

Corporate Parenting Panel

25 January 2019

Durham Virtual School Education Update



Report of Christine Stonehouse, Virtual School Head, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on key priorities and developments to improve educational outcomes for looked after children, based on the outcomes for 2018.
- 2 To summarise the quality of personal education plans (PEPs) and the impact of pupil premium plus funding (PP+).

Executive summary

- 3 Emerging national data indicated that outcomes for 2017-2018 were above the national average for the cohort at:
 - a. all measures in Early Years;
 - b. all measures at Key Stage 2 (KS2) except reading;
 - c. progress measures Key Stage 1-2;
 - d. all measures Key Stage 4(KS4).
- 4 Outcomes were below the national average for Key Stage 1 (KS1).
- 5 Girls achieved significantly better than boys across the board.
- 6 Attendance remains strong, our fixed term exclusion is lower than the national average (based on the statistical first release 2018 for 2016-17). We are awaiting updated data for the academic year 2017-18.
- 7 The Personal Education Plan's (PEPs) are the main driver for educational improvement. They provide the information and impetus for intervention. Recent quality assurance of the PEPs completed in the autumn term 2018 indicate a rise in quality from 2017, but this remains an area to improve.
- 8 Pupil premium plus (PP+) funding is mostly used effectively by schools to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people

through dedicated academic tuition or support for emotional and social wellbeing to develop self-regulation and readiness to learn.

- 9 Where funding is less effective or the spending is deemed to be ineligible, we challenge schools and, if necessary, withhold payment.
- 10 Durham virtual school uses retained funding to provide a broad range of support for schools and individuals, ranging from professional development for school staff to places for children at the inclusion base during times of pressure or crisis.
- 11 Our priorities for educational outcomes continue to be:
 - a. Reading at KS1/2;
 - b. Maths across the board;
 - c. The gender gap;
 - d. Higher grades for the more able;
 - e. Attendance better than the national average;
 - f. Fixed term exclusion lower than the national average;
 - g. Strong outcomes in Early Years and in Post 16.
- 12 Our broader priorities include:
 - a. Stability of school placement and swift admission to schools
 - b. Training for schools to be more attachment and trauma aware;
 - c. Training to improve the quality of the PEP;
 - d. Support for schools to use the PP+ funding effectively;
 - e. Listening and responding to the voice of the young people;
 - f. Celebrating their achievements.

Recommendation(s)

- 13 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to
 - a. read and note the contents of this report.
 - b. Provide any thoughts and comments.

Background

- 14 Durham Virtual School is proud of the 2018 achievements of our children and young people, but we know there is more we can do.
- 15 The detailed data for the 2018 outcomes was presented at the committee meeting in November and we do not have any updates on the validated data. This will not be available until March 2019. The current data can also be found in my annual report [Durham Virtual School Annual Report 2018](#)

- 16 In December 2018 we monitored the progress of all looked after children and young people in years 2,6 and 11. This data is currently undergoing a forensic analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, needs, trends, cohort groups and targeted intervention.
- 17 We are also in the process of quality assuring the PEPs for statutory school years from the autumn term 2018. We are developing a system for early years and post 16, but this is not yet fully implemented.
- 18 In September, we introduced a new system for the allocation of PP+ so that schools would know how much they were getting and could plan accordingly. We developed a resource plan for them to complete. Following quality assurance of this, we know we have some teething troubles to resolve.

Monitoring education progress, attainment and attendance

- 19 Every Durham looked after child has an allocated SEND, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups Caseworker. The role of the caseworker is to closely monitor the education of each child and work with their school to ensure all necessary support is put in place to enable their ongoing achievement.
- 20 We scrutinise pupil progress as follows:

Yr Grp	Monitoring		
Yr1			July
Yr2	December	February	
Yr3	October		May
Yr4	February		
Yr5	December	February	July
Yr6	December	February	
Yr7	October		May
Yr8		February	
Yr9			July
Yr10	December	February	July
Yr11	December	February	July (Post-16 Transition Plans)

- 21 For primary aged children at both KS1 and KS2 we assess:
- Progress against predicted outcomes – Fisher Family Trust;
 - Probability of meeting the “expected standard”.
- 22 For secondary aged children at KS4 we assess:
- Predicted outcomes in Maths and English;
 - Breadth of curriculum/outcomes across eight GCSEs through Attainment 8 scores;
 - Progress across the curriculum through progress 8 scores;
 - Percentage entering or achieving the English Baccalaureate.
- 23 For children identified as being at risk of not making progress, the caseworker ensures that additional support is put in place.
- 24 The outcomes of the December monitoring for Yr2, Yr5, Yr6, Yr10 and Yr11 are presently being analysed.

Updated attendance and fixed term exclusion trends

- 25 Durham looked after children attend school regularly and when national statistics are published the overall absence percentage should continue to be better than the national average. Table one below shows the three year trend for autumn / spring terms only. It is worth noting that this rate of absence has more than halved from 5.20 in 2011 to 2.29 in 2018.

Table 1: Three year trend of overall absence for Durham LAC

% absence from school of children who have been looked after		2016	2017	2018
840	Durham-LAC Overall Absence	2.70	3.19	2.29

- 26 Caseworkers respond quickly when they become aware of an attendance concern. Schools are quick to let us know if they begin to see a dip and carers work hard to ensure the children in their care have good attendance.
- 27 We are planning to look at children in different settings and schools. Attendance is lowest in our secondary SEMH schools. We need to explore the impact of home placement on attendance. There seems to be some anecdotal evidence that those children and young people in residential homes and those in care at home have lower attendance. We will report back on this when we have explored further.

- 28 To ensure we are able to maintain good attendance and also to explore any hidden absence beneath the overall figures, we have reinstated regular meeting with the Pupil Placement and Attendance Officer, to monitor this.
- 29 The number of days lost to fixed term exclusion continues to fall from 265 in 2016-17 to 151 in 2017-18.
- 30 In the autumn term 2018, 15 Durham looked after children had fixed term exclusion, totalling 51 days. This is a reduction from the autumn term 2017 when 18 looked after children were excluded for a total of 68 days.
- 31 Of the Durham looked after children excluded in the autumn term 2018:
- 4 had exclusions periods of 3 days or more
 - 7 had more than 1 period of fixed term exclusion
 - 2 had 10 days exclusion in total

The main reasons for exclusion are persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal threats and physical assault.

Current PEP Quality Assurance (QA)

- 32 As of December 2018, almost 400 PEPs had gone through the initial caseworker quality assurance and 77.72% were judged to be of high quality or better. This is an improvement of over 6% from 2017.
- 33 Those schools with PEPs judged to be below quality are challenged in the first instance by caseworkers. We will follow this up with a further conversation and support if there is no improvement.
- 34 There was high representation of young person involvement (97.2%) in this completed batch. 94.68% of parents / carers contributed, as did 86.84% of social workers.
- 35 Once all of the QA is complete, we will identify any schools with consistently poor quality PEPs to provide challenge, advice and support.
- 36 We will also identify social work teams where involvement / contribution was below expectations and work with managers to identify any barriers and challenge poor practice.
- 37 In order to improve the quality of the content of the PEP, we have provided some standardisation time for caseworkers to do a blind quality assurance exercise with members of their teams. A set of questions have been provided to support this.

- 38 The PEP should be the key driver in telling the ‘educational story’ of the young person. We should be able to hear the child’s voice coming through and be able to recognise the learning needs and barriers to success and agree actions to overcome them.

We have identified team leaders within the SEND, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups Casework Team to take the lead on early years and post 16 PEPS and we are liaising with the Young People’s Service on this.

Pupil Premium Plus Funding (PP+)

- 39 We retain £600 per child / young person to provide central support, services and input. Some examples of this support are set out below.

- 40 Between April and December 2018 we have supported 32 looked after children in the Virtual School Inclusion base as follows:

Yr 11	Yr 10	Yr 9	Yr 8	Yr 7	Yr 6	Yr 5
6	5	6	9	4	1	1

The children/young people attend the provision for up to 6 weeks and receive support from a teacher and 2 Inclusion Support Workers.

- 41 Children/Young People access the inclusion support when they have been fixed term excluded, where they are at risk of being in a cycle of fixed term exclusion or where they will benefit from a programme of personal and social skills development to support their engagement in learning.

- 42 The support offered is as follows:

- up to five half days support for a child/young person who has been fixed term excluded by their school
- access to a structured programme, 2 days per week for 6 weeks, to support personal and social development.

All children and young people who access the inclusion support receive additional English and maths support as part of their curriculum. We offer additional subject support based on the curriculum needs of each child/young person.

- 43 Our Educational Psychologist (EP) for looked after children has had involvement with 40 young people between April 1st 2018 and the end of the autumn term 2018 (two terms). Consultation has also been provided to the Virtual School and now SEND Caseworkers regarding individual children not formally referred. Most cases have been Durham looked after children educated in Durham but work was also completed for non-Durham young people in care attending Durham schools and

Durham children educated outside of the authority. Work has been across all key stages and in nursery and across mainstream and specialist provision.

EP involvement has included consultation, assessment, joint planning, review to inform statutory annual review and care team planning, coaching, training, referral on as required - on a case by case basis. Typically, the EP input would involve information gathering from other agencies (social care health and education) and carers, observation, direct assessment and work aimed at informing planning and support for the young person at school, and written reports. There has been an emphasis on capacity building through consultation/coaching for those who are supporting children with challenging behaviours - teachers and support staff. Direct work is not always needed or helpful.

44 Impact is not formally measured but would typically include:

- special educational needs more fully assessed to inform planning and support (PEP, care team, SEN Support Plan, EHCP)
- teaching staff understanding difficult behaviour in the context of the child's trauma and attachment difficulties and responding to it differently
- reduced stress in and increased resilience of teachers and support staff
- children who might otherwise be excluded or moved into more specialist provision remaining included in their mainstream school
- learning difficulties identified (where 'behaviour' is to the fore) to enable the child's needs to be better understood and met
- facilitating access to other services where there is a gap identified
- continuity of service where repeated changes of carer and school can lead to children missing out on services/'falling through the gaps'.

45 The Virtual School funds a 0.5FTE school counsellor post to ensure looked after children have access to emotional support when required. Up to 12 looked after children can access the support on an individual basis. The school counsellor/s work directly with the child for around 8 weeks depending on need.

46 From April 2018 to December 2018 10 looked after children accessed the support as follows:

Yr 10	Yr 9	Yr 8	Yr 7	Yr 6	Yr 5	Yr 2
1	1	2	1	1	2	1

47 We also provide additional support to looked after children and their schools where individualised learning pathways/curriculums are required to ensure their engagement in learning and reduce the risk of permanent exclusion. Examples of where this approach has been used include:

- A young person who was unable to attend secondary school for safeguarding reasons. We made additional PP+ available to the school to allow continued access to an alternative provision which was having a positive impact on the young person and their education.
- A young person at risk of permanent exclusion. PP+ was used to fund access to a specialist provider to enable integration into a new mainstream school.

48 The Department for Education has updated their guidance on the use of PP+. As a consequence of this, we have introduced an annual resource planning sheet that schools complete. Through quality assurance of the resource plans, we have identified aspects of the form to change for next year where this was not clear. We have also developed a guide for schools outlining some examples of effective use of PP+ and also highlighting ineligible spend.

Main implications

49 There are no key implications from this report

Conclusion

50 We want to ensure, that wherever possible, our looked after children and young people achieve to their potential. We know that it isn't good enough just to do as well as or better than the national and regional averages for children in care; we want our looked after children to close the gap on all Durham children. We have highlighted the reading deficit, maths gaps and gender gap with schools and we will continue to support them through additional funding, academic intervention and therapeutic strategies. Our priorities are outlined in our operational plan which will be shared with the Virtual School sub-group for scrutiny and challenge.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

N/A

Finance

Review of both de-delegated funding and pupil premium plus to ensure transparency for schools so that both are used for maximum impact.

Consultation

N/A

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

N/A

Human Rights

N/A

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Staffing

The SEND,LAC,VG team will be closer to capacity from February which should ensure that looked after children can be a higher priority.

Accommodation

N/A

Risk

N/A

Procurement

N/A