


Report to:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	12 January 2021
Reporting Officer:	Tim Bowman, Assistant Director Education
Subject:	VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT
Report Summary:	Report on the education provision of our cared for children during academic year 2019-202 with particular focus on pandemic response
Recommendations:	To note this report
Corporate Plan:	The report supports three elements of the Community Strategy - Prosperous, Learning and Supportive Tameside.
Policy Implications:	There are none arising from this report.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	The virtual team receive pupil premium funding of £1.32M to support Education for Cared for Children in the borough, which funds interventions, staff time and provides funding in to schools. There is further smaller grants, that contribution to the virtual head posts and teachers pay and pensions of £0.05m.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children Statutory guidance for local authorities issued in February 2018 by the Department for Education outlines how social workers and other professionals should support children in care and care leavers supporting the education of children in care and previously looked-after children.</p> <p>For looked-after children in schools, the guidance says: "Social workers, [Virtual School Heads], [Independent Reviewing Officers], school admission officers, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) departments should work together to ensure that, except in an emergency, appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement."</p> <p>It also added that Virtual School Heads, who are in charge of promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children, should ensure that appropriate training needs for professionals responsible for promoting young people's education are met.</p> <p>It would be helpful to the Education Attainment Improvement Board if confirmation could be given that all statutory requirements set out in the guidance have been met.</p>
Risk Management:	There is a risk of our looked after children not achieving their potential if statutory functions are not carried out.
Access to Information:	NON-CONFIDENTIAL
	This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.

Background Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Amanda Aylward, Head of Virtual School.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am delighted to present my third annual report as Head of Virtual School and College. It has been an unprecedented and challenging academic year for everyone and whilst, undoubtedly, there has been anxiety, disappointment and distress for us all, as always, this was intermingled with optimism, creativity, diligence and determination from our amazing cohort of cared for children and young people.

This report will present data and analysis as best it can this year, notwithstanding some omissions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will highlight our areas of priority and need to best support the cared for children of Tameside, whilst in and beyond this challenging period of time.

The Children in Care Council of Tameside have requested that they are referred to from now on as “Cared for children”. At this moment in time, this has to be presented to Corporate Parenting Board for ratifying. However, throughout this report I will refer to the young people as this in line with their wishes. The acronym “LAC” will stand in data reports until the new set of data next year.



Rainbow picture sent to the Children in Care Council during lockdown.

2 VIRTUAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE TEAM

Headteacher	Amanda Aylward
Specialist Intervention Teacher	Sarah Hall
Finance and Information Officer	Phillip Allen
Education Welfare Officer	Rosie Spiers
Education Welfare Officer	Kath Hankinson
Post 16 learning Advisor	Sally Courtney

- 2.1 The Virtual School and College work within the Access Service area of Tameside’s Educational Service. We have expanded our team further this year introducing a second Education Welfare Officer to track attendance, school admissions, PEPs and progress of our cared for children and young people. The additional team member assists our relentless focus to avoid delays in school admissions, due to unavoidable placement moves, with our joined up work with children’s social work team and IROs to ensure that education is an integral part of care planning. We work collaboratively with both education and social care management teams alongside Tameside SEND and Educational Psychology services.

- 2.2 The expansion of our team and working remotely is relatively new to us and we are embedding new monitoring and communication practices. As the Covid-19 situation changes, we will continue to adapt our practices to ensure that our cared for children are still receiving a prioritised and enhanced education offer throughout their school lives; through targeted monitoring, PEP analysis and interventions wherever necessary.

'I like being at home, I am not bored. I am doing my work and using Dojo. I am happy and safe'. Year 9 Samuel Laycock School

3 SCHOOLS INFORMATION DATA SEPTEMBER 2019

OFSTED School Rating	Number of Pupils	Percentage of cohort
Outstanding	64	13%
Good	276	57%
Requires Improvement	81	17%
Inadequate	30	6%
Not OFSTED inspected	35	7%

Pupil numbers by type of school	Number of pupils	Percentage of cohort
Number of LAC pupils in mainstream	385	79%
Number of LAC pupils in alternative provision	15	3%
Number of LAC pupils in special school	50	10%
Number of LAC pupils in schools attached to residential placements	7	1%

Pupil Numbers by year group		
Primary Phase		
Reception	=	20
Year 1	=	28
Year 2	=	33
Year 3	=	33
Year 4	=	38
Year 5	=	32
Year 6	=	46
Total	=	230
Secondary Phase		
Year 7	=	37
Year 8	=	52
Year 9	=	51
Year 10	=	56
Year 11	=	60
Total	=	256
Total statutory school age	=	486
Post 16 Phase		
Year 12	=	77
Year 13	=	44
Total	=	121
Total all key stages	=	607

4 PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP) COMPLETION

PEP COMPLETION RATES 2019/20	
Term 1	95.4%
Term 2	82.8%
Term 3	100%
PEP COMPLETION RATES 2018/19	
Term 1	97.2%
Term 2	98.2%
Term 3	95%
PEP COMPLETION RATES 2017/18	
Term 1	68.5%
Term 2	91.6%
Term 3	96.2%

- 4.1 As can be seen from this data, we have had a relentless and successful drive on timely PEPs completed each school term. As the country went into lockdown meetings inevitably started to be postponed and we can see this reflected in our Term 2 completion rate. As an immediate response to this, we adapted our PEP and PEP processes for one term only to ensure we had knowledge of all our young people's education experiences during this third term and we managed this successfully. Details around this are explained in Covid-19 response later in this document.
- 4.2 A robust QA system was put in place as part of our Virtual School processes and this year we are expanding this to include IRO service to ensure a professional independent view is considered.

'The situation is not ideal. I feel like I have coped well with the current situation. I find it difficult when I am struggling with something and I don't have the teachers help. I am looking forward to going back to school, I miss seeing my friends. I feel like I am supported well by my foster carers'.

Year 10 Bluecoat School

5. PUPIL PREMIUM GRANT FUNDING

- 5.1 Breakdown by term 2019-2020 (number of children receiving support via PEP request for funding for interventions set up through school)

	Spring 2020	Autumn 2019	Total
Alternative Provision Costs	2	5	7
Books (inc subscriptions)	3	22	32
Counselling	15	15	30
English/Literacy Intervention	67	87	155
EP Report	11	8	19
IT Resources	21	35	75
Learning Mentor Support	11	13	24

Maths Intervention	47	67	114
Mentoring (Inc behaviour mentor)	25	28	53

- 5.2 The chart above demonstrates the areas of intervention where some pupil premium grant funding was spent as requested by schools via their PEPs in Autumn 19 and Spring 2020. A separate analysis on the Covid 19 response is detailed further below in this report and demonstrates the use of this funding in our response.
- 5.3 Research shows that vulnerable groups may be more significantly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic, therefore, all pupil premium grant payments for our cared for children will be prioritised around any areas or developing gaps of need due to this. These must be clearly identified in the PEP document and schools encouraged to highlight any emerging needs.

'D says she is fine. She says that she is spending the morning working on her school work alongside her brother and then finishes after lunch. She has got into a good routine. D explained how she knows what work to do and how she is expected to complete it. Her favourite work so far has been the Islamic patterns. D loves art and shows great skill and patience when completing any work in this area... D is enjoying speaking to her friends in the chat room on her iPad (DOJO, SEESAW) . She has done some exercise with Joe Wicks and has been walking the dogs'.

6 ATTENDANCE DATA

- 6.1 The impact of Covid-19 has meant that there is not a full attendance data set this academic year but the data below illustrates attendance data up until schools closed on 20th March.

	2019 - March 2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
All LAC pupils average attendance	91.24%	91.9%	90.14%
LAC pupils with persistent absence (below 90%)	18.8% (81 LAC)	20.7% (90 LAC)	14% (62 LAC)
LAC pupils with 100% attendance		14% (61 LAC)	12% (56 LAC)
In borough LAC pupils average attendance	90.63%	91.2%	90%
Out of Borough LAC Average Attendance	92.48%	93.9%	90.52%
Mainstream LAC Average Attendance	94.02%	92.3%	92.35%

- 6.2 This data includes some young people who have been in care for brief periods and therefore only a snapshot of their attendance data for the period that they were in care was collected.
- 6.3 Working with "Looked After Call" data service has improved the communication between ourselves and schools, particularly in out of borough schools; we will continue to develop this relationship. Closer working with Tameside SEN team is improving the timeliness of school placements being named for cared for children with an EHCP avoiding delay. On three occasions this year we gave an intention to direct letter to out of area schools, these were all resolved and a more timely admission proceeded.

7 EXCLUSION DATA

- 7.1 There have been no permanent exclusions of cared for children this year.

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Permanent Exclusions	0	0	0
Number of LAC with Fixed Term Exclusion	52 (11%)	57 (13%)	54 (12%)
Number of days of fixed term exclusion	238.5	168.5	204
Average number of days lost per excluded pupil	4.59	2.96	3.77

7.2 Any young person who receives a fixed term exclusion is highlighted to our team immediately via Looked After Call. A member of the team will contact the school and offer support to ensure processes are correct, a minimum exclusion term is pursued and appropriate interventions explored and commissioned.

7.3 The data indicates that a higher number of fixed term exclusions would have been projected if the academic year hadn't been cut short due to Covid 19 pandemic. It demonstrates that we are being alerted to every exclusion through registers which we weren't necessarily previously. Our focus is always around prevention which we try to do through information in the PEP and an open relationship with schools to approach us if help needed; we can also see later in the report the increase in EHCPs issued and this is a reflection of both reactive and proactive support to prevent exclusions.

8 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS and DISABILITY (SEND)

8.1 Identified needs of LAC cohort in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Severe Learning Difficulty	Autism Spectrum Condition	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	Speech, Language or Communication Difficulties	Physical Disability	Specific Learning Disability	Behaviour Social and Emotional Difficulty
2019-2020	80	27	5	10	27	1	3	4	6

	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Severe Learning Difficulty	Autism Spectrum Condition	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	Speech, Language or Communication Difficulties	Physical Disability	Specific Learning Disability	Behaviour Social and Emotional Difficulty
2018-2019	40	20	1	6	4	2	4	3	3

	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Severe Learning Difficulty	Autism Spectrum Condition	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	Cognition and Learning	Physical Disability	Specific Learning Disability
2017-2018	32	17	5	3	2	2	1	1

8.2 We have seen a significant increase in cared for children with an EHCP for SEMH. This is in part due to better identification and quality of applications with evidence for young people with this need.

8.3 More work needs to be done within mainstream settings to identify and support young people with SEMH at the earliest opportunity. An SLA with Educational Service has been commissioned and commencing September 2020 to increase Educational Psychology time and support. The intention of this is to work on preventative advice in addition to EHCP submissions.

9 ATTAINMENT DATA

9.1 There is no published data as yet this academic year due to Covid 19 pandemic. Some academic successes in our Year 11 GCSE results from our own collected and invalidated data are as follows:

Year 11 Cohort 2020	
Total cohort Aug 2020	67
Number of young people with an EHCP	28 (42%)
Number with 1 GCSE grade or more	41
Number with a good pass (Grade 4 or higher) English or Maths	20
Number Good Pass Maths and English	8

9.2 Within this cohort, we have a high number of young people with an EHCP alongside two recent unaccompanied asylum seekers. There were some superb personal achievements including:

- 1 young person who had attended 3 different secondary schools plus two alternative provisions during her five years secondary school education experience managed to secure 4 4's including English and Maths and a 6 and a 3 through Denton Community College
- A cared for young person with a serious progressive illness gained 2 4's, 3 3's and 1 2 despite his personal struggles
- A young person who has been at a residential placement for 6 years gained 6 GCSE high grades and has progressed to A levels
- One young person gained this impressive portfolio of results: science trilogy 5, 6; Geography 5; Religious Studies 4; Sociology 5; Drama 6; Mathematics 6; French 6; English Language 6; English Literature 5
- Young person with an EHCP gaining a grade 8 in Maths

9.3 Our young people have such complex stories and all their grades are attributable to their determination, hard work and a credit to them.

10 POST 16

10.1 We currently have 119 young people in FE

Provision level	Number
Entry and below	37
Level 1	17
Level 2	22
Level 3	21
Awaiting confirmation of level	8
HE	10

10.2 We are working with Greater Manchester Higher to offer Success for Life programmes for KS4 students to introduce University conversations and ambitions to them.

11 VIRTUAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE RESPONSE TO COVID 19 PANDEMIC

11.1 In some respects, it was business as usual. When the country went into lockdown the team packed up their equipment and ably supported by our IT colleagues set up work at home and continued what they always do in their relentless support of education for our cared for children in Tameside.

11.2 Meetings transferred to Skype and consequently due to lack of travelling this has enabled better participation in meetings. Conversely, the Covid situation led to more meetings needing to be convened.

11.3 Virtual School Head teacher continued to attend weekly legal gateway meetings and participate in all placement tracking meetings to ensure our cared for children have education as an integral part of their care planning and that school admission and EHCP processes were continuing in a timely and appropriate manner.

11.4 Due to the unprecedented challenges through lockdown, the following response were also made:

- Revised one page PEP document focussing on emotional well being of the young person as well as current education provision and goals
- PEPs arranged by Virtual School and College team as opposed to designated teachers and social workers
- Pupil Premium + funding. Where schools had already committed to commissioned services or staff the Virtual School honoured all payments despite not necessarily being able to reflect progress in the PEP document
- Schools were advised that PP+ payments could be carried over to the following term if required
- At the start of lockdown a number of laptops were bought directly through Virtual School for young people immediately identified as not having IT equipment to work on
- Following the government announcement of the laptop scheme, Virtual School worked with our education colleagues to identify and allocate government laptops for cared for young people
- Two members of Virtual School team were deployed into the school liaison team to make daily School Link Officer calls and deliver messages to six schools each as part of the council response to schools
- Reading resource packs were created in conjunction with school improvement partners and made available to all schools, highlighted on the council website, sent to foster carers and placed on Virtual School website
- Regular emails sent to Tameside foster carers giving links to different educational resources and opportunities as well as mindfulness activities
- Nisai learning was commissioned and offered to all Tameside secondary schools who wanted to offer to their cared for children or young people at Child Protection
- One to One online tuition was commissioned for young people where requested via social worker, residential home or carer due to young person or carers struggling with home schooling
- Power Two, an organisation who work with vulnerable young people, commissioned for young people to engage in a mentoring programme
- Magazine subscriptions and books that had been part of our reading programme continued to be delivered
- Virtual School attendance fact sheet created and published with other school notifications to give guidance around expectations for cared for children attending school during lockdown

- Weekly attendance at NAVSH webinars which included a briefing from a representative from DFE to ensure all government recommendations and legislation was being adhered to
- Children In Care meetings attended via Skype

11.5 There were many more conversations offering support to carers and advice to social workers to ensure placements remained as stable as possible. Lots of bespoke packages of support were designed and one fabulous example of this was where a young person was really struggling with home education due to his SEMH. Their carer was really anxious about how they were spending time and the difficulties arising with sibling. As a response, instead of buying them a laptop, we bought parts for a computer for them to build with their sibling! They successfully managed this, keeping in touch with us along the way and this demonstrates the kind of creative and practical response we like to champion in Tameside.



12 CONCLUSION AND PRIORITIES 2020-2021

- 12.1 Continue to adapt and respond appropriately to changes in education and needs of our young people due to Covid 19 pandemic.
- 12.2 Ensure no gap in education is further exacerbated by pandemic for cared for children cohort.
- 12.3 Work with Education Psychology service to ensure advice is being offered to support cared for children regardless of SEN status.
- 12.4 Continue work with schools around addressing needs of cared for young people and inclusion.
- 12.5 Continued development of post 16 partners working together including Virtual school and college, positive steps, leaving care team and Tameside College.
- 12.6 Continue to ensure young people participate and vocalise their experiences and wishes in PEP meetings.

13 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 As set out at the front of the report.