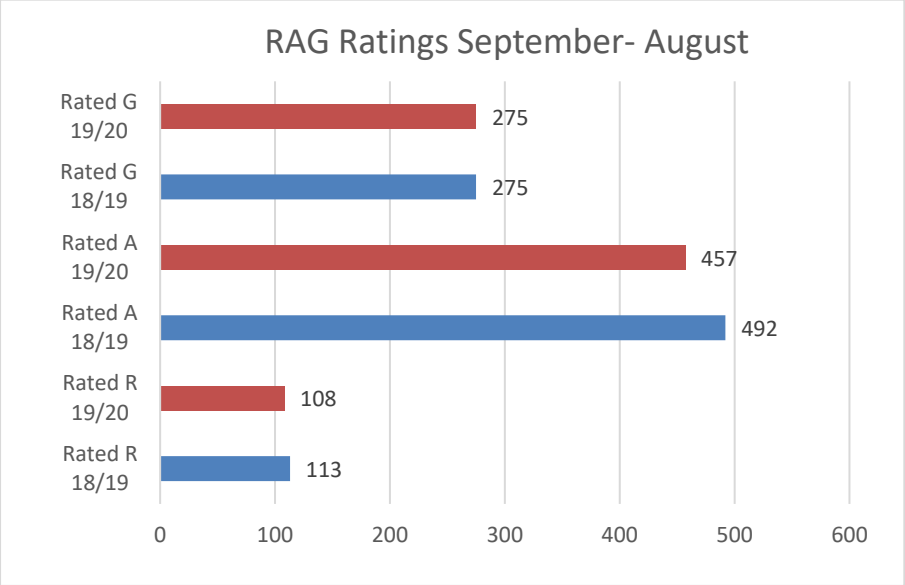
PEPs are deemed unsatisfactory if key information is not provided or if a previous PEP has been amended and it is unclear if information refers to the current or previous PEP. Most PEPs rated as satisfactory are given this grade because interventions are not specific or because the intended outcomes are not expressed in ways which can be evaluated. Where this is the case advisors support individual schools (designated leads) to develop the PEP to ensure that the quality is improved and targets are SMART. Exemplar PEPs are shared across localities during training sessions to share good practise.

Although the Virtual School Advisor does not attend all PEP meetings, they often do so for the more complex cases and in these situations can be a crucial and consistent link for the child. For example when a child is awaiting a new school or cannot attend school due to mental health issues the advisor will visit the child at home and make sure they have access to some tuition and learning and that this, where possible, includes a chance to include some social interaction.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority for cared for children and the school. Social workers, carers, VSHs, Designated Teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together. Social Workers have been asked to prioritise attendance at PEP meetings so that they gain essential information about their child. The Virtual School headteacher has atteded and led workshop sessions during social workers development day to give clear guidance on PEP process and procedures. As well as updates on their attainment and progress this should include discussion of their attitude, emotional state, friendships etc. If a child has a statement or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) then one of PEP meetings is run alongside the annual SEN review. This will ensure targets in the EHCP can be addressed through the PEP and that Social Workers and carers have the chance to review the impact of the SEN support for the child The Virtual School Head has delivered training to all SEND workers to support sharing information of how all staff can improve the education of cared for children as a corporate parent.

There is a rigorous 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 remains high and continues to support schools to develop their own practise, this is reviewed each year to ensure the process is robust. All PEPs are quality assured by each advisor and each term there is a moderation process led by the Virtual School Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to support further improving the quality of all PEPs and to share best practise. Each year following internal quality assurance sessions the virtual school have developed and shared a guide to schools on ‘what’s working well’ ‘even better if’. Below shows an outline of the RAG rating completed for the moderation of PEPs during 2018/19 and 2019/20 which shows the number of those rated as Red has slightly reduced and the

number rated as Green have sustained over time. We are continuing this year to work alongside all schools to share good practise and exemplar PEPs to ensure that the quality of PEPs improves.



OUTCOMES AND EVENTS	PEP RATING	Virtual School Support ACTION
Attendance below 80%	RED	
Episode of FTE since last PEP		Attend next PEP
Planned or possible placement move		Consider calling emergency PEP
Progress below expected for all subjects		Contact Headteacher re concerns
School move planned		Raise concerns with Social Worker
School rated as inadequate/special measures		Offer observation and planning
Attainment below age expected	AMBER	
Attendance between 80% and 90%		
Attendance between 90% and 95%		Call school to discuss case
Attendance has fallen since last PEP		Request specific additional information
Attends school outside Cheshire East		Call school before next PEP to assess progress
Attends Special School (maintained or independent)		Contact DT to offer staff training
DT is new to post		Arrange to visit school to meet DT
Episode of FTE in past		Set up monitoring plan for interventions
Has recently moved school		
In Y11 or Y6		
Lives in residential provision		
Previous PEP targets not achieved		
Progress below expected rate for 1 subjects		
School rated as RI		
Attainment equal to age expected	GREEN	
Attainment above age expected		
Attendance above 95%		Aim to attend 1 PEP per year
Attends school inside Cheshire East		Do not attend next PEP
DT is experienced		Offer advice and support if needed
In year other than 6 or 11		
Placement secure		
Previous PEP targets have been met		

ePEP

Following the successful implementation of our ePEP, we currently have 172 primary and secondary schools effectively using this system. We have further improved the content of the ePEP following feedback from our last inspection and from 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 ePEP to enable it to be used for Post 16 and we have now started rolling this out as a pilot. We are also continuing with the development to include

early years during next academic year to align and ensure consistency across all age ranges. This year we will be further developing to ensure that Preparing for Adulthood is included to support careers and aspirations for all children/young people.

School Admissions

The Virtual School are responsible for ensuring that every child has access to suitable education. Where possible and appropriate school moves will be avoided as it has been recognised that school can be a consistent and stabilising feature of a child's life. If a move is essential, then the following principles apply:

- Educational provision should mean a full-time place.
- Schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for cared or children in need of a new school.
- The choice of education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child. It should be based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make the maximum progress.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child.

Children move schools for a number of reasons which include

- Change of foster placement which means that continuing at current school is unrealsitic
- Carers move house which means that continuing at current school is unrealsitic
- Change to live with adopters
- Change of school if proximity to social contacts/family are having a strong negative impact on the child's progress and learning
- Change when school can longer meet needs (SEN or non-SEN)

Cared for children are given the highest priority under school admission arrangements and the usual fair access protocols do not apply. The Virtual School works with Head teachers to make sure that any admission is made as swiftly as possible. Where schools are reluctant to offer places, the Virtual School will consider making appeals or directing schools to admit. In 2019-20 there were no appeals made and no directions needed. All children for whom a place in primary and secondary schools were requested were allocated a place swiftly. The Virtual School works with all schools who are admitting a child to offer support, with funding if needed to ensure a smooth integration. Where children are placed in schools rated below 'Good' a clear risk assessment process is in place to review the provision, advisors attend all PEP meetings throughout the academic year to ensure progress, attainment and support is reviewed termly.

Attendance

The Virtual School monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company, to contact schools to collect a record of attendance.

*Due to COVID this year we have broken our attendance down based showing September to February half term before the school closures commenced.

From September to February half term:
Attendance at this point had increased compared to last year with the average Primary attendance increasing from 90% to 93% and the average Secondary attendance increasing from 90% to 94%.

Attendance in Primary schools:

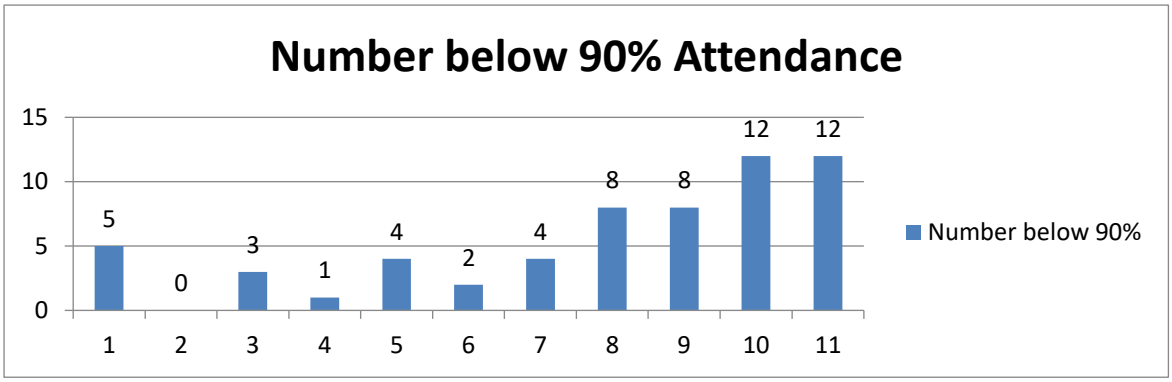
100% attendance	99% to 100%	98% to 99%	Below 90%
42 children	28	18	21
30%	20%	13%	15%

Attendance in secondary school :

100% attendance	99% to 100%	98% to 99%	Below 90%
49 children	21	28	44
24%	10%	14%	22%

Below 90% Special	Below 90% Primary	Below 90% Secondary
10 Children	21 children	44 children

There were 75 children whos attendance fell below 90% and would be considered as persistantly absent. This equates to 22% of the Reception- Year 11 cohort which is a decrease from 27% recorded during the same period in 2018/19.



This year we have employed two specialist attendance officers who have been tracking and montioring attendance to ensure effective support is in place:

- Working closely with key staff in schools to identify and resolve attendance problems.
- Working in con-junction with other Virtual School Colleagues.
- Meeting parents/carers and pupils at school or home.
- Jointly working alongside social care to ensure updates are given.
- Supporting to ensure access to education for pupils who are excluded is in place.
- Be involved in alternative education plans and development of bespoke packages alongside schools where this is deemed it is needed.
- Attend reintergration meetings following fixed term exclusions to support with next steps and effective planning to help reduce further repeat exclusions.
- Developed communication with Supervising Social Workers so that carers can be encouraged and supported to help improve attendance.
- Robust tracking and monitoring to ensure that direct intervention is quickly put in place for when attendance falls below 95%.

Case study of a young person that has received support to increase Attendance

Background:

Child C is in Year 11 at a mainstream Cheshire East School and has significantly poor attendance and engagement in school.

Key Concerns Identified

- Attendance has fallen to 85.3%
- Non-engagement in school/key lessons
- Internal truancy

Type of Intervention:

- Referred to Virtual School attendance support officer
- Attendance officer met with school to review attendance reports to review any patterns or trends
- Attendance officer met with school, carer and child individually to discuss any concerns and listen to child's voice
- Attendance officer led joint meeting with carer, school and young person to identify key strategies of support including identification of key worker in school to meet and greet and have access to safe space, 1-1 sessions with a tutor in a small room for identified classes

Impact of Intervention:

- Reduction of internal truancy
- Increased attendance from 85.3% to 99%
- Developed trust and relationship with key professionals in school and access to safe space and support when needed
- Access to 1-1 tutoring in a small space, supported to feel successful in key areas of timetable

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 2019/20 the Virtual School has been quick in its response to exclusion or threat of exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifes any key triggers and also instances when the

inappropriate behaviour does not occur and these strengths can be built on. If an exclusion was unavoidable then there were similar meeting held afterwards to try and avoid any further instances. Schools or carers are asked to inform the Virtual School whenever an exclusion takes place. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given.

The Virtual School has commissioned places at the Fermain Alternatvie Provision in Macclesfield and this has contributed to the reduction in repeat exclusions and total number of session lost with identified KS4 children. The Fermain staff have been trained in how to support children with insecure attachment and pupil premium funding has been used to help provide a mentor/key worker to support our children as a cared for champion.

There have been no cases of permanent exclusion in acadmic year 2019/20 with 9 individual fixed term exclusions recorded (for 4 individual children) of primary age. There still seems to be a higher number of fixed term exclusions at secondary school which is that of the national picture, although fixed term term exclusions overall have decreased compared to the same time last year. The data shows that there were 84 individual exclusions recorded (for 31 children) at secondary age. The Virtual School Headtacher is working alongside the Northwest Virtual Head group to design a regional guide to support reducing exclusions and offer advice and guidance to schools.

	Proportion of pupils subject to fixed term exlusion	Average Number of days lost per pupil
2016/17	13%	4 days
2017/18	10%	4 days
2018/19	12%	5 days
2019/20	9%	4.5 days

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.

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 intervention 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
- Agreeing targets for improvement in attendance or behaviour
- Identifying any particular issues/concerns in school
- Deciding whether additional adult support, eg mentor is required.

The voice of young people is included in staff appointments and children have participated on interview panels this year. They were involved in planning the questions and identifying the desirable

qualities and had an equal say with other panel members when the decisions were made. The 'My Voice' document has been developed this year following a working group session led by the Virtual School Head Teacher with a number of cared for children and careleavers who supported redesigning this document in line with Signs of Safety. The feedback from children and schools of the new format has been positive.

The participation team attend all corporate parenting workstream meetings to ensure that information around education is shared and communicated effectively.

Where children are not attaining and are struggling in school the VS 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 closley with schools to empower and train staff to continue support children/young people.

Comments from an advisor getting their young person's views across during COVID:

Young people that joined teams for PEP meetings with foster carers, were able to speak about the work they were doing at home and how they were using teams to contact teachers and ask questions regarding work that was set. Foster carers also spoke about how they were supporting with learning. Schools also sent postcards home or messages home to say how well they had done with online work that was set. Young people were also able to speak about how they were feeling or if they had any concerns. (VS Advisors)

With a couple of year 11's they were able to discuss how they felt regarding not doing exams, a lot were disappointed as felt they had worked hard. One was due to stay on at school so discussed a project she was asked to do and she was able to discuss how she was feeling about going into sixth form. Another young person then had some support from the learning mentor to help support with transition from school to college. (VS Advisors)

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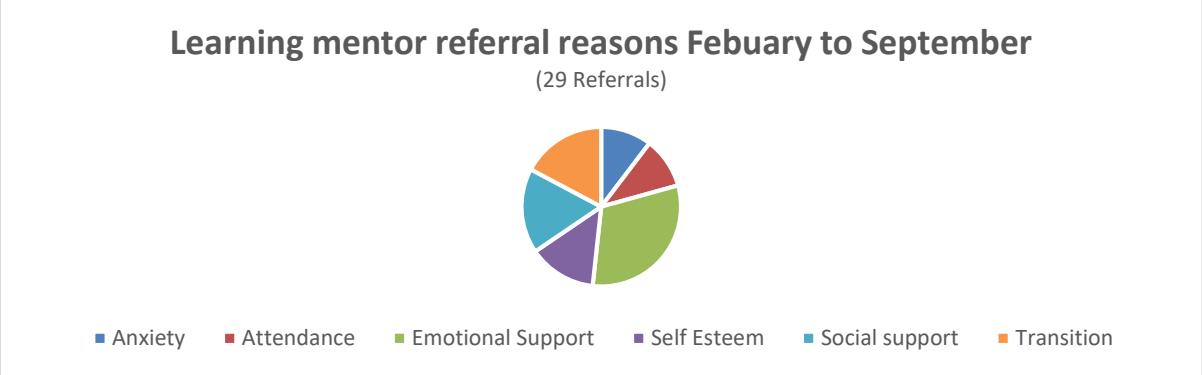
During lockdown I also engaged with some young people who had the EHCP reviewed. For one young person we discussed his views for the plan and another young person joined in the teams meeting to amend his plan ready for post 16 provision (VS advisors)

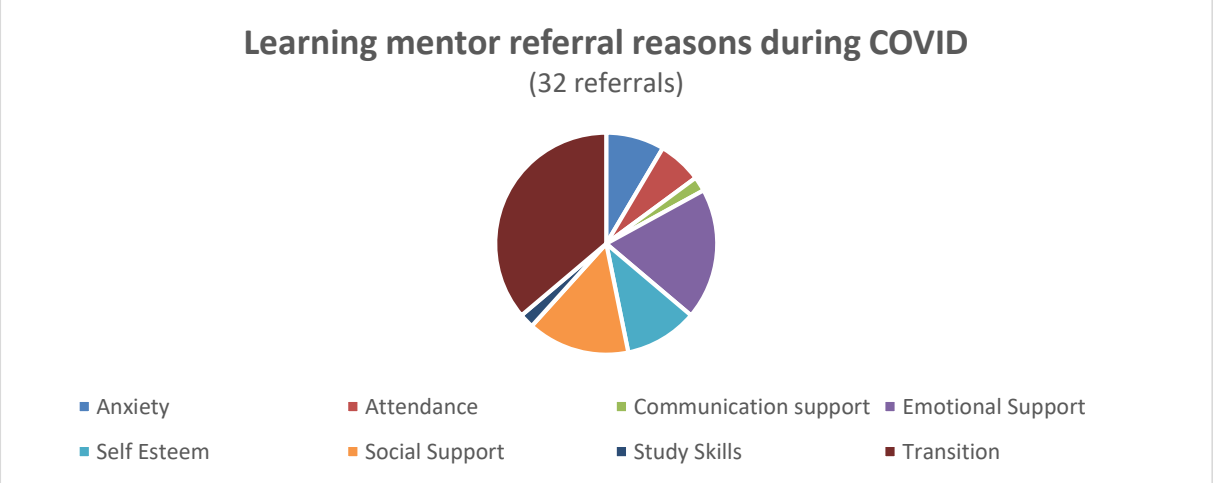
I have worked closely with the VS to ensure children and young people have been able to access educational support during the pandemic.

One member of staff has been on hand to advocate for a young person due to a deterioration in their mental health which reduces their ability to concentrate whilst managing their anxieties due to their Grandmothers ill health. Unfortunately, this young person's Grandmother passed. VS staff have supported me in advocating for this young person to ensure he can continue at college. She also provided the assistant of the tutor to support this young person to catch up on outstanding work. (Quote from Social Worker)

Learning Mentor

Virtual School now has three full time learning mentors who were newly appointed March 2020 and we are in the process of recruiting one more. The main aim is to work with school aged children to support social, emotional mental health and transition, when children have had a placement or school change or where children have high levels of anxiety. The learning mentors work alongside Designated Teachers and other agencies to support cared for children to overcome barriers to learning. This year we have one of our learning mentors specifically for supporting post 16 young people with a specific focus on increasing support for our NEET young people.





Our Learning mentor follows different programmes of study depending on the needs of the child and consults with professionals and carers prior to planning this. This multi-faceted approach aims to upskill the schools and carers enabling them to provide a consistent approach which can be maintained once the direct work with the Learning Mentor (LM) ceases. The focus of work with young people has included:

- Joined up work for Y6-Y7 transition
- Support in reintegrating back into mainstream provision
- 1:1 support around anxiety
- How to manage challenging social interactions and friendships
- Support around emotional regulation and the exploration of feelings
- Understanding feelings, social and friendship skills

This year we have also employed our first Post 16 learning mentor who has specific oversight of our NEET young people to support in reengaging them back into Education, Employment and Training.

Case Study from the learning mentors support during COVID

Background:

- **Child A became a cared for child in April 2020**
- **Experienced considerable disruption in their education having been on roll at numerous different schools.**
- **In year 6 Child A had moved placement and to a new school.**

Type of Intervention:

-VS Education Adviser identification of school place for conclusion of year 6 in line with government guidance for 'wider opening of schools '
- Successful identification of alternative school where Child A could attend as a 'guest' whilst living in foster care
- Referral to Learning Mentor to support transition liaison with carers and school in order to attend sessions in school
-Joint working with partners to ensure effective completion of initial PEP
-Effective communication between the VS Adviser and foster carer
-Identification of school place for year 7 Sept 2020

How is PP being spent

Appointment of Learning Mentor within the VS team to support direct work with identified children.

Impact of Intervention:

Child A had previous fixed term exclusions and had uncertain education provision though the work of the VS mentor they were able to access education under government guidelines for 'Year 6 wider opening of schools' during Covid school closures.

Post 16 Learning Mentor Case Study

Background:
Child came into care in the Spring of 2020 as an unaccompanied asylum seeker, was unable to speak English and educational background was unclear.

Key Concerns:

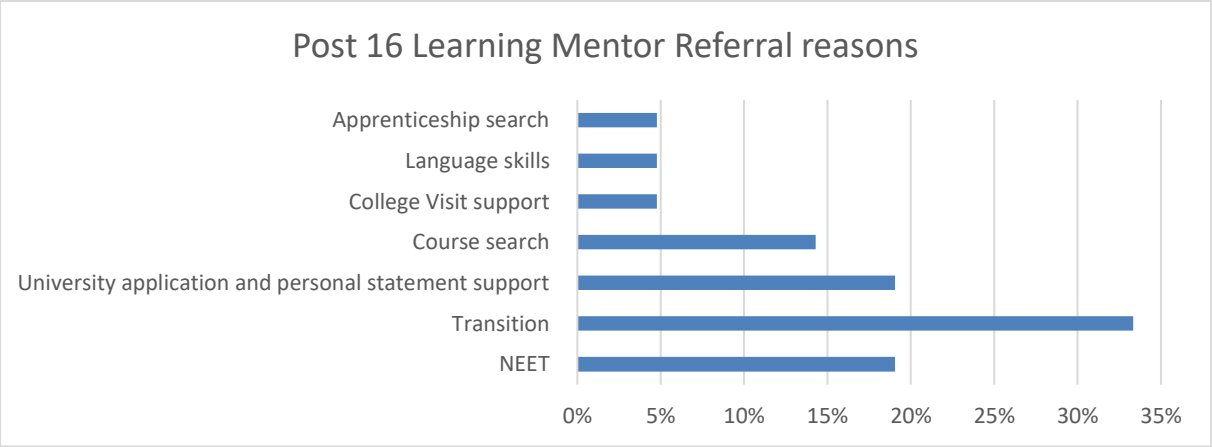
- **Language barrier**
- **Accessing education**
- **Self-esteem and anxiety**
- **Dependence on foster carers**
- **Impact of police involvement**
- **Building relationships**
- **Cultural differences**

Type of Intervention:

- **1:1 weekly catch up sessions with VS post 16 mentor**
- **Language support sessions using ESOL learning materials over the summer to prepare for college**
- **Application support to the ESOL course at College**
- **Support in applying for an educational bursary**
- **Post 16 mentor arranged and supported college visitation morning to increase familiarity, meet and greet with tutors**

Impact of Intervention:

- **Built a trusting relationship**
- **Gradually increased his English vocabulary to support him in accessing simple English language skills at college**
- **Attended the visitation morning at college which made transition into education smoother**
- **Support with enrolment at college and is now attending full time.**
- **Receives a bursary to fund learning materials and lunches at college**
- **Developed close friendships with other children and young people living in his foster placement**
- **Plays for a local football team**



Post 16 Tutor

1:1 tuition is offered to 16-18 years old. Most of the young people taking part are currently NEET and/or have no formal qualifications. If there is a need and there is a capacity within the caseload, 1:1 tuition is also offered to under-16 and over-18 years old. The purpose of 1:1 tuition is to gain

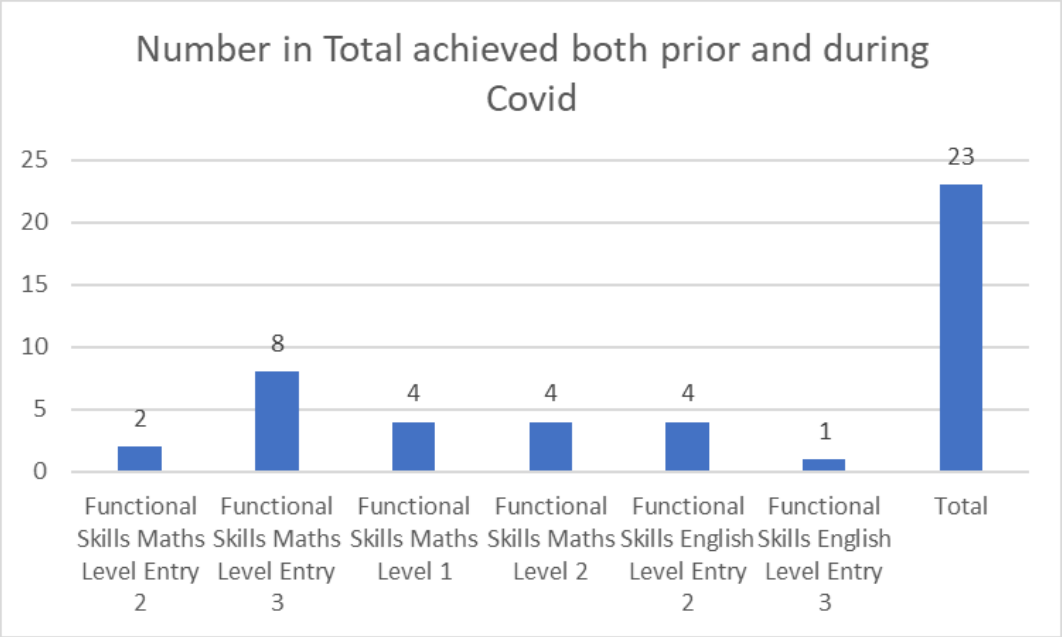
qualifications, improve confidence, to engage in other positive activities and progress to Education, Employment and Training.

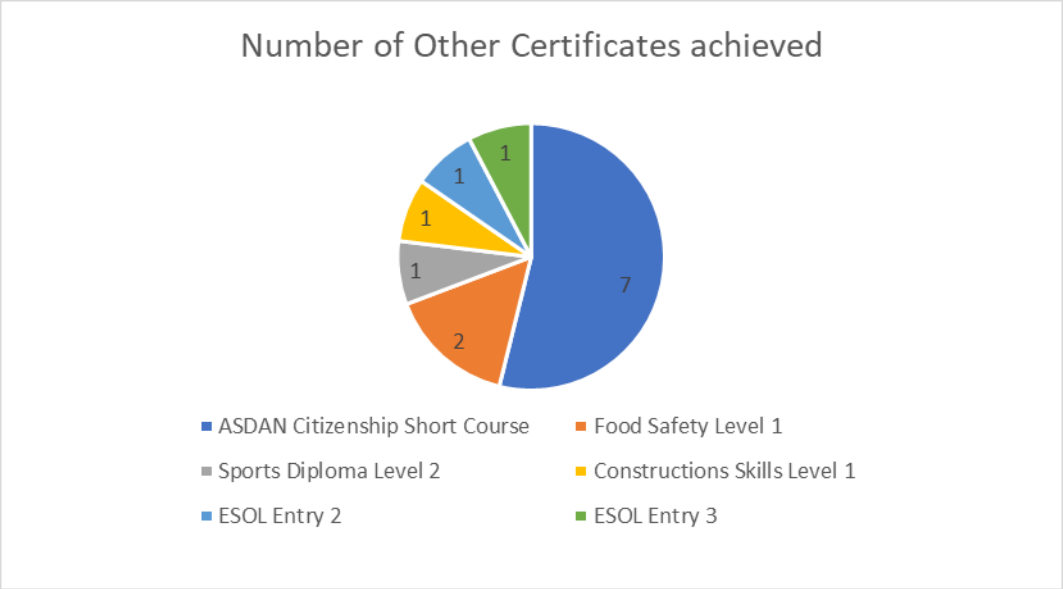
1:1 Tuition Offer:

Functional Skills Maths and English. Every student gets access to an online learning resource (bksb). Students take an Initial Assessment test to determine current level. Then an Individual Learning Plan is created and the students to follow, using learning resources provided.

During the last academic year, 100% of the students who attempted, have passed their Functional Skills Exams and gained qualifications. We were also able to continue sitting the exams during COVID due to them being completed on a 1:1 basis.

Exams passed/Qualifications achieved:





English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) - Teaching ESOL to UASC Young People, who are currently awaiting to enrol to an ESOL course. Students are working at their individual pace and create a portfolio of activities covered in 16 topics of ESOL Activities. Main aim is to introduce English to non-speakers (Pre-Entry Level) and to boost their language skills at Levels Entry 1 and Entry 2.

The Post 16 tutor offered 1:1 intervention for several ESOL learners, 3 of the young people have continued at college, 1 has secured full time employment due to success of support and completion of qualifications.

Post 16 Tutor Case Study

Background:
Child C is a former relevant care leaver who has arrived in UK in 2018 (15 years old UASC). English is not their first language but they speak good English.

Key Concerns during last academic year

- **No engagement via Teams during COVID-19**
- **No work submitted since the lockdown (since Friday 20th March 2020)**
- **Will not pass the course if the outstanding work is not completed**
- **Due to leave the area therefore was not engaged in finishing the work to complete the Level 2 course.**

Type of Intervention:

- **Post 16 tutor liaised with designated staff member at college to get contacts to teachers**
- **Post 16 tutor contacted teachers to find out what work needs to completed**
- **Post 16 tutor arranged to visit college during COVID-19 restrictions, in order to access resources needed to complete the work**
- **Post 16 tutor monitoring daily to ensure attendance and access as needed, visits if required to support engagement**
- **1:1 sessions were extended if needed with post 16 VS tutor, to make sure that the piece of work is completed and submitted to the teacher.**
- **Constant communication between VS and College to support with updates as needed**
- **VS involved in information relating to final assessment (Teacher Assessments)**

Impact of Intervention:

- **Young person has passed Sports Diploma Level 2 course**
- **Enrolled at college to continue studies**

Early Years

Early Years children cared for children have been supported by three members of the Early Years team during the year Sept 19-20. Foster carers and parents were signposted at PEPs to the facilities and activities being run by the Children Centres and through the Parenting Journey. Due to COVID 19 and lockdown the majority of our 71 2-4 year old cared for early years children only had two PEPs completed this year. However, during lockdown, we contacted all the carers of our 2-4 year old children at least once each month providing advice, guidance and support on learning activities and useful websites. We made sure that all children transferring to school had school places and had a handover of cases. We supported 2 year olds to access a nursery place when eligible.
We were also busy putting together an Early Years ePEP (electronic PEP) which we trialled in the summer term 2020 and have implemented from September 2020. However, this will need updating next year in light of the information below.

There has been no formal assessment at end of Reception this year due to the impact of the Pandemic. It is also worth noting that the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) coming into effect in September 2021 was released with updated Development Matters (child development) guidance for settings to use. We have 36 schools in CE that have agreed to pilot the new curriculum guidance and Development Matters, including 19 maintained nurseries. The new curriculum comes with a change in assessment criteria which will come into effect in July 2022.

Feedback from a foster carer

Hi this is just a little note to say thank you for your support, over organising funding for… to attend the …. Holiday Club in lieu of her being unable to take up the Pre-school entitlement in January. The difference it has made is very obvious.

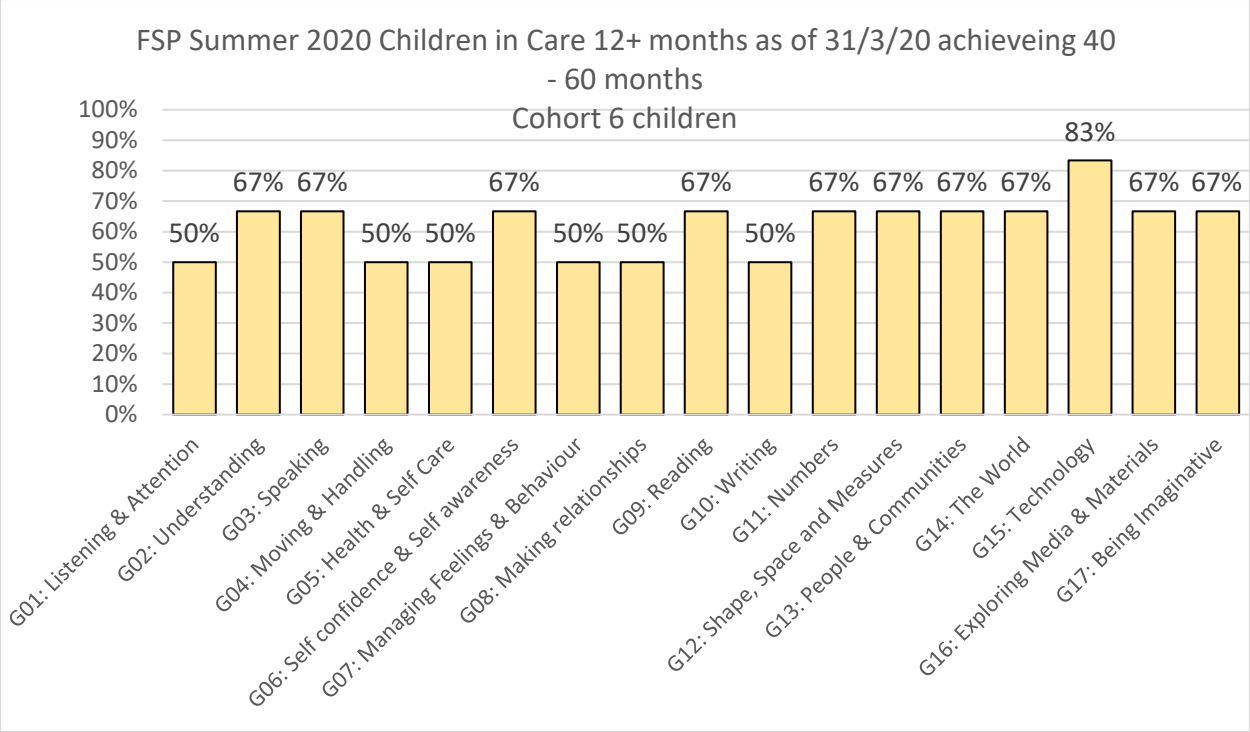
She has both enjoyed and benefited from this time. We can see how much it has helped her interaction with other children and her self-reliance. Mixing with others after such a long time of isolation has been of enormous value. It has also given us some time away from the constant and extremely lively attentions of our little 'Pocket Rocket'. Thank you again

There were 10 children in total as of July 2020 with 6 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months as of 31st March)

*All data is based on Teacher Assessment as no formal baseline assessment were undertaken due to Covid 19, DFE guidance is that no school is required to submit data July 2020.

Based on In care 12+ months	On track to achieve GLD?	On track to achieve GLD?
Yes	2	33%
No	3	50%
Not provided	0	0%
NOR	1	17%
Total	**6**	**100%**

Data in the graph below shows that although only 2 children have been recorded as on track to achieve GLD higher percentages were recorded of children achieving 40- 60 months.



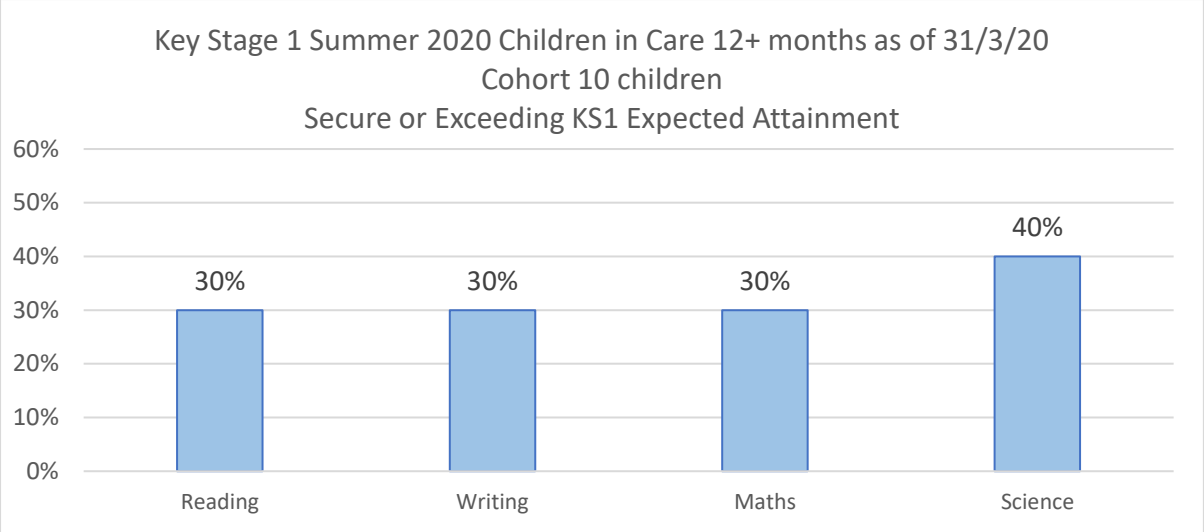
Attainment at Key Stage 1

As at July 2020 there were 13 cared for children in total, with 10 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months as of 21st March).

*All data is based on Teacher Assessment as no formal SATs were undertaken due to Covid 19, DFE guidance is that no school is required to submit data July 2020.

Number of children	Reading attainment	Reading Progress	Writing attainment	Writing Progress	Maths attainment	Maths Progress	Science attainment	Science Progress
Emerging	2		3		2		2	
Developing	5		4		5		4	
Secure	3		3		3		4	
Exceeding	0		0		0		0	
Progress - Age Expected		5		4		6		6
Progress - Below Age Exp.		5		6		4		4
Total	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**

Percentage (based on whole cohort)	Reading attainment	Reading Progress	Writing attainment	Writing Progress	Maths attainment	Maths Progress	Science attainment	Science Progress
Emerging	20%		30%		20%		20%	
Developing	50%		40%		50%		40%	
Secure	30%		30%		30%		40%	
Exceeding	0%		0%		0%		0%	
Secure + Exceeding	30%		30%		30%		40%	
Progress - Age Expected		38%		31%		46%		46%



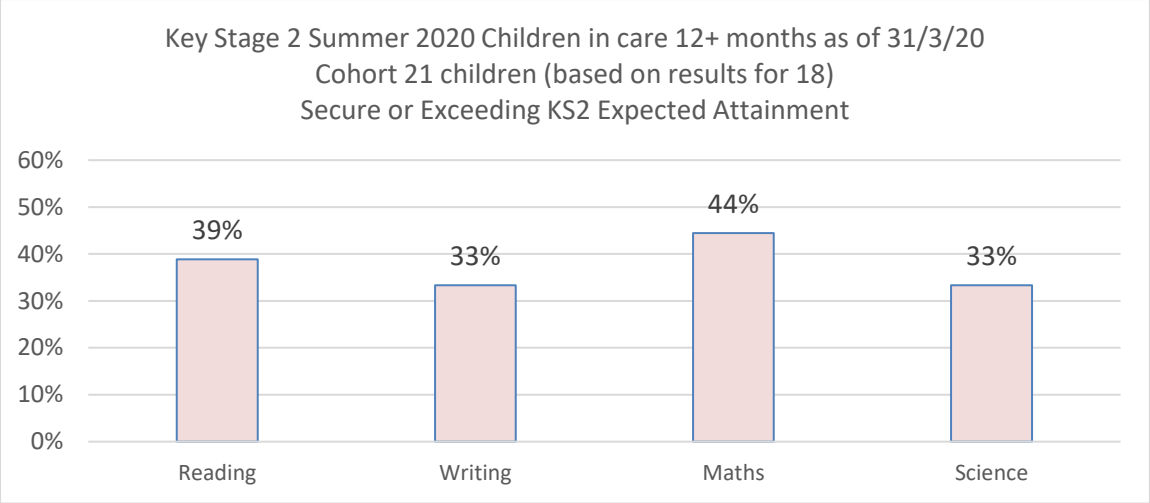
Attainment at Key Stage 2

As at July 2020 there were 27 Cared for Children with 21 within the eligible cohort (data for 18 children were submitted)

*All data is based on Teacher Assessment as no formal SATs were undertaken due to Covid 19, DFE guidance is that no school is required to submit data July 2020.

Number of children	Reading attainment	Reading Progress	Writing attainment	Writing Progress	Maths attainment	Maths Progress	Science attainment	Science Progress
Emerging	7		7		6		6	
Developing	4		5		4		6	
Secure	5		5		6		6	
Exceeding	2		1		2		0	
Progress - Age Expected		11		11		12		11
Progress - Below Age Exp.		7		7		6		7
Total	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**

Percentage (based on returned cohort)	Reading attainment	Reading Progress	Writing attainment	Writing Progress	Maths attainment	Maths Progress	Science attainment	Science Progress
Emerging	39%		39%		33%		33%	
Developing	22%		28%		22%		33%	
Secure	28%		28%		33%		33%	
Exceeding	11%		6%		11%		0%	
Secure + Exceeding	39%		33%		44%		33%	
Progress - Age Expected		61%		61%		67%		61%



*Phonics collection is taking place next term and results will be available in January (report will be updated following this)

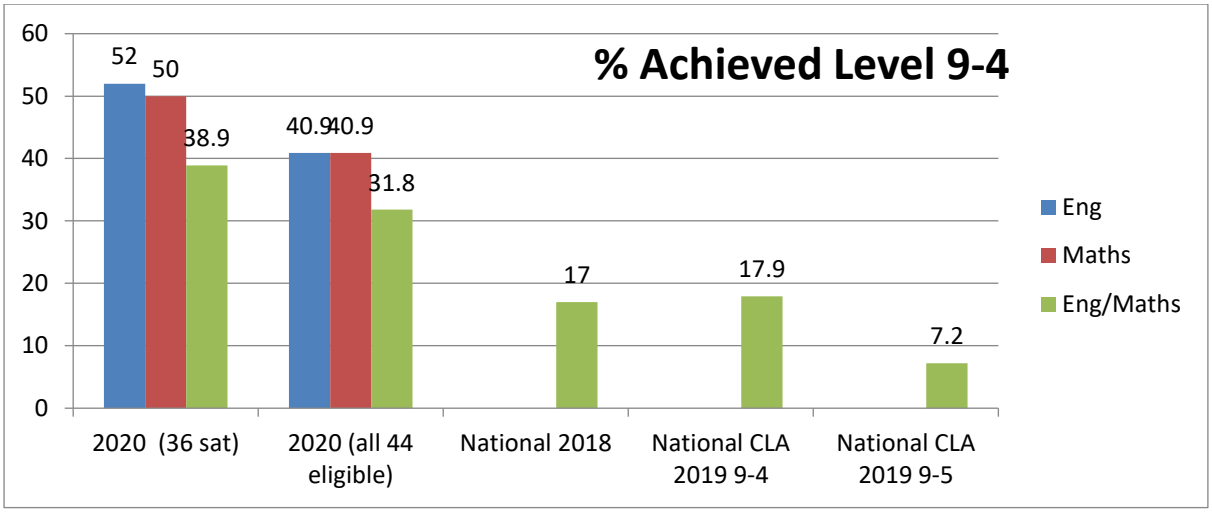
Attainment at Key Stage 4

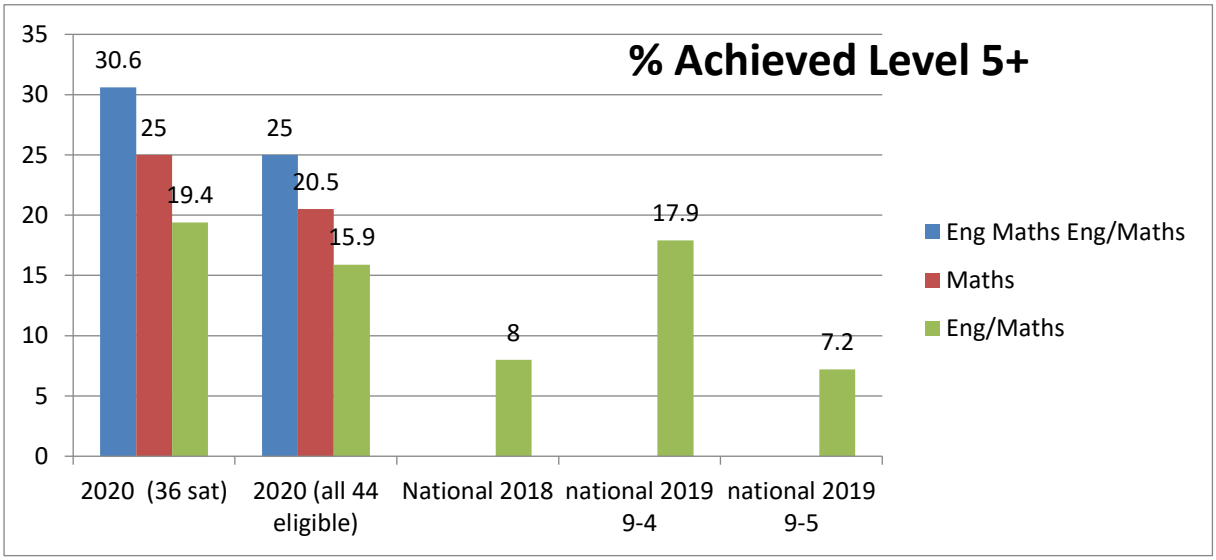
*All data is based on Teacher Assessment as no formal GCSEs were undertaken due to Covid 19, DFE guidance is that no school is required to submit data July 2020.

At the end of the academic year July 2020 there were 51 children in total that are Cheshire East Cared for Children. Of the 51 there were 44 in the eligible cohort (Cared for - at least 12 months March 19-March 20). Of the 44 eligible 36 were entered for GCSEs, (the other 8 children gained a range of other functional skills qualifications, most attended specialist schools for children with complex needs).

- 6 gained 9-6 in Maths
- 4 gained 9-6 in English
- 1 gained grade 8 & 9 in English and Maths
- 29 received grades for at least 5 GCSEs
- 13 received grades for at least 8 GCSEs

***Although data below includes that of this year and national, as per DFE/OFQUAL guidance this year's data should not be published or compared to previous years/national data.**





Post-16 Education, Employment and Training

Year 12:

At the end of the academic year 2019/2020, there were **53** students in total. Of this, **10** were NEET (19%), 4 of the NEET young people have been supported through summer and have a positive destination for the start of the new academic year. The other 6 young people are not currently engaging with services on offer and have other needs to address before EET can be achieved. Students are engaging in a range of post 16 pathways including college courses ranging from entry level to level 3, apprenticeships and re-engagement programmes.

8 students have completed the first year of their level 3 course and are progressing to the 2nd year in September.

Year 13:

At the end of the academic year 2019/2020, there were **65** students in total. Of this **21** were NEET (32%).

Students have engaged in a range of post 16 pathways, including college courses ranging from bespoke and pre- entry level to level 3, apprenticeships and re-engagement programmes.

2 students completed and passed level 3 qualifications. Both have secured places at university.

Year 14:

16 students have continued with their learning this year. 14 of these young people have either gained employment or progressed to the next level of learning. 2 students from this cohort do not yet have a positive EET destination for Sept. (88% moving into a positive EET destination)

Service objectives 2019/20

Strategic priority	Summary	Lead	Achieved/Some Progress/ Not achieved
Implement changes resulting from the Social Care Bill which includes Virtual School Head teacher to have responsibilities for previously looked after children as well as looked after and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools	Evaluate models and make changes to staffing structure and use of funding to support improving outcomes of children. We have introduced learning mentors across the team to support individual children. Continue to increase support to schools through training and locality sessions Continue to work alongside adoption counts to develop information and guidance for Previously Cared for and adopted children**.** We have an advisor with specific oversight for advice and guidance for PLAC children and has developed web pages and resources. We have worked alongside regional VSchools to ensure collaborative working is in place and sharing good practise	**LR**	**Achieved**
Implement a self-assessment tool for use with and by schools to improve their practice and support for cared for children	Adapted a self-assessment tool for schools following DLT to support audit of current protocols and practise	**LR**	**Some progress**

	Checklist created to support new DLT with roles and responsibilities in line with DFE guidance Created a cared for children profile for use in schools. Although some progress due to Covid some elements were put on hold and will continue to be a focus and review next academic year		
Virtual head teacher to review impact and effectiveness of current arrangements to ensure support and interventions are targeted and lead to improved outcomes. Review the impact of a SEN lead within the Virtual School team	Clear and robust tracking documents to review attendance of all children. Clear and robust tracking documents to review attainment of all children. Clear procedures to support improving SEN and aligning EHCP reviews and PEPs with a SEN lead within the VS team in place. Clear procedures to support building Signs of Safety into practise and procedures. Virtual School are working closely across service areas to support clear impact for children. Advisors have been identified as leads within specific areas to support across services: SEND, Bespoke, Mockingbird, PFA	**LR**	**Achieved**

Development of ePEP (Electronic Personal Education Plan) for Early Years and Post 16	ePEP and PEP documents have been redesigned to include: -Signs of Safety format -Review of PP funding to ensure schools are measuring impact each term - My voice was adapted with working group of cared for children and care leavers to change format for scaling system Nearly all primary and secondary schools are now effectively using ePEPs, due to success the ePEP has been developed for EY and Post 16 and is being piloted during this year.	**LR/CL**	**Achieved**
Implement a revised quality assurance process for PEP arrangement to increase the number of good/outstanding	Clear and robust QA process for advisors is in place. Clear and robust moderation process is in place. Training delivered to Designated lead teachers to support 'what makes an outstanding PEP' Virtual locality sessions have continued throughout this academic year with both CE and schools Out of Authority.	**LR/CL**	**Achieved**

Improve attendance to ensure reduction in Persistent Absence figures in particular within Special Schools	Clear and robust tracking documents in place to allow for regular monitoring and reviewing of individual Children's attendance. Worked closely with Director of Education and HOS (education) throughout Covid on the education recovery of schools to ensure that there was smooth reopening in September. Joint working with other services to ensure that access to education either remote or on site was in place as needed. Clear communication and procedures in place throughout the pandemic to ensure PEPs continued. Effective communication procedures in place to support return to school.	LR/CL	Achieved

24. Development Priorities for 2020-21

In addition to the specific actions included in the various sections of the report the Virtual School has identified the following priority areas and key actions to be addressed this year.

Strategic Priorities for 2020-2021:

1. Implement a Governing Body to ensure governance and scrutiny to include core members from across key partners and stakeholders.
2. Work with council leaders to ensure development of apprenticeship opportunities for our Cared for Children/care leavers.
3. Development of a pupil council voice to ensure our children/young people are fully involved with key developments across the service.
4. Work alongside council members as part of the corporate parenting strategy to develop access to front line services (members to support: Governing Body, Priority 2 Workstream, Direct work with children and young people to improve access to education).

Operational priorities:

Continue to provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes (narrow the gap and lost learning) and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of Pupil Premium. In relation to the return to schools following impact from Covid 19.
Monitor requests and impact of Pupil Premium and develop a system to ensure schools are made accountable for impact.
Introduce a governing body within the virtual school to scrutinise all areas of the service.
Increase targeted support and interventions for pupils in Y6, 11 and Post-16.
Embed locality model working to support children and schools.
Improve outcomes for all years and support with impact from Covid 19 and gaps in learning.
Improve Literacy and Communication of Early Years and Primary aged children.

Identify and implement changes resulting from the Social Care Act 2017 which includes Virtual School Head Teacher to have responsibilities for previously looked after children as well as looked after and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools
Continue to review the impact of staffing changes and use of funding to support improving outcomes of children.
Adapt training to increase support to schools to offer full staff CPD to increase Attachment and Trauma awareness.
Continue to work alongside adoption counts to develop information and guidance for Previously Cared for and adopted children.
Continue to work alongside regional VS partners to share good practise
Continue to develop online webpages and resources to further support advice and guidance.

Monitor the impact of commissioned and front-line services through engagement, progress and outcomes
Work with procurement and commissioning to develop monitoring process for commissioned services.
Increase direct supervision of commissioned service and clarify expectations to be achieved.

Review and monitor the impact if commissioned service to ensure quality and value for money.
Continue to work with alternative provisions to ensure outcomes of children accessing alternative provision is further improved.
Work alongside social care to ensure education involvement with Bespoke and Mockingbird

Implement the self- assessment tool for use with and by schools to improve their practice and support for cared for children
Identify schools where progress is below expected and use self-evaluation to plan for improvement.
Share best practice where pupils achieve above expectations.

Improve completion rate and quality of PEPS and develop to extend to Early Years and Post 16
Review and roll out pilot for ePEP for early years and post 16 providers.
Continue to improve completion rate of PEPs (termly).
Continue to improve number of PEPs graded as 'Good'/'Outstanding', sharing best practise within locality network sessions
Develop PEP to ensure PFA is a clear focus