

Virtual School Head Teacher

Annual Report 2020/21

All data is provisional until validated data is published by DFE



Overview

The Virtual School is responsible for supporting the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) in discharging their statutory duties as stated in the DfE statutory guidance, dated February 2018, Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children and previously looked after children.

VSHs, working with education settings, should implement Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) arrangements for all Children in our Care (CIOC) who need support. VSHs have considerable flexibility in the use of PPP funding to maximise its impact for individual CIOC as well as the whole CIOC cohort.

The Virtual School works with educational providers and other professionals and partners to ensure that the educational achievement of CIOC is seen as a priority by everyone and that the needs of CIOC are understood. The Virtual School provides training, support, challenge and signposting to providers to support them to meet these needs, contributing to improved educational outcomes and supporting CIOC to make at least expected progress and reach their full potential.

The functions within the Virtual School include:

- **Promoting a culture of high aspirations for our children.**
 - By striving to achieve accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better
 - Ensuring our children access high quality educational experiences
 - Promote consultation with the VSH prior to a CIOC moving placement
 - Children are prepared for adulthood and independence in the best possible way
 - Attachment aware and trauma informed practice is embedded in our day-to-day work
- **Ensuring efficient systems are in place to ensure good quality data, information, and monitoring**
 - The VSH holds a roll of all CIOC, which includes information on the name, type and quality of education provision, SEN status, attendance, exclusions, attainment, and progress.
 - Robust procedures are in place to monitor attendance and educational progress
- **Personal Education Plans (PEP)**
 - Ensure up-to-date, effective, and high-quality PEPs, that focus on educational outcomes, are in place and that education planning is aspirational and is an integral part of the care planning process
 - Ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities
- **Pupil Premium Plus Funding (PP+)**
 - VSH are responsible for managing pupil premium plus funding for CIOC and for allocating it appropriately
- **Ensuring all statutory guidance is followed and drift and delay are avoided**
 - For admissions, exclusions, SEN procedures
- **Pupil Voice in education is sought and listened to**
- **Supporting schools and other Partners in meeting the needs of CIOC**
 - By supporting and challenging schools to ensure that they are working in the best way to identify and meet the needs of individual CIOC
 - By providing appropriate training to all partners
 - By signposting to appropriate services and resources
 - By supporting all professionals and stakeholders to focus on early identification of needs
 - By promoting the importance of effective transitions
 - Ensuring information sharing is appropriate and timely
 - By promoting evidenced-based interventions, and an attachment aware and trauma informed approach

Introduction

The following report is a summary of work undertaken by the Virtual School and the achievements of the Children in our Care whose education we support and oversee.

2019-20 was an unprecedented year which presented some very difficult circumstances for social workers, schools, families, children, and young people. COVID 19 resulted in a national lockdown including school closures providing significant challenges for education providers and other partners. The 20-21 academic year has continued to present challenges and disruptions, seeing schools close once again in the spring term.

Children in our Care and other vulnerable children have been eligible to attend school throughout the lockdown period and the Virtual School have continued to offer support and encouragement to carers and children to attend. Around 75% of our children in care accessed their school place during the lockdown, this was higher than the first lockdown in March 2020.

As well as supporting schools and children during the second national lockdown in January 2021, this year has focussed on recovery, as well as responding to changing circumstances and supporting schools in providing a positive return to school and making up for lost learning.

COVID 19 - work undertaken by the Virtual School

Our response to COVID 19 over the previous two years has included:

Out of Area Schools (Attendance)

During the first national lockdown all out of area schools were contacted regarding how often they were in contact with CIOC, how they maintained contact, who was responsible for contact, how this information was being recorded and any questions and queries. Any issues were then responded to accordingly.

Learning during lockdown

Carers of CIOC in key year groups (Year 1, 5, 6, and 10) were contacted regarding their experiences of learning during lockdown, to gain further understanding of whether CIOC attended, took part in home learning, the amount of school contact and whether educationally they felt that children were making progress in their learning. This provided a key piece of learning around what aspects worked and where improvements in practice could be made. Key issues were also picked up with individual schools.

The Virtual School have put together a post COVID recovery plan to support CIOC with the impact of COVID on their learning and with their transition back into school.

The plan has 5 strands:

1. Targeted support based on individual needs
2. Visits to schools to offer support and challenge in relation to their post COVID support for CIOC
3. Learning support offer
4. Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) offer
5. Additional activities

During the first lockdown changes in working practices were introduced and many continued into the 2nd lockdown at the beginning of 2021:

- Engagement in all virtual meetings for CIOC

- Challenge and support continuing through the virtual environment
- Day to day work continuing with team working from home, with gradual and increasing time spent face to face and in the office
- Monthly newsletters for carers and Designated Teachers, encompassing current thinking and advice on learning in lockdown and mental health support during lockdown
- Use of Website to promote good practice and recommended educational sites
- Changes to the Personal Education Plan, including a COVID19 page, to capture changes, challenges, and successes during this period
- Working with schools and social workers to support attendance where appropriate for CIOC
- Designated Teacher meetings held via Zoom
- Continuation of Attachment Training where appropriate for Schools
- Carer review of 'Learning in Lockdown'
- Virtual Thrive assessments
- Continuation of work with individual CIOC via telephone and video conferencing
- Signed up for Maths research project for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 CIOC
- Attendance at webinars to ensure the team are up to date with current guidance, sharing good practice and continuing our CPD
- Working as part of the Wellbeing for Education Return delivery team
- Monitoring meetings for key year groups (Year 6 and 10) following the first lockdown (March to July) to support schools with reintegration and catch up. This continued for key year groups following the 2nd lockdown and into the academic year 21-22
- Review of data analysis working with the Planning and Performance Team

The Virtual School Educational Psychologist who started with us in September 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, has hit the ground running in difficult circumstances. She has focused on the work needed to support CIOC with their educational recovery and her work has included:

- Carrying out psychological assessments and formulations, offering advice and support about the needs of CIOC and how best to support them in school and within residential care (in and out of area)
- Providing psychology-informed facilitation within Virtual School and with residential home managers
- Providing psychological knowledge of child development within the Early Years Strategy Group
- Developing bespoke training for schools based on need and local context
- Contributing towards a training programme that is supporting the needs that are being identified as children return to school (ATTEND framework, Stress, Reframing Behaviour, Executive Function Skills, Power of Relationships, Using creative approaches therapeutically in Schools)
- Transition research to support schools in the current climate
- Video Interaction Guidance therapeutic intervention trial

Our work on recovery is continuing into the academic year 21-22, including

- An enhanced training offer for schools particularly around the attachment aware and trauma informed approach, and the offer to schools to train a member of staff as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
- An enhanced training offer for carers, including the Family Thrive Programme, and sessions on 'how to support learning in the home'

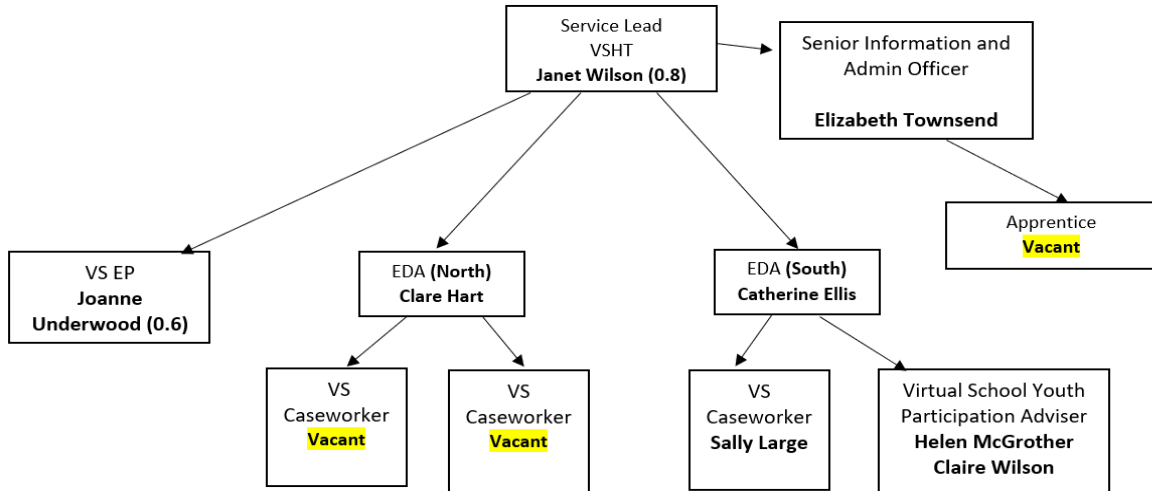
- Our pupil voice hub events will focus on listening to the voice of the child - ‘what it was like for them and how we can help them to move forward’
- We are offering a mentoring programme run by Middlesbrough Football Club for those CIOC identified as needing some additional support
- Supporting schools to use a solution focused approach to identifying children’s needs and clarifying the support and interventions needed
- Adding Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores to the personal education plan so that Virtual School can analyse the scores to identify emotional wellbeing difficulties that might impact on school engagement and success

Our other priority, as we move forward from COVID, is to support Social Workers further in their understanding of education and how they can best support the children they are working with; this will be a theme in the coming academic year as the role of the Virtual School has been extended for a short period of time to include Vulnerable Children (Children in Need and children who have ever been open to social care). The Virtual School Head Teacher will have a strategic role in promoting the education of this group of children. To meet this new challenge our priorities in the coming year will be:

1. Information Gathering
2. Providing Data to enable a strategic overview of the key performance indicators
3. Promoting and supporting all schools to consider and implement an Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Approach
4. Work with Schools and Further Education Providers to support monitoring and intervention for this group of children and young people
5. Promote partnership working across Childrens Services, sharing data trends and analysis, helping us to identify and share good practice
6. Clarify to schools Stockton’s Offer to support this cohort

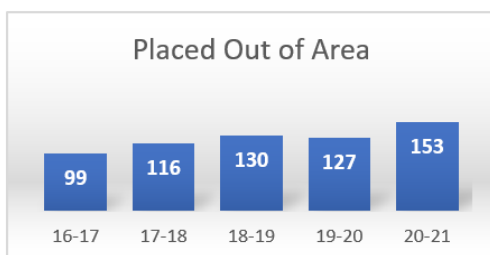
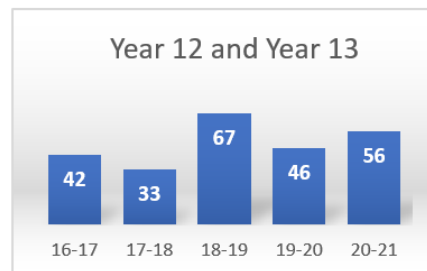
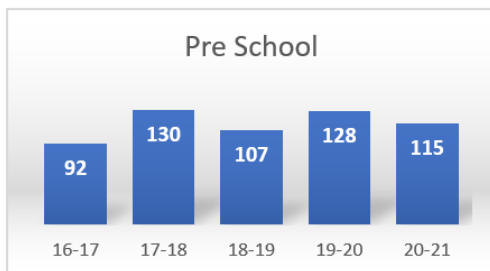
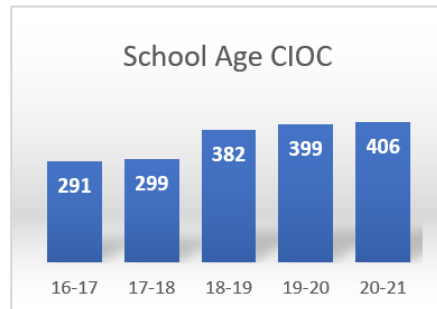
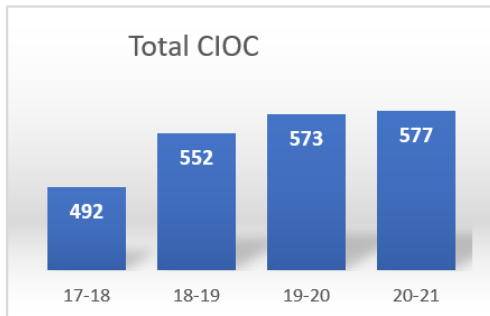
Virtual School Structure

As well as responding to the needs of the pandemic, the Virtual School has gone through significant change this year. The Children’s Services Review brought about a change in line management with the Virtual School moving into the SEND and Inclusion Service. Linda Russell-Bond who has been the Virtual School Head Teacher since 2014 retired in April 2021 and the current Virtual School Head Teacher commenced her role from March 1st, 2021. As the Childrens Services Review continued at the end of the summer term, consultation started for the review of the Virtual School. Our Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) resigned to move into a promoted post in November 2020 and this position has not been replaced in the new structure. The new and current structure is below. One of the positives to come out of the review is the change in contracts from temporary to permanent for most staff. This has contributed to staff feeling secure, valued, and has had a positive impact on wellbeing and feelings of belonging. The Virtual School Educational Psychologist has been in post for 12 months and has had a significant impact on the work of the Virtual School. There are currently two vacancies for Caseworkers.



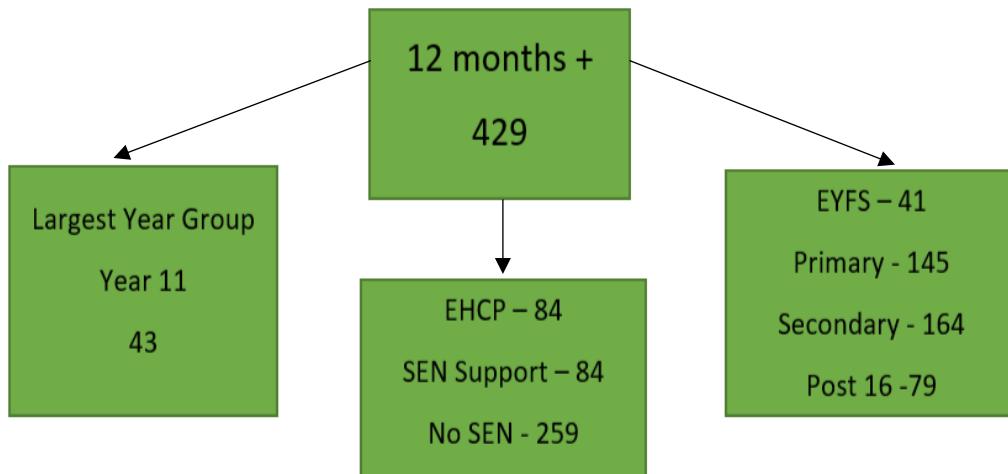
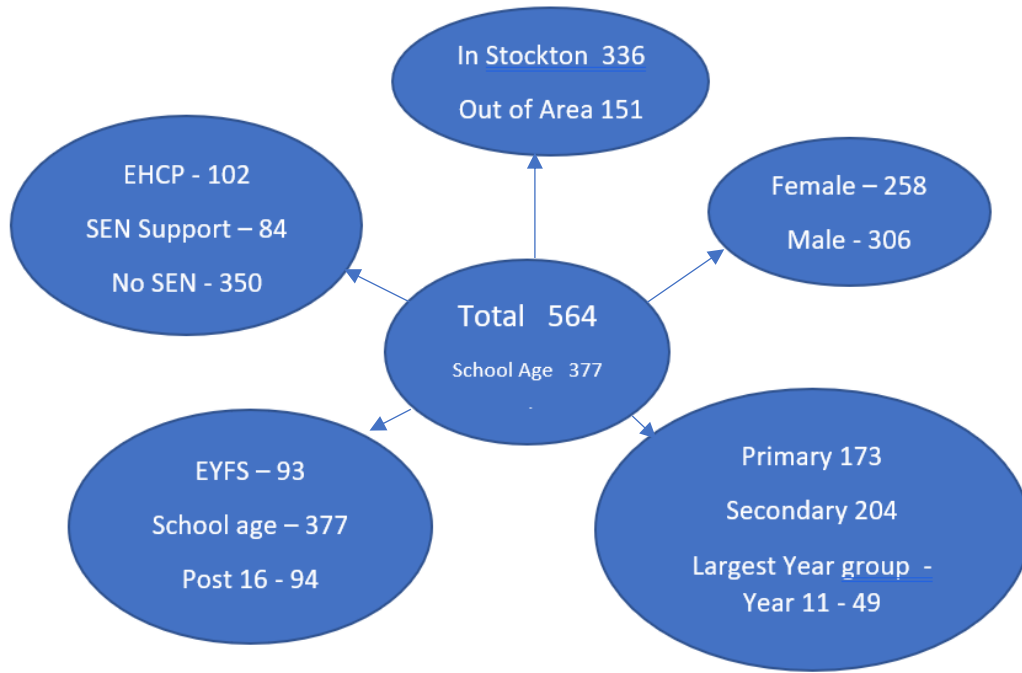
The team are a highly motivated and committed group of professionals who are dedicated to ensuring that the best interests of the children in our care are prioritised. They have responded skilfully and enthusiastically to the many challenges and changes required of them during this difficult period.

Virtual School Roll



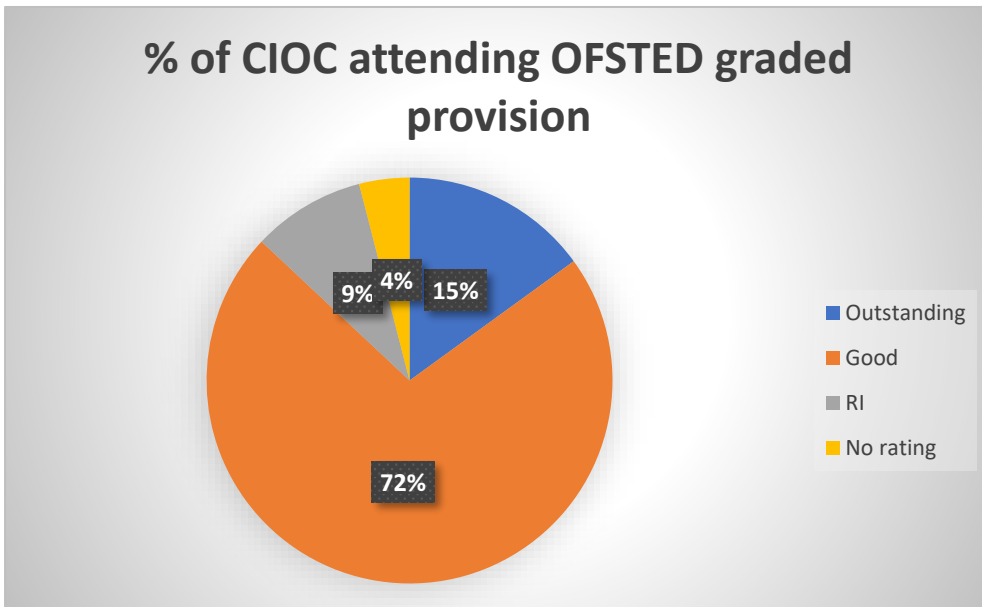
The graphs above show the trends over time for our cohort of CIOC. (Data taken from Virtual School roll, (L3) July of the academic year)

The two diagrams below again show the current cohort, the first showing all CIOC as of September 2020 and the second showing the breakdown for the 12 month+ cohort (903)



Quality of Education

Rating	No. of Schools
Outstanding	23
Good	93
Requires Improvement	16
Special Measures	0
Not known	11



Concerted efforts are made to ensure that CIOC attend good or better schools. Currently 87% of CIOC attend good or better schools. In exceptional circumstances the Virtual School may agree to enrol a child into a school graded Requires Improvement. Where this may be appropriate, the Virtual School Head Teacher will discuss this with their equivalent Head Teacher in another LA to ensure provision is appropriate for the needs of an individual child and that the decision is evidence-based. Where a child already attends a school, which is judged to be less than good, before becoming looked after or where the school receives a lower grade at inspection while the child is already at the school, the VSHT must consider whether a fall in OFSTED grading would justify disrupting a child’s education with a school move. The Virtual School will monitor the education that is provided for children in less than good schools closely. A quality assurance document is used to assess the quality of out of area independent providers where it is felt necessary and appropriate.

Special Education Needs

	SEN Identified		EHCP	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
19-20	47.3	193	21.3	87
20-21	38.2	220	17.7	102

An Education Development Adviser specialises in SEN support, attends Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) panel, and supports school and partners to ensure statutory timescales are followed and appropriate interventions are in place. The Virtual School Head Teacher sits on the Senior Leadership Team of SEND and Inclusion and works closely with the other Service Leads to ensure provision for CIOC is timely and appropriate wherever possible.

The Virtual School and SEN colleagues work closely to ensure that drift and delay is avoided when placing pupils in specialist provision by:

- Liaising closely with one another when informed of a CIOC who has an EHCP and who has a potential care placement change where it may result in a change of school.
- A change of school is only considered if necessary or it is deemed appropriate through the EHCP process.
- The Virtual school Education Development Adviser supports with the consultation process whenever necessary.
- Virtual School and SEN work together to provide interim provision whilst a placement is found, or work to arrange a bespoke package where necessary.

Attendance

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		2020-21
			Before Lockdown	Total	
Overall attendance	96.3%	96.8%	95.7%	94.6%	87.7%
National	95%	94.9%		No data	No data
Primary	97.4%	97.3%	96.8%	96.7%	93.7%
Secondary	95.3%	93.1%	94.7%	92.6%	82.5%
Persistent absence (<90%)	7.3%	8.3%		No data	26%
National	11.7%	12%		No data	No data
100% attendance					63 Children 14.4%

As for attainment, it is not appropriate to compare attendance figure year on year. The academic year 2019-20 included the first national lockdown when attendance for CIOC was advised and

recommended, however, if children did not attend they were not recorded as absent. In the academic year 2020-21, vulnerable children, including CIOC were required to attend and if they did not they were recorded as absent. This disadvantaged many of our children who engaged with home learning very well and did not want to be different to many of their peers. Some of our children in care did continue to access home learning rather than physically attend school. This was discouraged by the Virtual School but there were some exceptions where this was agreed as it was felt to be in the best interests of the child and/or family.

Exclusions

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
% of children with 1 Fixed term exclusion	No Data	4.2	8.2	11.7
Number of pupils with 1 Fixed term exclusion	12	16	33	44
Total days lost to exclusion	63.5	132	No Data	239

Educational Outcomes

Primary assessments did not take place in the summer term of 20-21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures. GCSE and A-Level examinations did not take place and pupils were allocated Teacher Assessed Grades.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes for those children who have been in care for 12 months+

It is nationally recognised that the system for measuring and comparing the attainment and progress of looked after children is problematic and often not of significance due to the often small and diverse cohorts. For that reason, it is often useful to look at the make-up of the cohort and consider how this impact on outcomes.

- 41 pupils were in the Year 11 (12 months +) cohort, 1 pupil is equivalent to 2.42%
- 59% has some recognised special educational need
- 32% had an EHCP and 27% had SEN support
- 27 pupils were educated in schools in Stockton (66%)
- 14 pupils were educated in schools outside of Stockton (34%)
- 10 pupils attended specialist, specialist independent or alternative provision (24%)

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Level 4+ English and Maths	17.8%	20%	27.5%	31.7%
Level 4+ English	32.1%	33%	42.8%	46.3%
Level 4+ Maths	17.8%	27%	27.5%	34.1%
Level 5+ English and Maths	3.6%	10%	14.2%	9.7%
Level 5+ English	14.3%	17%	22.8%	19.5%
Level 5+ Maths	7.1%	13%	14.2%	19.5%

The results at Level 4+ are pleasing as all indicators show an improvement in performance, however, it is important to note that due to the different assessment methods used (in summer 2020 and

summer 2021) the data is not directly comparable to previous years. This will also be the same for attendance and exclusions.

The attainment and progress, as well as the overall progress of children regardless of their attainment, and their engagement, is recorded on a child's PEP document. Every term information is collated and analysed. As part of our monitoring schedule, the Virtual School scrutinise this information and identify those children who are causing concerns. We will then aim to attend the next PEP meeting or contact the school for further information, ensuring effective interventions are in place and to offer support.

Boosting Reading Intervention

In 2019, just prior to the first lockdown, using national attainment data for Key Stage 2, it was identified that Reading attainment was an area for development. Our plans to work with schools looking at the reading offer for CIOC was put on hold due to restrictions on visitors into schools, this work will be picked up as soon as it is possible to do so. However, the individual CIOC reading intervention was able to commence.

The Boosting Reading programme is a short term, 10-week, one-to-one intervention that provides intensive support for selected children who are in danger of falling behind in reading. It targets children who can read, but not very efficiently, or with little understanding and enjoyment. The main aim is developing independent reading and comprehension skills and to strengthen reading strategies to enable them to access a wider range of reading material more confidently.

The programme has been an overwhelming success, not only in reading, but in the children and young people's self-esteem, and the way that they have committed to the intense intervention.

Over the academic year 2020-21 the average progress made in the 10 weeks (in reading age), by the children and young people we worked with was 23 months.

Work has already commenced with identified children, in the academic year 2021-22

Another successful reading intervention has been the Letterbox Project. The lead Education Development Advisor (EDA) specifically targets Early Years children who are below expectations in the Early Years reading strand as well as children in Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 who are below age related expectations in reading. Analysis of the impact of this intervention is very positive and we will continue to support this with pupil premium plus funding. As an addition the EDA is going to include some carer training for those identified to get further enhanced benefit from the resources and intervention.

Post 16

To support CIOC with their preparation for adulthood and in making appropriate decisions for their education Post 16, the Virtual School has appointed a Youth Direction Participation Adviser (a job share comprising two officers working three days each) to support the Virtual School in delivering independent careers advice, guidance, and support.

The Virtual School Youth Direction Participation Advisers play a vital role in supporting other professionals, carers, young people who are in our care or care leavers in respect of education, employment, or training. They work in partnership with colleagues in social care, Youth Direction,

SEN, carers, schools, colleges, universities, and training providers to ensure pathways to support young people in their aspirations and independence.

The roles and responsibilities of the Participation Advisers include:

- Offering advice, guidance, and support to CIOC
- Attending PEP meetings from Year 9 onwards to support and advise on transition plans into further education, employment, and training
- Liaising with other professionals in the LA to secure work experience opportunities/apprenticeships, training, and employment
- Ensuring that CIOC have a careers information, advice, and guidance interview
- Maintaining positive links with local colleges, training providers and schools to support young people’s attendance and engagement in their education and training
- Mentoring and supporting young people regarding accessing and engaging in educational opportunities
- Advising and guiding with transition plans and exit plans between courses of education, employment, and training.
- Working with other professionals to ensure support for the young person is in place to overcome barriers to engagement,
- Keeping other professionals up to date with any relevant information in respect of the young person’s attendance, engagement, disciplinary action in respect of their education and training

The Participation Advisers work closely with the Virtual School Education Adviser and attend termly Post 16 meetings to ensure future destinations are shared and communicated to receiving colleges. In 2020-21 the Participation Advisers carried out over 1673 significant interventions ranging from attendance at a range of meetings, home visits, support taking CIOC to interviews and college visits, emails, telephone calls and texts.

Destination data

	Sept 2017 (23 young people)	Sept 2018 (28 young people)	Sept 19 (34 young people)	Sept 20 (36 young people)	Sept 21 (41 young people)
Education	96%	76%	74%	75%	(27) 66%
Employment	0%	8%	3%	0%	0%
Training	0%	8%	15%	22%	(8) 20%
NEET	4%	4%	9%	0%	(6) 14%
Other	0%	4%	0%	3%	0%

Key Stage 5 Data (Year 12 and Year 13) shows that a high number are progressing, and retention rates are positive. From destination interviews in Year 12 and 13, 88% of Year 12 and 76% of Year 13 are planning to progress and stay in education, employment, or training.

University

Progression to University is pleasing. 26 Care Leavers currently attend University, with 5 care leavers completing their university degree in Summer 2021 (Results include: 2:1 – Nursing, 2:1 - Masters (Law), First - Masters (Medical and Molecular Virology), 2:1 – Primary Education)

University	Number of care leavers	Type of degree
Total	26	
Year 1	12	1 Foundation Degree 9 Honours degree 2 Masters
Year 2	6	
Year 3	7	
Year 4	1	
Completed 20-21	5	

The Virtual School has been successful in gaining a place on a Department for Education pilot project for Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus funding. £63,000 was awarded to the Local Authority to support Post 16 young people in our care and care leavers. Our proposal is to extend the work of our current Youth Direction Participation Officers with additional capacity so that young people up to the age of 20 can be supported to overcome barriers to their learning and education. It will also allow the Virtual School to collect data that gives us a better understanding of the progression and retention trends and allow appropriate interventions to be implemented when pupils face barriers to learning and become NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

The statutory guidance published in 2018, Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, emphasises the importance of PEPs as an integral part of the care plan of all children in our care from pre-school to age 18. Currently all children who are school age (age 5 to 16) have their PEP reviewed termly, those pre-school and Post 16 are reviewed every 6 months. The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school that the child attends. The PEP is quality assured by Virtual School staff with support from other LA colleagues following a quality assurance framework devised by the Virtual School. All PEPs are quality assured, and feedback is provided to schools.

In September 2019 the Virtual School focused on the submission of PEPs as a priority for schools and this has seen a significant improvement in the completion rates by schools. From September 2020, we have implemented a process by which we can work with social care colleagues to improve the completion rates by social workers. This work is being accompanied by the production and sharing of PEP completion guides and additional support and training from the Virtual School. We have also listened to Designated Teachers and implemented several changes to the PEP document to help them use their time more efficiently. This process will be repeated for social worker this academic year (21-22).

The Virtual School cannot attend all PEP meetings due to capacity, so we currently prioritise our attendance using the following criteria

- Requests to attend from Social Worker and/or Designated Teacher
- Identification of pupils through our regular data meetings where analysis of data allows us to identify students who we feel may need additional support
- A new admission to care
- CIOC who have recently moved out of the area or it is proposed that they may move out of the area
- CIOC attending schools that are graded less than good, where we have concerns

Record of PEPs in place

Early Years

	As reported in VSHT report (19-20)	Summer Term 20-21
PEPs in Place	44.1%	64%
PEPs to be closed off	45%	37% (inc. 5% below)
PEP no date set	10.9%	5%

School Age

	As reported in VSHT report (19-20)	Summer Term 20-21
PEPs in Place	84.9%	87%
PEPs to be closed off	13.3%	13% (inc. 0.5% below)
PEP no date set	1.8%	0.5%

Post 16

	As reported in VSHT report (19-20)	Summer Term 20-21
PEPs in Place	85.7%	41%
PEPs to be closed off	13%	35% (these yp have a PEP in place but it is out of timescales)
PEP no date set	1.3%	24%

Quality Assurance of PEPs

Summer Term 20-21

	Early Years (%)	School Age (%)	Post 16 (%)
PEP graded Green	63	67	90
PEP graded Amber	29	30	10
PEP graded Red	8	3	0

The pandemic has had a significant impact on Post 16 PEPs where many of our young people did not attend face to face but continued their studies online. Where Post 16 PEPs are submitted the quality is good.

Where quality is judged to be Red, the quality assurance process ensures that comprehensive feedback is given, and Virtual School staff encourage the designated teacher to resubmit. If necessary, or if requested, the Virtual school Staff will offer bespoke advice and/or training.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

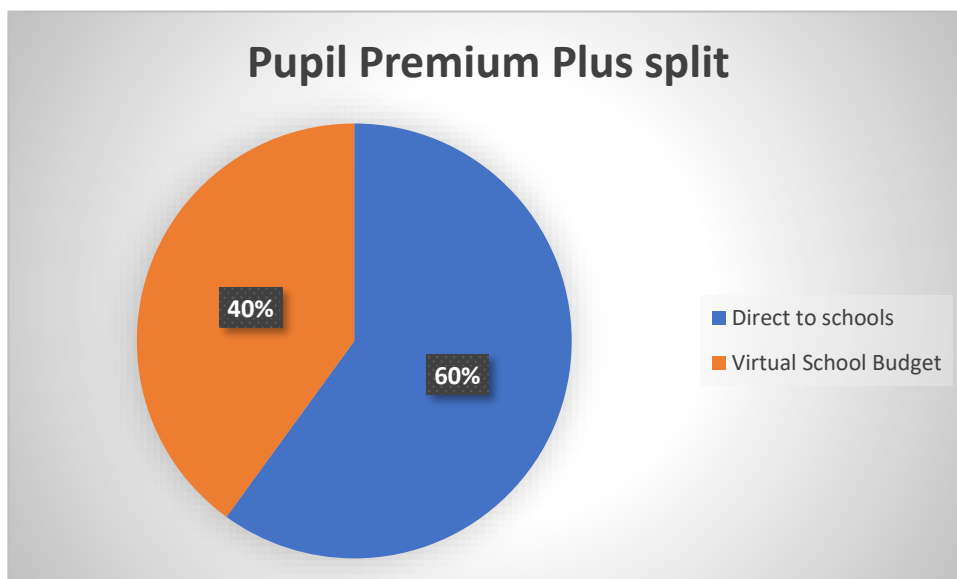
Looked-after children are one of the groups of pupils that attract PP+ funding. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of looked-after children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Local authorities receive a PP+ grant allocation (£2345 per child) based on the number of children looked after for at least one day and aged 4 to 15 as at 31st August, as recorded in the latest looked-after children data return. VSHs, working with education settings,

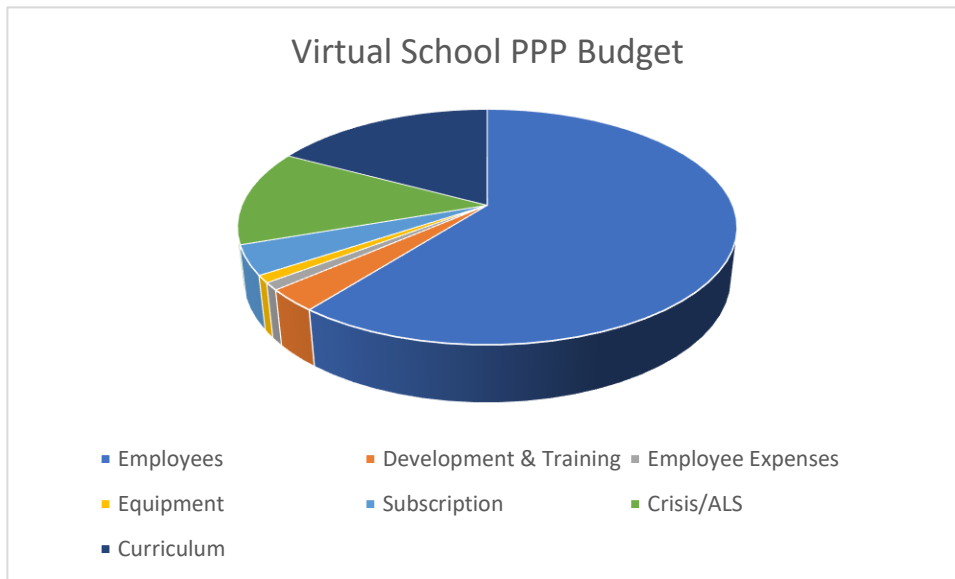
should implement PP+ arrangements for all looked-after children. VSHs have considerable flexibility in the use of PP+ funding in order to maximise its impact for individual looked-after children as well as the whole looked-after cohort. This grant cannot be carried forward into the new financial year and must be spent within the allocated financial year or returned to the Department for Education. As a result, this budget needs careful management and the Virtual School Head Teacher works closely with the Finance Team to ensure this grant supports the CIOC appropriately and effectively.

The majority of pupil premium plus funding is made available to schools to meet the specific needs of individual children in line with the targets in their PEP and is paid on submission of a completed PEP document.

The remaining proportion is held by the Virtual School to support the Cohort as a whole. This part of the grant supports much of the Virtual School staffing and the associated costs. It provides:

- Employment costs
- Associated employment costs (Staff CPD, equipment, expenses)
- Curriculum interventions
 - Partnership places for children in crisis
 - Middlesbrough Football Club Mentoring
 - Letterbox
 - Nimbl (online curriculum support)
 - MSLTP (More Stuff Like This Please)
- PEP costs (Welfare Call, QA costs)
- Training for Schools and other partners
- Additional Learning Support Fund (schools can request additional pupil premium plus funding to support additional learning interventions)
- Training offer to schools





Previously Looked After Children

The role of the VSH for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators, and others who the VSH considers necessary.

The Virtual School work very closely with Adoption Tees Valley and with the other Tees Valley Virtual School Head Teachers. To support us in discharging this duty the Tees Valley VSHTs have appointed an Education Support Worker to sit within Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) to promote education and support this service with education advice, guidance, and support. The Education Support Worker has been employed since July 2019 and has made a significant impact within the ATV service. The worker has worked intensively with over 40 Stockton families, contributes to Designated Teacher meetings, liaises regularly with the Virtual School, and has accessed Thrive training along with Stockton Virtual School colleagues ensuring that a consistent message is given to schools about meeting the needs of this group of children. As well as working closely with the Education Support Worker, the five Tees Valley Virtual School Head Teachers meet regularly with the Service Lead and key staff within ATV to coordinate and support the Education Support Worker in their role. A comprehensive education development plan has been produced by this group to support and enable previously looked after children to thrive in school and be supported to reach their potential in a nurturing and highly supportive school environment

Challenge and Support

Partnership Working

Partnership working is crucial to the overall effectiveness of the Virtual School and our support of CIOC. As one part of the Corporate Parenting Body we strive to support all partners to ensure that the educational provision and opportunities that our children receive are of the highest quality and that children are supported to make at least expected progress and achieve their potential.

Examples of how we work in partnership are detailed below.

- As a Service Lead the VSHT attends Children's Services Management Group (CSMG)
- Attendance at Joint Area Managers Meeting (JAMM)
- VSHT sits on Resource Panel held fortnightly
- Attendance at the Children in our Care Core Group (CIOC group)
- Attendance at the Children in our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG)
- Provide training sessions as part of the Foster Carer Preparation Training
- Attendance at Social Care Team Meeting to update staff on local and national developments
- Virtual School Youth Direction Participation Adviser attends Accommodation Panel
- Virtual School Caseworker attends and is part of the Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) strategy group (previously VEMT)
- IRO information and briefing sessions, with any necessary identified training or bespoke support
- As a Service Lead in the SEND and Inclusion Service, the VSHT attends senior leadership meetings
- VS Education Development Adviser (EDA) attends SEN EHCP Panel
- VSHT attends the Education Improvement Service senior leadership team meetings
- VS contribute to SENDCo briefings, Safeguarding Forum, Education Matters, Closing the Gap, Schools Causing Concern, Secondary Heads and Principals Group (SHPG)
- VS EDA and the Youth Direction Participation Advisers attend the Youth Direction Education and Employment Clinic
- Half termly meetings are held with the Looked After CAMHS team
- VS Educational Psychologist attends the Early Years Strategy meetings
- VSHT is a member of the Health Schools Steering group and the VS is represented on the development groups of the four strands.

Meetings organised by the Virtual School to aid partnership working include:

- Attendance and Wellbeing meeting (chaired by VSHT), attendance includes, LAC Nurse, Youth Offending Team Education Officer, Local Authority Educational Psychology representative, Social Care Team Manager, SEN Officer
- Post 16 Meeting (chaired by EDA)
- Early Years (0-5) (chaired by EDA)

Within the wider partnership working the VSHT attends The Tees Valley Adoption Education Group, the North East Virtual School Head Teachers regional meetings and the National Association of Virtual School Heads webinars and Annual Conference

Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

As well as attendance at meetings the Virtual School (VS) supports a comprehensive training package for school and partners.

The following training events were delivered by the Virtual School in 2020-21

- Termly DT meetings/briefings
- Half termly DT Newsletters
- Bespoke training for Designated Teachers new to post
- Ongoing Bespoke Training for individual teachers, Teaching Assistants, and whole school training on Attachment Difficulties/Developmental Trauma/ Emotion Coaching and Theraplay.

- Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed whole school training sessions (3 different sessions).
- Key Adult training
- December 2020 - Core responsibilities for LAC, Making Sense of Education - provided for Social Care colleagues and Residential Care staff
- Autumn 2020, Governor Training
- Newly Qualified Teacher training on Attachment Aware and Trauma informed classroom approaches
- Stockton Campus Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) – Training delivered on Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Approaches
- Wellbeing for Education Return - 4 sessions of Trauma CPD delivered alongside EIS colleagues
- VS is currently producing a whole school training offer to support schools in enhancing their provision for CIOC (work to commence with two pilot schools)
- Education Psychologist half termly training sessions (session 1 – ATTEND Framework (supporting emotionally based school avoidance), session 2 – CIOC and Stress, session 3- reframing behaviour, session 4 – executive functioning skills, session5 – Power of Relationships, session 6 – using creative approaches therapeutically in school)
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training (planned for Spring Term 2022)

External training organised by VS

- Theraplay (two-day face to face training postponed to Autumn 2021, this has now taken place and involved 36 staff from Stockton schools)
- Touchbase Attachment Lead Training (the third cohort completed a 7-day, 200-hour, intensive training course in September 2021. We now have 42 qualified Attachment Leads, 29 in Stockton Schools and 8 trained Local Authority Staff)
- Thrive Approach
- Kate Cairns Associates, Emotion Coaching with 5 schools, whole staff training
- Lisa Cherry – 4R's Conference (October 2020 - Session 1, January 2021 - Session 2)

The VS staff continue to develop their expertise in a variety of means. In 2019/2020, five staff attended the THRIVE Course to train as Thrive practitioners, one EDA commenced a Post Graduate Course – Education of Care-experienced Children, and the other extended her THRIVE practitioner work to include the THRIVE family programme. In addition to this the staff have attended a variety of webinars during the COVID period.

Challenge

The VS will challenge decisions and interventions that we feel are not in the best interests of our children. They will challenge decisions that are not in accordance with statutory guidance or the law or are causing any drift and/or delay to our children accessing appropriate provision in a timely manner. This is done through professional dialogue with colleagues and partners and by using the processes within the Virtual School and Children's Services to document, escalate and inform.

To support the Virtual School in their challenge of early identification of CIOC's individual needs, the VSHT is working closely with the planning and performance service to devise a Virtual School Data Dashboard that will allow us to look termly at the key performance indicators and intervene as soon as issues arise ensuring that the CIOC are being supported appropriately. This work is ongoing and

will bring together the data we already have in a much more manageable and clear way, keeping the data together in one place and allowing for much better sharing of information in a usable and understandable format. Currently, the Virtual School accesses this data via our own monitoring systems, and we meet half termly to identify areas of concern and actions to be taken.

A Virtual School monitoring report has been devised to support schools with their readiness and ability to support CIOC and this is used to support schools in the development of their work with CIOC. It also allows us to identify and celebrate the good work of many of our schools who provide outstanding provision for the CIOC.

School monitoring visits have taken place for the CIOC in key year groups to work with schools to support children in making expected progress and making up for lost learning. This is particularly important following the interrupted and often variable provision that children have received over the previous two years, including national lockdowns, teaching bubbles and individuals needing to self-isolate.

We also promote audit tools so that schools can begin to assess their provision for different aspects of their work and begin to work on areas of development. Popular audit tools are the Pupil Premium Plus Audit and the Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Audit.

Virtual School Accountability

The Virtual School are held to account through key performance meetings within Children's Services. The VSHT attends the SEND and Inclusion Service Performance Clinic and presents to that group every half term on progress and outcomes for the Virtual School and for CIOC. The Virtual School Head also presents key performance indicators at the Social Care, Team Operational Performance (TOP) meeting at the beginning of each term.

The Virtual School have a school improvement plan that is shared with the SEND and Inclusion Service manager. This plan is available on request. The Virtual School Head Teacher and the Education Development Advisors lead on the Education section of the CIOC Group improvement plan

The VSHT presents biannually to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of everyone is particularly important following the two years we have had with COVID 19 and the disruptions that this has caused in all aspects of daily life, particularly for the CIOC. School, care placements, family time, additional activities and social opportunities have all had the potential to be disrupted, changed, or cancelled. As a group of young people who are particularly affected by change and disruption to routine, this has been in the forefront of our minds as we work to get children back into the school routine.

We have worked with schools supporting individual children and have looked closely at our training offer to ensure that this support is built into our daily work and training programme

Child Engagement/Celebration

The VS continues to work in partnership with Social Care Service Leads to organize and support the Annual Celebration of Achievement events

- Unfortunately, the Celebration of Achievement Event for Year 1-10 could not take place due to the COVID lockdown. Alternative initiatives have been discussed with social care. The VS sent out certificates to pupils during the lockdown to recognise exceptional work
- VS have supported the More Stuff Like This Please (MSLTP) initiative, and the Care 2 Dance Project
- PP+ Award enables school to celebrate the high quality of provision for the children in our care and can support the evaluation of a school's provision – an additional two schools have achieved the award in 2020/21
- Implementation of Primary and Secondary Hubs have continued. These have happened virtually and face to face proving highly successful (43 Primary School Pupils /18 Secondary School Pupils)
- Partnership work with Jamie Wassell has continued regarding the Let's Take Action/ Positive Activities Group
- The VS continues to encourage schools to celebrate pupil achievement in its widest sense on the child/young person's PEP. Schools are encouraged to use the VS Ten Challenges, which links into the Preparation for Adulthood Framework, and supports schools in engaging pupils in a variety of activities that evidence social skills and personal development. The challenges are bespoke to the different educational Key Stages.

We are particularly proud this year of:

- 75% of our children attended school in person during the Spring Term Lockdown
- 63 students have recorded 100% Attendance
- This year more of our children achieved at least a grade 4 in GCSE English, GCSE Maths, and in both GCSE English and Maths combined.
- 12 students started University in September 2021, with 26 currently attending University
- 5 Care Leavers completed their University courses this year with fantastic results
- All children have managed amazingly well to continue with their education for such a difficult and prolonged period, many of them thriving.