

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 23.11.21
Title of report: Virtual School Headteacher Report 2020-21

Purpose of report: To brief the Corporate Parenting Board on how the Virtual School has been working during the academic year 2020-21

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not applicable – for information
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Jo-Anne Sanders for Mel Meggs
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Not applicable
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr V Kendrick (Children)

Electoral wards affected: None

Ward councillors consulted: None

Public or private: Public

Have you considered GDPR? Yes GDPR considered no service users identified

1. Summary

Kirklees Virtual School – Position Statement

This has been a very difficult period for our young people because of the issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been increased pressure on the Virtual School to respond to the additional needs of young people due to the fact that their education has been disrupted with time spent in “lockdowns”, “the vulnerable learner offer”, “bubble closures” and “on-line learning”. The Virtual School has ensured that resources and support are in place to minimise the impact as much as possible. This report considers validated data from 2019, with updates for 2020 and 2021 wherever possible. We are very conscious of the impact of the pandemic on the emotional health and well-being of our young people and we are seeing the impact of this as we move forwards.

Ofsted – June 2019

The effective virtual school has high aspirations for the progress and well-being of children in its care. The virtual school has developed increasingly purposeful links with schools and colleagues in social care to check pupils' progress and provide additional support. Personal education plans are thorough and clearly capture the views of children, young people and carers on the support they receive. The virtual headteacher has supported the creative use of additional funding to improve attendance, provide extra tuition and promote children's involvement in wider experiences. As a result, children in care have achieved outcomes that are largely in line with children in care nationally. Additional support for young people over the age of 16 is encouraging increasing numbers to remain in education, employment or training.

Context July 2021 following the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown periods and subsequent return to school

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 February 2018*. Kirklees Virtual School currently works with all young people in the care of Kirklees from the age of 3 through to age 18 (end of year 13 with consent) when they become care leavers. This is delivered by an EYFS / primary team and a secondary / Post 16 team.

The Virtual School Team support and challenge schools and other professionals to enrich the learning experience of our children and young people in care by striving to close the achievement gap through targeted support and intervention when needed.

Our 2 main priorities are to:-

- Ensure all children and young people in care are in an education provision that is right for them
- Ensure all children and young people in care have a high-quality PEP, completed within timescales, that meets their needs.

These key areas of work include:-

- Being proactive in supporting Social Workers with school applications (where a school move is unavoidable) and supporting the transition into the new educational placement.

- Leading and coordinating all Initial Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings when a young person comes into care – or has turned 3 – to ensure that as much support is in place as soon as possible within their school or educational placement.
- Allocating all young people to an Achievement Coordinator or Teacher, who will be responsible for monitoring and tracking their cohort.
- Reviewing attainment and progress data on a termly basis to identify level of need and intervention and using this data to plan our support.
- Providing the specialist educational challenge and support in PEP Review Meetings according to need and liaising closely with Social Workers and Designated Teachers in these cases.
- Providing advice and guidance to Designated Teachers and coordinating individualised targets and support for our young people to accelerate their progress in education. These are funded through Pupil Premium Plus and their impact is reviewed as part of the PEP process.
- Commissioning capacity across services to prioritise work for our young people with the Educational Psychology Service, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Commissioning Team (SENDACT) and the Early Years Outcomes Team.
- Strengthening partnership working with senior managers in Social Care to ensure that education is central to any decision taken about our children and young people in care.
- Closely monitoring attendance and establishing plans to improve engagement - Welfare Call Ltd are commissioned to collect and report on the attendance and exclusions of our children and young people in care.
- Offering support, guidance and training to Foster Carers, Head Teachers, Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officer's to enable them to work together to put education at the centre of all work with our young people.

We continued to deliver a full service offer throughout 2020-21 as above and increased our involvement to coordinating and leading on all PEPs for all of our young people virtually. This has increased the quality of these discussions as well as achieving 100% PEP completion in all terms.

Self-Evaluation Summary September 2021

Our Key Strengths	Our key areas for development	Actions we are taking to move forward
<p>We are well-resourced and have an experienced and effective team who work with all young people to monitor their educational progress, therefore we know our young people well and their progress and attainment are reviewed at least termly so that we can intervene as appropriate.</p> <p>We work well with other professionals including Social Workers (SW), Designated Teacher's, Carer's, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Commissioning Team (SENDACT), Education Psychologist's (EP) to support and challenge others to provide the best for our young people.</p> <p>We have raised the profile of Personal Education Plans(PEPs) across service and completed all PEPs and initial PEPs in line with the statutory timescales.</p> <p>We have robust systems and processes which provide accurate data linked to priorities and statutory duties.</p> <p>We have clear priorities for improving the work of the Virtual School (VS) and track and monitor our performance against these e.g. impact on Year 12 NEET (not in education, employment or training)</p> <p>Outcomes for our young people were generally in line with national outcomes for children and young people in care (2019 validated data). We undertake detailed analysis and use our understanding of this to inform practice moving forwards.</p> <p>We have no permanent exclusions and low numbers of fixed term exclusions because we work proactively with educational providers.</p> <p>Clear evidence that Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding is used efficiently - funding is allocated through the <i>ePEP</i> system by the Virtual School Head Teacher – we know how every penny is allocated and track the progress made against each individual personalised target.</p> <p>Commissioned PP+ projects support all schools in Kirklees with an enhanced offer for our children – Early Years Outcomes Team, SENDACT, EP and support workers, Childrens Emotional Wellbeing Service, whole school training linked to the 'Timpson project'.</p> <p>We have a rigorous system of PEP quality assurance implemented by the team and signed off by the team managers. This enables team managers to have a rigorous holistic overview of the cohort.</p>	<p>Ensuring that there is minimal impact on the learning of our young people due to Covid</p> <p>Avoiding drift and delay when a young person needs a school move by early involvement in "stability meetings" and the placement search process.</p> <p>Reducing the number of Persistent Absentee (PA) pupils / pupils Not in Full Time (NIFT) education</p> <p>An ongoing focus on improving attainment and progress across all phases with a particular focus on impacting on KS2 outcomes.</p> <p>Extension of offer for children in care from 0-25</p> <p>Improve understanding and practice around the work of the Virtual School, aspirations and educational progress</p> <p>The strategic implementation of the guidance for young people with a Social Worker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking specific questions around any dips in attainment and progress in PEP's. • Working with others to support individual strategies to support and improve this. • Close liaison between the achievement coordinators / SW when planning school moves • Involvement in placement stability and other professionals meetings • Contact with other VS for advice when a young person is placed in another local authority • All young people with attendance below 90% have a PA plan agreed by all professionals • Regular monitoring and tracking of PA/NIFT pupils by team managers to focus where strategies are or are not having an impact • Sharing of data with SW managers and Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) to work in partnership to improve NIFT and PA, and training on data dashboards. • Earlier intervention – Virtual School involvement will be from age 2 by the Summer Term 2022 • Primary teacher tracks and monitors the trajectory of the target cohort ensuring appropriate support is in place • All Primary PEPs have a reading, writing and maths target when appropriate • Letterbox – for all EYFS and primary pupils • Partnership working with Early Years Outcomes Team and Early Years SEN team • Review and evaluation of early years PEP process and further development of tracking and reporting • Developing the work with the EET strategy group (16-25) • Implementation of the Post 16 national developments • Awareness raising around statutory duties and development of advice and guidance offer to schools/providers/care • Develop an internal and external training offer • Improved communications across partners including a newsletter • VSH working to implement the pilot project from September 2021-April 2022 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker)

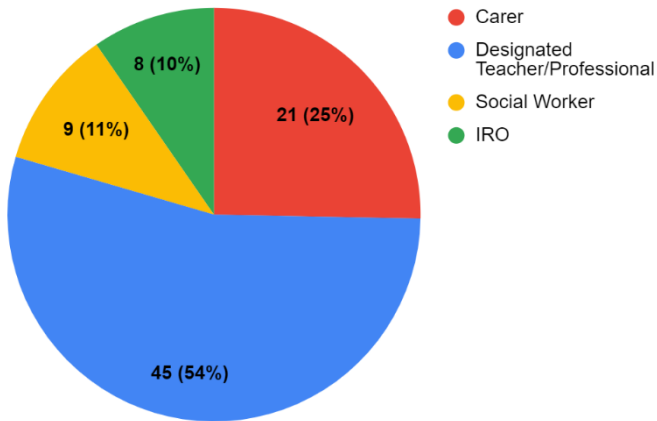
Kirklees Virtual School self-evaluation – Evidence of impact 2018-19 to 2020-21

Verbal feedback during the Ofsted inspection July 2019

- *The Virtual School is held in high regard by schools.*
- *The team are accurate in Self-evaluation regarding their areas of strength and areas for development*
- *Most PEPS reflect the thoroughness of the reviews, and clear and ambitious and show evidence that professionals have a good understanding of children's needs, with a positive move planned to termly PEPS*
- *The voice of the child and carers are meaningfully and purposefully captured in the PEP process.*
- *The impact of Pupil Premium Plus is tracked at individual level, and it is not just tracked it is evaluated – this is 'powerful and effective'.*
- *The Achievement Coordinators have high caseloads although schools confirmed that they are present at key meetings and prioritise according to need, and at points of transition.*
- *For most key stage outcomes we are more or less in line (at KS4 better) than CLA nationally.*
- *Good progress at EYFS*
- *Post 16 tracking...showing positive EET.*
- *Safeguarding – VS have a clear awareness of Gangs and CSE, schools involve the VS if there is an issue*
- *Kirklees College and other schools said that the Virtual School were 'good chasers up'*
- *The sign off process for PEPs is strong, and not just about compliance but about quality.*
- *Joined up communication is improving for young people in Year 12 and 13*
- *NEET is reducing for care leavers, heading in the right direction and is known as an area for focus*

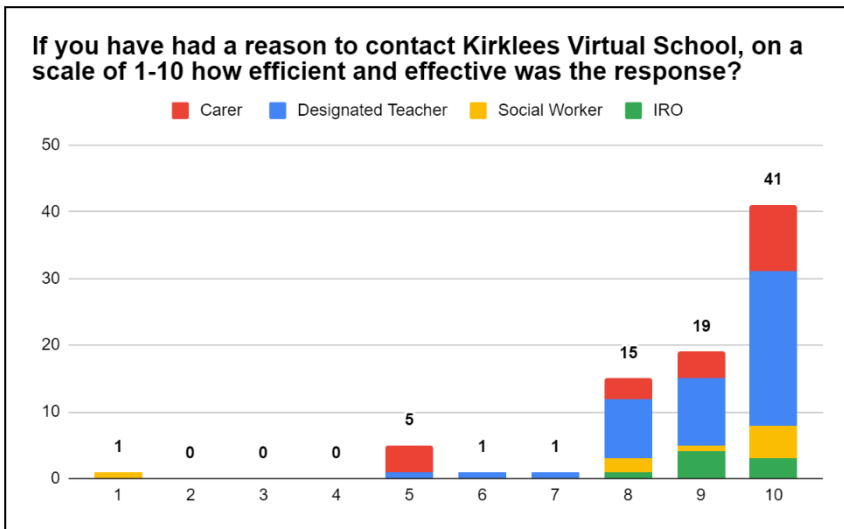
Kirklees Virtual School Feedback May 2021

Survey Responses - 83

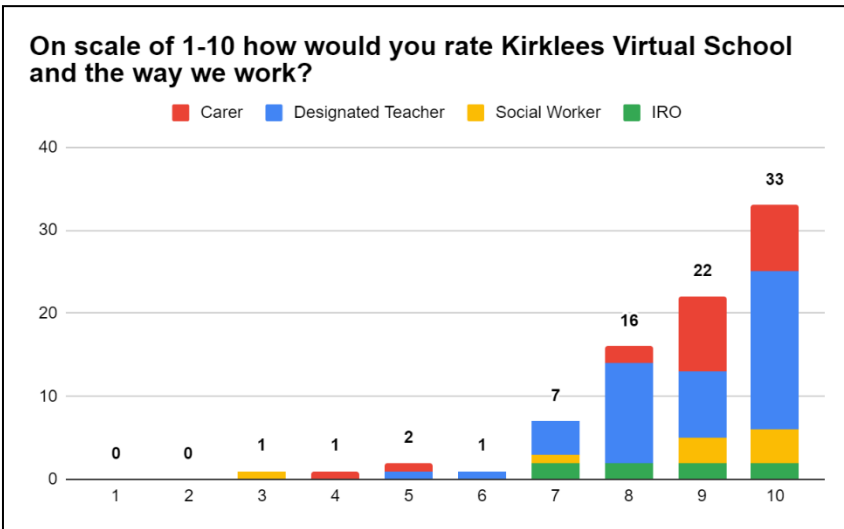


I am the allocated social worker for the child. The Virtual School have been very supportive in speaking and advocating on behalf of the child and ensure that schools are meeting the educational and developmental needs of the child, working together with social workers and parents. Ensuring the best outcome for the child, and ensuring targets are dealt with and pupil premium is used appropriately. – Social Worker

They are enthusiastic about the young people in their care and want the very best for them. – Designated Teacher



75/83 (90%) of respondents rated the Virtual School's efficiency and effectiveness at 8 and above.



71/83 (86%) of respondents rated the way the Virtual School work at 8 and above.

The Virtual School are always very helpful and very professional. – Carer

It is excellent. The Virtual School staff are easily accessed for queries and respond quickly. The network meetings are always informative and useful. – Designated Teacher

Support offered is good from my perspective, workers are responsive to queries and appear to have good relationships with schools and colleges in order to progress actions to support children and young people. Actions agreed in reviews are specific to individual needs. – IRO

The support given to the children to improve their academia was excellent and well thought out. – Social Worker

I strongly feel that Kirklees Virtual School has offered excellent support which has enabled the child to reach their full potential. The child's best educational interest always put first. – Carer

Kirklees Virtual School self-evaluation - key strengths

- During the 2019-20 we reacted swiftly to the challenges faced due to Covid 19. We provided a full service without any break working from home to ensure all our young people were safe, had any resources and support they needed for home learning - see appendix D (Covid Support)
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes are above national for children in care for both GLD and prime areas (2019 data)
- The vast majority of all children in care accessing 3 and 4 year-old free early education are placed with a provider judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- All children and young people in care have a PEP from aged 3 until the age of 18; these are needs assessed and of good quality – quality assured and signed off by the team managers.
- The percentage of KS1 pupils reaching expected or higher standard for Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) combined was above the national average for children and young people in care in 2019. In 2021 there has been a significant dip, however we do not currently have the national data to compare. This possibly reflects the impact of missed learning due to Covid.
- The last reported outcomes for our young people taking GCSEs were the highest ever in 2019 and above national for children and young people in care. 2020 and 2021 provisional results are an improvement on these. We were Band B for Attainment 8 in the last published LAIT and Band A for Progress 8 and 9-4 Pass in English & Maths GCSE
- The majority of young people who achieved national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 progressed on the trajectory to expected outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
- Participation and progression remain strong in Post 16 despite the challenges due to Covid.
- The monitoring of attendance by the Virtual School is strong and concerns are addressed promptly. Overall attendance was 94.02 % for 2018-19 (92.05 % in 2017-18). This has been impacted by Covid 19 in 2019-20 and 2020-21. We were Band A in the last published LAIT (2019)
- There has been no permanent exclusion of a child and young person in care for a number of years. This is testament to the collaborative approach to supporting those with challenging behaviour and the access to effective support services that ensure those pupils at risk of exclusion receive appropriate intervention. Whilst fixed term exclusions are a concern for us in the last published LAIT, we were Band A (2018).
- The electronic PEP system enables the Virtual School to monitor the completion and quality of PEPs and allows for systematic application, authorisation and monitoring of Pupil Premium Plus funding for individual pupils. All Designated Teachers (DTs), Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers have access to this system and can contribute to the PEP process. This process is used to challenge schools to support pupils' individual needs and is currently quality assured by the Virtual School Headteacher and team managers who signs off all PEPs. All previous targets must be reviewed in terms of impact before further targets are set.
- PEP completion in termly timescale – 100% summer term 2021
- Initial PEP completion in 10 school days of VS notification was 97% in 2020/21
- The Virtual School Team Manager oversees school changes and makes sure the new school is 'good' and will meet the curriculum needs for the young person. In July 2021, 80% of children and young people in care were attending good or outstanding schools. We have a clear understanding of the 20% who are attending education provisions judged as requires improvement / inadequate at their last Ofsted visit or with no inspection report (4.7%). When a

schools Ofsted judgement is downgraded extra monitoring and support is put in place to ensure that the educational needs of our young people are met.

- There has been a steady increase in the number of young people who attend an educational provision in Kirklees to 63% in 2020-21. we recognise that this is still an issue in Years 7 and 8.
- We always work closely with other agencies, and this can be clearly evidenced in the PEPs.
- We have commissioned multi-agency support working across the Education Psychology Service, and the Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (ChEWS) and have additional capacity in SENDACT. Impact clearly evidenced in appendices.
- Designated Teachers and support staff received extensive attachment training in the education provision through the EP Services, who offer follow up bespoke whole school sessions. The feedback has been very positive.
- We have an established Governing Body that meets regularly with a cross section of representation that holds the Virtual School to account through supportive and challenging meetings.

Kirklees Virtual School self-evaluation – Key Challenges and opportunities

- The impact of COVID -19 lockdown and ongoing issues in terms of missed education and the emotional health and well-being of our young people.
- The ongoing concerns around inclusion being magnified by the current Covid-19 pressures on the system.
- Increase in the number of young people in care and on the roll of the virtual school by 24 in 2019-20, and a further 16 in 2020-21.
- Increasing number of boys in the cohort with the issues around boys' attainment and progress in school. This is particularly apparent in years 1,4,5,6, 8,9 and 12.
- We are working with more young people overall and have more young people entering the system who need a high level of initial support and intervention particularly in Year 11 and Year 12.
- In the academic year 2020-21 there were 32 pupils not in full time education. These pupils were supported individually to return to a full-time provision that meets their needs.
- In 2018-19 the number of Persistent Absent students was 62 pupils (14.5%). There is no comparative data for 2019-20, and in 2020-21 data has been significantly impacted by Covid particularly C and X codes when students have been isolating or working from home. Persistent Absence for a core group of young people continues to be a key focus area. We were Band B for Persistent Absence for the published LAIT (2019)
- School stability remains a concern with 75 school moves outside of the natural transition process from Reception to Year 11, this was an increase from 60 in 2019 -20. (In KS 4 - 15 in Year 10 and 7 in Year 11)
- End of KS2 outcomes continue to be an issue (data 2019), 33.3 % of pupils were disapplied and/or did not sit the KS2 tests. This impacted negatively on overall results compared to children in care nationally.
- Extension of the age range working with Year 13 and considering next steps post 18 as young people become care leavers.
- Embedding new knowledge of EYFS reforms that came into effect from Sept 2021
- Supporting a shared understanding of processes, timescales, and expectations across the wider service.

Improving outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2

Context:

Historically the outcomes for Kirklees CLA at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) have been poorer than for all CLA nationally, for both measures - attainment and progress.

We are working to attempt to understand any key contributors to this picture and to turn the curve and narrow the gap.

What are we doing to address this?

At a strategic level:

- Early intervention – work is being undertaken across service to ensure that as many of our cohort as possible are taking up their entitlement to early education and care from age 2 so that early learning is prioritised, and children are being supported to achieve and make progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout the 21/22 academic year we will begin work to support children pre 3 so that by Summer 2022, our involvement will commence from age 2.
- Training for carers - work is being carried out through commissioned projects to support carers in supporting home learning – particularly in relation to early literacy and communication and school readiness.

At cohort level:

- Teacher assessment and progress data is submitted termly from individual schools and Early Years providers for each pupil and is the focus for the challenge and support provided by the virtual school through the Personal Education Plan reviews. Attainment and progress is tracked and monitored by Virtual School for all children from age 3 and reported on termly. Trends and areas of concern are identified and form the basis for decisions around whole cohort needs/interventions/training.
- There is an expectation that termly targets are set for reading, writing and maths for all primary aged children where below expected progress is recorded
- There is an identified targeted cohort made up of children who have achieved age related expectations at prior key stage assessment points (a good level of development at Reception or at least expected in one or more of the core subject areas (reading, writing and maths) at the KS1 assessment point.) Achievement co-ordinators are supported by the Primary Teacher and EY/Primary Team Manager to pay particular attention to progress for this cohort so that any dips are addressed where possible.

At individual child level:

- Bespoke targets (funded and non-funded) are set and reviewed at least termly for each child to support individual attainment and progress in the core areas of reading, writing and maths. Targets also take account of the child's wider interests, preferred learning styles and build on strengths as well as areas for development.
- Progress and attainment of each child is discussed in regular cohort supervision meetings between EY/Primary Team Manager and allocated achievement co-ordinator

Measuring Virtual School Impact

- Attainment and progress continue to improve and the gap with national narrows.

2. Information required to take a decision.

Not applicable.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People.

Not applicable

3.2 Working with Partners.

Kirklees Virtual School Governing Body provide appropriate challenge and support.

3.3 Place Based Working.

Not applicable.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality.

Not applicable

3.5 Improving outcomes for children.

Oversight and monitoring of education outcomes for children in care. Corporate Parenting Board to monitor progress, as requested by the Chair.

3.6 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources).

Not applicable.

4. Consultees and their opinions.

Not applicable

5. Next steps and timelines.

Virtual School Head to continue to lead on this way of working during the pandemic.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons.

That the report be noted.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations.

Not applicable

8. Contact officer.

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janet.tolley@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

For information only

10. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders