

# **Bromley Virtual School**

## **Annual Report 2018/19**

***'A Trauma-informed Approach to Teaching  
Children in Care',***



<b>Point</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
	<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The Purpose of the Virtual School</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Our Children</b> Children Looked After numbers Educational Outcomes Regular Attendance at School	<b>3</b> <b>4</b> <b>13</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Pupil Premium Plus</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>New Duties for the Virtual School</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Summary of Key achievements and challenges through the academic year</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Addressing the Key Challenges in 2019/20</b>	<b>26</b>

## Executive Summary

Academic year 2018/19 was a year of high challenge and significant successes for the Virtual School.

The Inspection of Children's Social Care Services in November 2018 was a major event in the year and the Lead Inspector said that the Virtual School 'punched above its weight' and the report says *'The virtual school team is effective in its work with children'*

A temporary Deputy Head Teacher role within the Virtual School has increased capacity, especially in the area of support for our children with special or additional needs.

Provisional reporting shows that the number of children achieving GCSE results at grade 4 and above *and* grade 5 and above is the highest since recording began and puts Bromley among the highest achieving Virtual Schools in the country.

The highly regarded and very successful Transition Project has improved engagement of our 16 and 17 year-olds, not just at the beginning of their post-15 journeys but throughout the year.

Significant progress has been made with the quality and effectiveness of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). It demonstrates increased curiosity about the school lives of children and ambition for their future. These plans provide a starting point for the provision of intervention and challenge by the Virtual School.

The Virtual School has embraced the demands of increased statutory duty imposed by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

# 1. The Purpose of the Virtual School

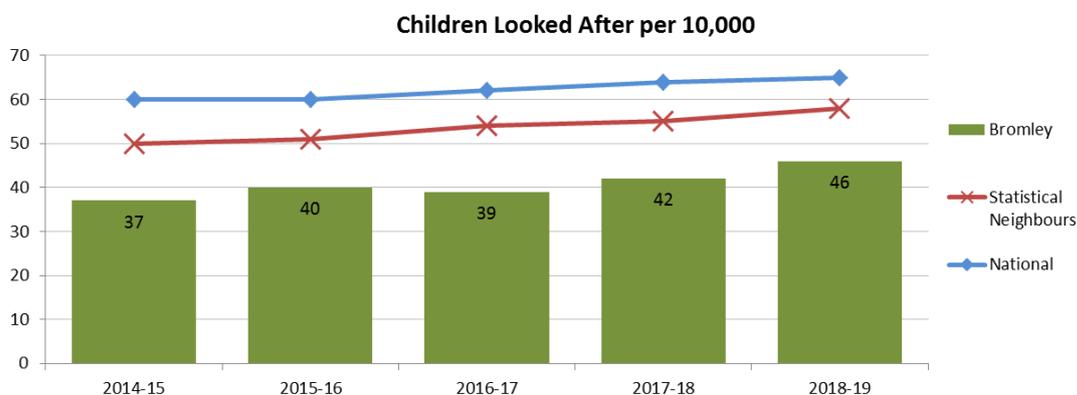
- 1.1 The Virtual School in Bromley exists to support children looked after to engage with and enjoy their education and to achieve their potential. We want to see our children go on to be successful in their careers and become active and useful members of society, just like any parent does.
- 1.2 This report outlines the activity and impact of Bromley Virtual School during the academic year 2018-2019 and provides full details of the educational outcomes of Bromley Children Looked After (CLA). It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for our looked after children.
- 1.3 Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of the LB Bromley for the academic year 2018/19 and includes outcomes\*\* for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

*\*\* N.B. This data is not validated until the publication of the Statistical First Release, expected between December 2019 and March 2020.*

## 2 Our children

### 2.1.1 Children Looked After: numbers as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

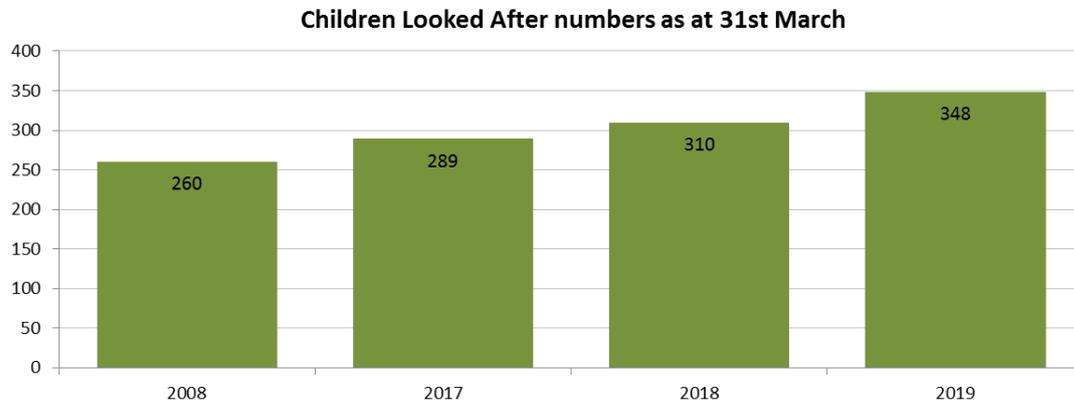
Despite an increase in the number of children looked after in Bromley, the numbers per 10,000 in Bromley remain much lower than those in statistical neighbours and significantly lower than the National picture.



2.1.2 **Graph:** Children looked after: rates per 10,000, including statistical neighbours and national statistics

2.1.3 Around 350 children looked after and care leavers aged 18 were in the Virtual School at any point in the academic year 2018/2019. The

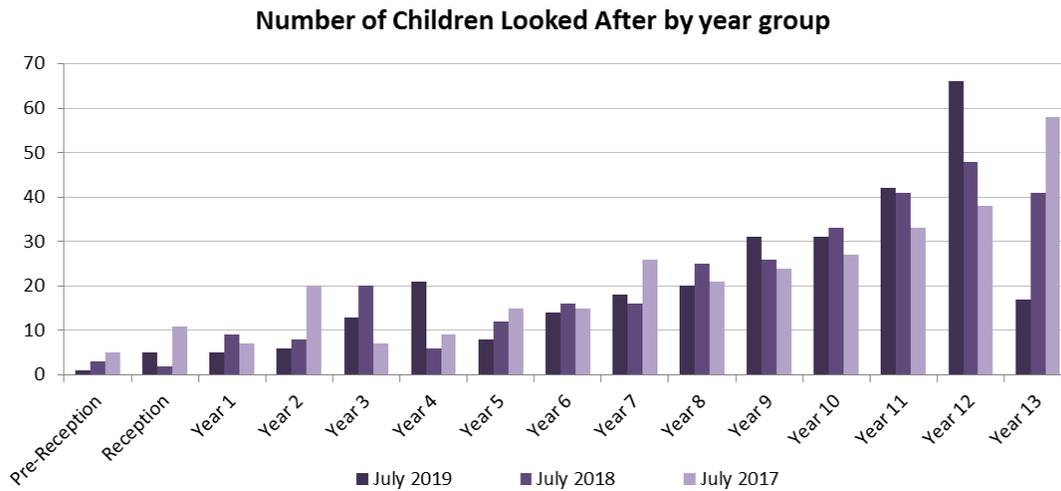
features of the cohort are representative of all Bromley children in terms of gender and ethnicity and, as might be expected, secondary aged children are slightly over-represented, As illustrated, these numbers have changed significantly since I became VSH in 2008.



**2.1.4 Graph:** Numbers of children looked after with historical context

**2.1.5** Of the cohort in care at the end of the academic year, around 50% were in schools outside the borough. Some of these were schools close to Bromley, in neighbouring authorities, and some were as far away as Liverpool or Gateshead. Around 45% of Bromley CLA in schools outside Bromley were in special schools or alternative provision, including those having tuition at home. This is in stark contrast to those who remained in school in Bromley, of whom, only around 12% were in special or alternative school provision.

**2.1.6** Older children continue to feature disproportionately in the Virtual School with year groups 9, 10 and 11 ending the year with over 30 children. The size of the year group cohorts tends to grow reasonably steadily year on year but, occasionally, there are bulge year groups lower down the age range, as can be seen in the graph below at 2.1.7. The proportion of children with an EHC plan in these groups is much higher in than in the rest of the population. This figure is also likely to grow as the intensive work done with the children by the Virtual School is likely to uncover unidentified special needs within the group. Although we do not wish to label our children unnecessarily, it is sometimes essential to secure an EHCP in order to access the most appropriate education provision within or outside the borough.



**2.1.7 Graph:** Bromley Virtual School Year Group Cohorts as at 31/07/2019 including data for previous years

**2.1.8** Most Bromley Children looked after are settled in their education settings and are making good progress. Our data shows that 75% of our children had only one school place in the last 2 years or have had only one, positive, change of school (14%) as a result of a move to permanence or a planned move to a more appropriate education provision. The Virtual School is consulted when a child needs to move schools because of a placement change and works hard to minimize possible gaps in education. Education Advisers visit schools all over the country to secure admissions and facilitate consultations for children with EHCP plans. Bromley admissions service works in partnership with the virtual school and has on only one occasion in the last five years had to instruct. It can sometimes be a little more challenging working with other local authorities and schools outside Bromley but the Virtual School offers support pre and post admission and generally meets with a favourable response.

## 2.2 Educational outcomes

### 2.2.1 Key Stage 1 Summer 2019 (7 year olds)

6 children in care ended KS1 in August 2019. Of these, **only 4** had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) and these pupils form the **reporting cohort**. 2 of the reporting cohort (50%) already have EHC plans. The significant needs of those 2 pupils meant that neither was able to access the tests but both are counted in the statistical reporting; 50% of Bromley CLA met the expected standard in Spelling Punctuation and Grammar, Reading, Maths, Writing (teacher assessment) and science.

	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Maths</i>
Bromley CLA	50% (2 of 4 children)	50% (2 of 4 children)	50% (2 of 4 children)
Bromley	80%	76%	80%
National	75%	69%	76%

**2.2.2 Table:** showing KS1 outcomes and comparator data

### 2.3. Key Stage 2 Outcomes Summer 2018 (Age 11 years)

**2.3.1** 14 children in care ended KS2 in August 2019. Of these, **10** had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) and these pupils form the **reporting cohort**.

	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing*</i>	<i>Maths</i>	<i>GPS</i>
Bromley CLA	40% (4 of 10 children)	20% (2 of 10 children)	20% (2 of 10 children)	40% (4 of 10 children)
Bromley	81%	86%	85%	83%
National	73%	78%	79%	78%

**2.3.2 Table:** showing numbers of children who achieved expected standard at KS2  
\*Writing based on Teacher assessment.

**2.3.3** 6 of the 10 children in this cohort (60%) have identified special educational needs, each already having an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP. 4 children are recorded to have been below the level of assessment and did not sit SATS tests. Their results, however, along with those of a child who was not entered because he had moved schools too close to the tests, are included in the cohort outcomes as that is government expectation.

<i>Date of birth</i>	<i>Length of time in care</i>	<i>In/out of borough</i>	<i>SEN</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Maths</i>	<i>GPS</i>	<i>Writing</i>
2007	1-2 years	out	None	AS	AS	AS	AS
2008	6-7 years	out	EHCP	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS
2008	1-2 years	out	None	DNS	DNS	DNS	DNS
2008	7-8	In	EHCP	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS

	years						
2008	7-8 years	Out	EHCP	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS
2008	3-4 years	In	None	AS	AS	AS	AS
2008	1-2 years	In	EHCP	AS	WTS	AS	WTS
2007	1-2 years	Out	EHCP	NS	NS	NS	NS
2008	5-6 years	Out	EHCP	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS
2008	1-2 years	In	None	AS	AS	WTS	AS

**2.3.4 Table:** showing pupil level data for KS2 in 2019. Final student returned home before the end of the school year but was CLA during the relevant time period.

Legend: EXS student working at expected standard; NS – student has not met the expected standard; Dis – student dis-applied (working below the level of assessment). DNS – student did not sit the test (for other reasons, not including working level)

**2.3.5** It should be noted that each child in this cohort has carried more than 10% of the weighting in the report, regardless of the fact that more than half of them did not actually sit the tests. The Virtual School considers the identification of the needs of primary-aged children to be a strength of the service. By working closely with schools and foster carers and then securing an EHCP, we are able to ensure that children are placed appropriately at secondary transfer and not left in the position of having to fail in a large secondary school before they are picked up. Sadly, many of the children who come into care as adolescents are struggling in school and developing (or have already developed) serious behaviour problems because their learning needs have not been addressed.

**2.3.6** Though fewer than 30% of the cohort met age-related expectations at the end of YR6, most children made significant progress from their starting point at KS1. Bromley CLA made more progress points in Reading than CLA nationally.

**2.3.7** Writing is a real challenge for some CLA, as many have been it is for many neglected and traumatised has an impact on their capacity for creativity. We are not complacent, however, and are planning a creative writing programme, to take place in the spring term, for the new YR6 cohort. We will also undertake a review of the progress of the 2019 cohort of children as they progress through YR7.

## **2.4 Key Stage 4 Outcomes 2019**

**2.4.1** 43 children in care ended YR11 in August 2019. Of these, **31** had been continuously looked after on roll in YR11 for at least 12 months (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) and these pupils form the **reporting cohort**.

**2.4.2** 29% of the reporting cohort achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 4 and above including English and Maths. The cohort was significantly larger than average this year, so each student carries a smaller percentage weighting. As can be seen from the table, below, a much higher number of children than in any other year has successfully achieved the target of 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths.

	2019 Reporting cohort of 31 pupils	2018 Reporting Cohort of 20 pupils	2017 Reporting Cohort of 19 pupils	2016 Reporting Cohort of 12 pupils
5 at grade 4 and above incl. English and Maths	29% (9 pupils)	15% (3 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)	25% (3 pupils)
5 at grade 4 and above	29% (9 pupils)	20% (4 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)	25% (3 pupils)
5 GCSEs	45% 18 pupils	65% (13 pupils)	47% (9 pupils)	42% (5 pupils)
1 GCSE	58% (18 pupils)	80% (16 pupils)	84% (16 pupils)	50% (6 pupils)

**2.4.3 Table:** showing GCSE outcomes 2019 with historical context

*N.B. it should be noted that national reporting is based on the number of CLA **actually on roll in YR11**. This data includes 2x17 year olds who completed YR11 in August after having previously missed a year of education.*

**2.4.4** These GCSE results are likely to place Bromley very well within the National CLA profile for 2019, though the numbers are small so statistical relevance is questionable.

	English 4+	Maths 4+	English and Maths 4+
Bromley CLA	29% (9 of 31 children)	29% (9 of 31 children)	29% (9 of 31 children)
Bromley all children	82% (provisional)	76% (provisional)	72% (provisional)
National all children	76% (provisional)	70% (provisional)	69% (provisional)
National CLA	Not available	Not available	Not available

**2.4.5 Table:** showing GCSE outcomes with local and national comparator data

**2.4.6** Provisional National data suggests that the percentage of Bromley CLA who achieved 5+ GCSEs graded **5** and above is 4.3% higher than all CLA nationally and 5.3% higher than all London region CLA.

**2.4.7** Despite the apparently good GCSE results for this cohort, most Bromley CLA did not make good progress against earlier attainment individually or against national benchmarking. This may be the result of later entry into care, multiple changes in placement or school disruption or it may be the result of missed opportunities for the provision of support or even the support itself having been mis-judged or of poor quality. Because of the small size of the cohort and the wide range of circumstances of the children, it is difficult to make a judgement on the reasons of this failure at cohort level though it is possible to review the performance of individuals in the context of their social care histories and extrapolate learning from the outcomes and use of resources made available to support them. A detailed piece of work analysing the information is being undertaken but the table below shows some of the relevant information:

Ref.	DOB	Length of time CLA	Placed In/Out of borough	SEN	No. of GCSEs	Maths 4+	Eng 4+	5@ 4-9 inc. English & Maths	5@4-9
1	2003	2-3 yrs	Out	Stat Assess	2				
2	2003	5-6 yrs	Out	EHCP					
3	2002	1-2 yrs	In		8	•	•	•	•
4	2003	12-13 yrs	Out	EHCP					
5	2003	4-5 yrs	In		9	•	•	•	•
6	2003	1-2 yrs	Out	EHCP					
7	2003	4-5 yrs	Out	EHCP					
8	2003	2-3 yrs	In	School support	6				
9	2003	8-9 yrs	Out	EHCP	7				
10	2002	2-3 yrs	In		8	•	•	•	•
11	2003	3-4 YRS	Out	EHCP					

12	2002	1-2 yrs	Out		5				
13	2003	10-11 yrs	Out	EHCP	10	•	•	•	•
14	2003	1-2 yrs	In						
15	2002	2-3 yrs	In		9	•	•	•	•
16	2003	2-3 yrs	In		8	•	•	•	•
17	2003	2-3 yrs	Out	School support					
18	2003	9-10 yrs	Out		9	•	•	•	•
19	2003	10-11 yrs	Out	EHCP					
20	2003	5-6 yrs	In	School support	6				
21	2003	5-6 yrs	Out	School support	7				
22	2003	2-3 YRs	In		6	•			
23	2003	3-4 yrs	Out	EHCP					
24	2002	2-3 yrs	Out						
25	2003	1-2 yrs	In		9	•	•	•	•
26	2003	1-2 yrs	In		6	•	•	•	•
27	2003	4-5 yrs	Out	EHCP					
28	2003	8-9 yrs	Out	EHCP					
29	2003	1-2 yrs	Out	EHCP					
30	2001	6-7 yrs	In	EHCP	1				

**2.4.8 Table:** showing pupil level data with number of years in care and SEN status.

**2.4.9** 13 young people in the reporting cohort have an EHC plan. This equates to 42% against a national figure of 2.8% (all children). A further 5 were receiving additional support in school without recourse to an EHC plan, making a total of 58% with identified special or additional needs.

**2.4.10** Within this cohort, young people accessed their education in a

variety of settings:

- Mainstream: 14 (45%), 10 in Bromley, 4 out of borough including 1 grammar school.
- Special Schools: 10 (32%). 1 in Bromley and 9 out of borough.
- Alternative Provision: 5, including tuition on site provided by the Virtual School. 1 in Bromley. 4 out of borough
- No provision: 2 students with no provision, refusing to engage with a wide range of education provision made available to them

**2.4.11** The Virtual School works hard to ensure that children placed out of borough are provided with the same level of service as those in Bromley schools and has evidence that these pupils are visited by education advisers more frequently than their peers local to Bromley. The oversight of such children in this way ensures that Pupil Premium funding is appropriately accessed by schools outside Bromley and that those living at a distance from home receive tuition and other aspirational opportunities. What is clear, however, is that children with special educational needs are more likely to be placed in schools outside Bromley even if they live in the borough and that children who do well would do so whether inside or outside the borough. Those children are also more likely to be in longer-term, stable, foster placements.

## **2.5 Post-16 Young People**

**2.5.1** Our vision is that all young people over 16 who are looked after or care leavers will be engaged in Education, Employment or Training commensurate with their ability and aspirations, and be making significant progress towards recognised career ambitions.

**2.5.2** Academic year 2018/19 has seen a continued focus on transition at 16+ and improving the quality of post-16 PEPs. PEP meetings are now being used much more effectively to monitor progress and provide an opportunity to consider ETE pathways for this group of young people. This provides opportunities for the Virtual School pick up on learning or access needs and to offer further support and/or assessments

**2.5.3** We extended our successful partnership with Fresh Start in Education during the spring and summer terms of 2019 and provided intensive support to YR11 students making choices about post-16 progression, ensuring that an increased number of students had a secure and appropriate offer of a place for a YR 12 start in September 2018. 82% of CLA started YR12 with a secure place in a sixth form or college in

September 2018. This was an increase of 11% on the previous year and also resulted in much lower drop-out figures across the year as predicted. This is a remarkably good piece of work which has been recognised as good practice (and is being replicated) within the London network of Virtual Schools.

**2.5.4** In the Ofsted Report January 2019, inspectors said:

“The proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment or training (EET) is improving and compares positively with statistical neighbours and the national average. This is a result of concerted efforts by a specialist worker and others in the leaving care service to provide tailored and creative support with a focus on helping care leavers into suitable opportunities. Staff are ambitious for care leavers, and those care leavers who are not in EET are considered at the fortnightly EET panel.”

We expect the numbers of post 18 NEET young people to drop substantially as the cohorts of those receiving transition support move up to the age group. Supporting our young people to achieve during KS5 will provide them with the tools and ambition to enter higher education or become a useful and productive member of the workforce in the longer term.

**2.5.5** The local authority has worked hard to develop new opportunities for older children looked after and care leavers within the council and in partner organisations. When a contract is due to be tendered, commissioners of adults/children’s social care and education are now required to consider if potential new providers are able to create apprenticeships, on the job training and work experience for Bromley young people (including looked after children) . During the year 2018/19, 2 young people commenced apprenticeships in the council and one young person was directly employed by our construction partners. In addition, one young person began an internship in the Cabinet Office and a further 3 have interviewed for civil service apprenticeships.

**2.5.6** Despite successfully securing Social Impact Bond funding for the I-Aspire programme (formerly Your Chance) in partnership with Lewisham, Greenwich and De Paul, the project took some time to launch successfully in Bromley. During the latter part of the academic year, however, a number of our young people aged 18+ who were out of education, training or employment (known as NEET) were referred to the project and the momentum has grown. A total of 112 young people aged 19 to 21 have now been referred to this project and rapid referrals are now also made for NEET young people aged 16-18 when they become CLA at this age.

## 2.5.7 KS5 Outcomes

Young Person	time in care	UASC (Y/N)	SEN status	ETE status at end of academic year	ESOL	Level 1 qualification	Level 2 qualification	Level 3 qualification
A	1 yr	Y	Nil	ETE	E3			
B	2 yrs	N	Nil	NEET				
C	1 yr	Y	Nil	ETE	L1			
D	1 yr	N	Nil	NEET		•		
E	1 yr	N	Nil	ETE			•	
F	1 yr	N	Nil	NEET				
G*	5 yrs	N	Nil	ETE				•
H	12 yrs	N	Nil	ETE		•		
I	2 yrs	N	Nil	NEET				
J	2 yrs	Y	Nil	NEET				
K	4 yrs	N	Nil	NEET			•	
L	2 yrs	N	Nil	ETE			•	
M	1 yr	N	Nil	ETE			•	
N	2 yrs	Y	Nil	ETE		•		
O	1 yr	N	EHCP	ETE				
P	1 yr	Y	Nil	ETE	Pre entry			
Q	2 yrs	Y	Nil	NEET				
R*	3 Yrs	N	Nil	ETE				•
S*	4 yrs	N	NIL	ETE				•
T	3 yrs	N	Nil	ETE			•	
U*	8 yrs	N	Nil	ETE				•
V*	6 yrs	N	Nil	ETE				•
W	10 yrs	N	Nil	ETE				
X	8 yrs	N	EHCP	ETE				
Y	2 yrs	Y	Nil	ETE	Pre entry			
Z	2 yrs	N	Nil	ETE			•	

AA	1 yr	Y	Nil	Entry 1				
AB	1 yr	N	EHCP	ETE			•	
AC	2 yrs	Y	Nil	ETE		•		
AD	1 yr	Y	Nil	ETE	Entry 2			
AE	12 yrs	N	Nil	ETE			•	
AF	7 yrs	N	EHCP	ETE			•	
AG	4 yrs	N	EHCP	ETE			•	
AH	1 yr	N	EHCP	ETE				
AI	4 yrs	N	Nil	NEET			•	

**2.5.8 Table:** showing YR13 outcomes for reporting cohort 2019

Legend:  = qualifications achieved summer 2019

\* = entered university September 2019

**2.5.9** The table at 2.5.8 shows what a complex range of learning abilities and stages are associated with our older cohorts. This does not represent the final tally of level 2 or level 3 qualifications that will be achieved by these young people. A number of the young people who appear not to have achieved any qualifications are part way through apprenticeships and many who have achieved ESOL or level 1 qualifications have now gone on to further courses and have trajectories that could eventually take them to level 3 qualifications or beyond.

**2.5.10** 10 Bromley care leavers commenced undergraduate courses at university in September 2018. We are hugely proud of these young people, many of whom have been known to the Virtual School for a number of years.

## **2.6 Regular Attendance at School**

**2.6.1** Regular attendance at school is vital to help children achieve and get the best possible start in life. Good attendance is a protective factor for children looked after and academic achievement is the key to a successful and productive adult life and breaking the cycle of neglect and life in care.

**2.6.2** The Virtual School utilises a service provided by 'Welfare Call' to monitor attendance at school and alternative provisions on a daily basis by an individual phone call to check every child is at school. Where students are not at their provision the Carer is contacted to

ascertain the reason for absence and the Social Worker and Virtual School are notified. This ensures the whereabouts of every student is monitored on a daily basis and serves as an early warning system to patterns of lateness and non-attendance. Attendance reports are reviewed at weekly Virtual School team meetings and children at risk or poor attendance are identified. Contact is made with the foster placement or residential care home to discuss concerns and plan strategies for improvement.

- 2.6.3** Despite a focus on attendance through the academic year, persistent absence remains far too high among Bromley CLA. While 43% of children looked after achieved over 98% attendance in the academic year 2018/19, 25% had less than 90% attendance in school in the same period (for children in Care for more than one year at 31/03/2019 – the 903 return cohort - this figure is significantly lower at 10%). This is particularly worrying because more than half of the 90% have an EHC plan or are under statutory assessment.
- 2.6.4** Early findings from analysis of this data shows that 40% of persistent absentees experienced a placement change resulting in a change of school during the academic year. For some of those children there was a delay in securing a suitable new school or alternative provision and the Virtual School funded tuition on site whenever it was appropriate for this group. For a large percentage of the cohort, persistent absence is a result of refusal to engage with education and/or periods missing from care.
- 2.6.5** Over half of persistent absentees (18) were in YR11, of whom all but 4 were placed outside of the borough. There is strong evidence that the Virtual School visits this group as often as (and sometimes more often than) children placed inside Bromley. These children often tell us that they are refusing to engage with education or training until they are returned to Bromley and we recognise this is an attempt to gain some control in their lives but Virtual School Education advisers continue to work the young people and their foster carers, residential staff and social workers to identify alternative provision that may be attractive to students.
- 2.6.6** A new Virtual School Attendance Policy is in place and weekly reviews of the absence data are taking place. Trends and concerns resulting from this work are discussed with social workers. Where an intervention, challenge or incentive is appropriate, we contact schools and carers.
- 2.6.7** Alternative provision, usually in the form of 1:1 tuition is now put in place more rapidly than has previously been the case when a child is moved in an emergency. The Virtual School has managed to substantially increase the number of tuition providers on its dynamic purchasing system.

- 2.6.8** Improving attendance of CLA has been identified as a key priority for the Education and Employment work stream of the Corporate Parenting Board and further information about the work that has been undertaken to promote school attendance can be found in 5.1.1, below,

### **3 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

- 3.1** The Local Authority has a statutory duty to maintain Personal Education Plans (PEP) for every school age CLA up to the end of the school year in which they turn 18 (i.e. the end of Year 13). The PEP must be reviewed at least termly, or at any time of significant changes to placement and/or education provision. Social Workers are jointly responsible along with school Designated Teachers for writing, reviewing and taking actions written into the PEPs.
- 3.2** PEP compliance has been improving over the last couple of years and records show that, though there is still a small number of PEP meetings that do not get recorded each term. The majority (over 90%) of CLA in YR groups R-13 had 2 or more PEPs completed on the system and authorised during the academic year.
- 3.3** There has been a significant improvement in the quality of PEPs through the year, especially Post-16 PEPs, as a result of the provision of training and the modelling of good PEP assessments by the Virtual School Education Adviser responsible for transition and KS5.
- 3.4** Target setting in PEPs continues to improve and we are beginning to encourage more references to the EHC plan for children with special needs. This is in the early stages and needs developing but it is clearly important that the two plans are cross referenced regularly and that schools are held to account for delivering the support and resources required by the EHC plan. This aligns with priority 3 and action 3.4.1 of the SEND Reforms Action Plan (2019/20), accountable to the SEND Governance Board.
- 3.5** Attainment and progress reporting, which is recorded well in our PEPs, together with an outcome of the targets from the previous PEP inform a wider record of progress held by the Virtual School and updated each time a PEP is authorised.
- 3.6** The Virtual School continues to provide 2-3 PEP training sessions for social workers each term. These are offered to all social workers who are new to Bromley and any others who may need a 'refresher'. Occasionally a whole team may be targeted for one of the sessions. Education advisers maintain their offer of support for new social workers, attending at least one PEP meeting to model good practice

and offer deskside advice and training on recording PEPs where required.

- 3.7** Every Year 6 PEP meeting in the summer term was chaired by an Education Adviser and that receiving secondary schools were invited to attend. This was to ensure consistent information sharing through the secondary transfer process, like any good parent would. The same Education Adviser will chair the first PEP of YR7 so that nothing is missed during this crucial time for our children.
- 3.8** There are two layers of quality assurance for PEPs. The PEP Quality Assurance Officer reviews every PEP when it is submitted for authorisation. This provides an opportunity to her to identify gaps or weaknesses in the assessment and address them with the social worker or school, effectively providing 1:1 training in the process. When the PEP is completed to her satisfaction it is reviewed and authorised by the VSH. Issues that are identified at any point in this process are followed up with conversations with education advisers, social workers or directly with schools. This type of work ensures that Virtual School staff have a very good knowledge of the circumstances and needs of all the children.

## **4 Pupil Premium Plus Funding for CLA Financial Year 2018/19**

### **4.1 The Purpose of Pupil Premium Plus**

- 4.1.1** Children who have been in local-authority care for 1 day or more attracted £2,300 of pupil premium funding in financial year 2018/19. This funding does not go directly to the schools but is managed by the Virtual School in the local authority that looks after the child. The Conditions of Grant require the Virtual School Head Teacher to distribute funding and allow for that to be done according to local knowledge of the cohort.
- 4.1.2** As for last year, the initial allocation to schools was £1,600 for each child for whom a monitoring form was completed and returned, with the Virtual School withholding £700 in the first instance. Further funding was accessible through the year where there was demonstrable need and clear links to the needs and targets identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP). A number of initial payments of the full allocation of £2,300 or more were made where the Virtual School team was aware that schools were already funding expensive resources for children.

**4.1.3** All allocations were made as a full year payment except where there was a natural transition (e.g. secondary transfer). In these cases the primary school was given a third of the funds, and the receiving secondary school the remaining allocation when the child enrolled and a monitoring form was completed in the autumn term. In some cases, both the primary school and the receiving secondary school received larger allocations where it was known that additional support or resources were required.

**4.1.4** Pupil Premium Plus allocations for children making in-year transfers have been dealt with on a case by case basis but the Virtual School rarely asks for allocations to be refunded. Receiving schools were offered a payment pro-rata to the full allocation unless a larger integration support package was needed.

## **4.2 Use of Withheld Funding**

**4.2.1** The principle of withholding an element of each child's funding is based on our knowledge that not every child needs the same thing at the same time. This is supported by the huge variation of responses received from schools, some of which, every year, tell us that they do not require additional funding or resources for a child, while others request sums to the value of tens of thousands of pounds. For some children – those who are living with the effects of trauma and neglect - have had a fractured education history or who have experienced multiple placement moves - a significant amount will be needed to fund the cost of the support they need. Withheld funds allow us to make resources available to targeted individuals and groups as well as occasional universal offers of activities to the wider group.

**4.2.2** In financial year 2018/19, withheld funding was used for the following:

- A 0.2 FTE Education Psychologist who has provided access to rapid assessments for CLA, with priority being given to those placed at a distance from Bromley.
- A 0.4 FTE PEP quality officer (see 3.1.8, above) who reviews all PEPs to ensure that personal education planning is robust and provides an accurate understanding of the progress being made by students as well as addressing the needs of the child. This officer provides support and training to social workers and designated teachers.  
(The use of Pupil Premium Plus for the creation of this post was considered to be good practice by Ofsted during the ILACs Inspection of Children's Services in December 2018 and was seen to be providing the Virtual School with additional capacity to offer interventions and support in a timely way).
- Classroom support for individual learners
- 1:1 tuition or e-learning resources for targeted year groups

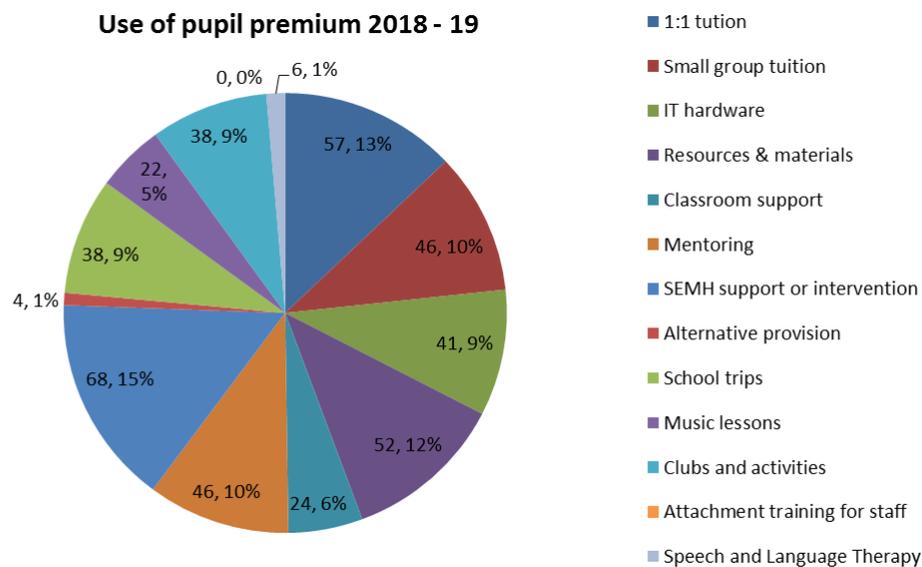
- Integration support for our CLA changing schools. This will usually be the guarantee of a full year's allocation even if the previous school has had funding, as well as further resources if required
- Short-term funding of alternative provision for our CLA not able to access a conventional education setting.
- YR11 Transition Project
- Laptops/tablets and software for our CLA
- Support/intervention for schools when they are having difficulties with individual pupils, including 'Creating Connections' from Kate Cairns Associates
- Whole school training on attachment awareness and emotion coaching for schools that wish to participate
- Training for Designated Teachers/Head Teachers/Governors through the accredited online training packages as well as the Designated Teacher Forum and other training events
- Additional educational, cultural or social activities for CLA, including educational visits, music programmes etc. to promote aspiration in CLA cohorts and their foster carers. These included continuation of the Aspiration Project, as well as the promotion of local and National STEM and Arts activities and the provision of theatre tickets. The Virtual School plans to increase the number children who attend university open days throughout the year.
- Resources and support for unaccompanied asylum seekers which included an ESOL summer school for 12 young people and the provision of an App to support the acquisition of English language skills.

#### **4.2.3 Use of allocated Pupil Premium Plus Funding by Schools**

**4.2.4** The main purpose of Pupil Premium funding is to close the gap and accelerate progress for Children Looked After (CLA). Bromley Virtual School recognizes that children's needs may vary over time and therefore a personalised approach is needed. Schools can request funding for a wide range of resources and activities, however, they are advised to consult with carers, social workers, colleagues from the Virtual School and, most significantly, the individual child to ensure it is used to support the education the child needs and deserves to help

them succeed in life. Consideration can be given to one-off funding (ie: for a piece of equipment), regular funding (ie: 6 weeks tuition at £ per week) and longer term funding (ie: closing the gap writing intervention: 1:4 small group with HLTA, 30 minute sessions 3 x week). Schools are advised to make use of the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit of strategies to improve learning. Summary for schools spending on the Pupil Premium <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>

**4.2.5** Schools have used Pupil Premium funding in broadly similar ways to last year. The only notable change is the increase of 1:1 tuition provided in or by schools. This is almost universally for pupils in KS4 and replaces tuition that would otherwise have been commissioned by the Virtual School. Though not tested, there is a theory that schools sometimes provide tuition in this way when they can think of no other use of the funding. It is also the case, however, that some children are being provided with tuition during lunchtime or at the end of the school day because they perceive the concept of tuition at home to be punitive.



**4.2.6 Chart:** showing use of pupil premium plus funding delegated to schools

### 4.3 Pupil Premium Case Studies

**4.3.1** Child A. Before becoming CLA she had been placed in an alternative provision by her mainstream school but became a school refuser. She was placed in an alternative provision at some distance from school and was offered a range of alternative provision options by the Virtual

School. She appeared to visit each one happily but subsequently failed to attend each one. During this period, the Virtual School provided 1:1 tuition in the foster home and it seemed that this might be the only acceptable option for the remainder of her school career. The high quality teaching and mentoring provided by the tutor, however, provided a further window for exploring education outside the home and after a series of taster days, the student, supported in the classroom by her tutor, has engaged in a part time timetable and tuition at home continued on the days she was at home. The plan for the autumn term of 2019 is to reduce her dependency on the tutor in the classroom and then eventually increase the timetabled hours in the provision.

This successful piece of work was a result of a trusted partnership with a tuition provider and the patient work of a high quality tutor. Though expensive, it has been good value for money and has produced the best possible outcome.

**4.3.2** Child B. The child attends an additionally resourced unit in a primary school. He experienced a series of placement disruptions and was moved across several boroughs but the Virtual School insisted that a change of school should be avoided until he was found a long term home. As a result of the turbulence and uncertainty, his distress became more and more visible in school and needed more and more 1:1 support in order for him to be contained within the unit (and being in the main part of the school was not an option). PP+ funded an experienced LSA to work with child B in the classroom rather than on a withdrawal basis until the placement issues were settled and his behaviour was no longer an issue. During protracted discussions about secondary transfer, child B again became very agitated and funding was again released until an additional resource package was agreed by SEN.

The good work undertaken with PP+ funding provided sufficient evidence to suggest the child B's EHC plan was seriously out of date and the new draft amended plan helped professionals to review and amend the secondary transfer plan to better meet his needs.

**4.3.3** Child C. This able student is a gifted musician. When his long term placement broke down he stopped playing the piano and drums and, despite being given a lot of encouragement, he refused to attend music lessons. School used PP+ to fund group music therapy, to which child C was invited with a group of his peers. This clever intervention allowed him to re-engage with his music without the humiliation of having to back down from the position in which he had positioned himself.

This model has been shared within the Designated Teacher network as good practice. Offering an alternative is an easily overlooked solution for de-escalating stressful situations that may otherwise lead to angry confrontation.

## **5 New Duties for the Virtual School**

- 5.1** The Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed significant new statutory duties on the role of the Virtual School Head Teacher, extending it to include promoting the interests of children who have been adopted or who are in long term care permanent arrangements (under an adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangements order). These responsibilities came into force in September 2018.
- 5.2** Identifying and profiling the cohort of 'Post-LAC' children in the borough is not a simple task. It is dependent on self-disclosure by parents or guardians and is, by default, only required if there is a problem in school or if the parent has reason to believe that it will entitle them to a service or other provision. Enquiries with the DfE, initially yielded the figure of 202 post-LAC children identified as recipients of Pupil Premium Plus across 61 (mostly primary) schools in the borough. Even taking into consideration only the remaining maintained and academy schools in Bromley, it can be extrapolated that the number will rise to close to 400. The proportion of adopted children in independent schools in the borough is likely to be higher but putting a number on them would be pure speculation.
- 5.3** The new duty requires the VSH to respond to enquiries from both parents/carers *and* schools and there is an increased demand on the service to provide training on the needs of care-experienced children and the use of Pupil Premium Plus to support them. This equates to between 3 and 5 enquiries each week, largely relating to children not known to the Virtual School, or, indeed to the wider Children's Social Care service (many children will have been adopted from outside the authority), which means that there is often a degree of 'detective' work to be done before advice and guidance can be provided. This work is disproportionately time consuming, working with anxious parents and schools that have often been compassionate and supportive but which have ultimately reached the end of their resources.
- 5.4** During the year, the Virtual School has also seen an increased number of enquiries about children previously looked after coming from the SEN and Admissions services. These usually relate to unsuccessful requests for statutory assessment and to the complex admissions rules for adopted children.
- 5.5** The increase in enquiries from schools has led to a corresponding increase in requests for training on the effects of trauma and neglect and, together with new training sessions for adopters and special guardians, which is provided through the New Permanency Service,

this has also created an additional burden on the resources of the Virtual School.

## **6 A Summary of Virtual School Achievement in Academic Year 2018/19**

**6.1** The Virtual School saw a number of challenges and successes through the academic year. Successes include:

- We identified the need for a Deputy Head teacher role within the Virtual School and secured funding to offer an honorarium to an existing member of staff to act up into the role part way through the year. We subsequently used Pupil Premium funding to backfill the Education Adviser role, ensuring that essential work for our SEND children was not lost.
- A positive contribution to the Inspection of children's Social Care Services in November 2018. The Lead Inspector said that the Virtual School 'punched above its weight' and the report says '*The virtual school team is effective in its work with children*'.
- Developing partnership working has enabled us to offer an extension of both the Aspiration Project and the Transition Project. The aim of both of these is to increase engagement with and a commitment to education through KS4 and 5. Both projects are highly regarded by children and their carers and social workers and the quality of the work that is being done with individual is very high. We are confident that this work will eventually result in increased engagement all the way through to the 21-25 age groups as these children grow up in our care.
- We ran our first ESOL Summer School at the end of the school year. This was targeted at 14-19 year old unaccompanied minors and was a well-attended programme culminating in a visit to Greenwich to the Planetarium and the Cutty Sark and a meal out together at the end of the day. During the programme the young people had a visit from the creator of an APP which promotes English language skills for speakers of English as a second language and we are delighted to have been able to provide each of the young people with free access to this resource.
- We have successfully supported a number of children to transition into schools that are more appropriate to their needs. Using information recorded in PEPs, we have been able to follow up concerns and

explore the appropriateness of the schools of a number of children across the age range. We worked closely with carers and social work teams to identify new schools and are particularly proud of work that was undertaken to return 2 children to mainstream after periods in a pupil referral unit and an SEMH school.

- We have increased the number of training courses offered to a range of professionals and broadened the programme to include Preparation for School, Managing Transition and Trauma and Neglect in the Classroom. We have trained adopters, connected carers and foster carers as well as social workers and have created a bespoke programme which includes the principles of Corporate Parenting for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).
- The Celebration of Achievement in February 2019 was our most successful and acclaimed event to date. Co-hosted by the chair of the Children in Care Council, LINCC, we presented a music performance by our children and gave awards to over 150 children and young adults.

## **6.2 Addressing the challenges**

**6.2.1** At the end of the 2017/18 academic year, we identified four key challenges for the Virtual School. They have remained a focus throughout the year. Work done to address these challenges includes:

### **6.2.2 Reducing Persistent Absence.**

- Since the creation of the temporary Deputy Head of Virtual School role, we have established better processes for information sharing about imminent placement changes and have instituted regular emails to social workers across the service reminding them that they have a statutory duty to inform the Virtual School of impending changes of circumstance that might affect education.
- We have increased monitoring activity using the daily, weekly and monthly data from Welfare Call. This has resulted in improved communications with social workers about absence from school which is supporting social workers to understand the implications of absence and exclusions and their role as corporate parent in reducing these.
- We have encouraged social worker attendance at reintegration meetings where the Virtual School lacks the capacity to attend.

- Where we are able, we have attended meetings about poor attendance and have occasionally asked for an early PEP meeting to be held to air our concerns and discuss strategy for supporting the young person to attend.
- We have made frequent visits to young people who are finding it difficult to engage with any options that are presented to them. Education officers frequently accompany young people to interviews and enrolments and sometimes pick them up on a daily basis for a limited period to ensure that they are attending. We also work with young people and their carers on identifying transport options.
- We have worked hard with young people in custody and secure accommodation to ensure that they have a plan for education or training before they are released. Even though we cannot always know where the young person will be living, we make sure we understand their needs and aspirations so that we can be agile and responsive as soon as they are released.
- We know that early identification of emerging problems with attendance is a weakness in the Virtual School and we expect to recruit to the vacant Education Support Worker role in the new financial year. This role will also provide more capacity to work with young people who are refusing to engage, often because they are living a long way from home.
- We recognise that there is a shortage of alternative provision for children and young people for whom mainstream school is not appropriate. The VSH is member of the Alternative Provision Commissioning Group in Bromley and is ensuring that the needs of children looked after, particularly those who move around frequently, can be met in the future.

### **6.2.3 Reducing fixed term Exclusions**

- The VSH has delivered a number of whole-school training sessions across Bromley and schools in other authorities. These sessions have provide an opportunity for schools to reflect on behaviour management policies and their effectiveness and impact on traumatised children and the impact of repeated fixed term exclusions on the stability of a foster placement.
- We have encouraged schools to make contact with the Virtual School before a fixed term exclusion is used as a sanction for a child. Such contacts have been largely positive and, in most cases, and exclusion has been avoided. Schools welcome support and ideas for

encouraging greater engagement or better behaviour from children without resorting to overly punitive sanctions.

- The VSH has been member of the Alternative Provision Commissioning Group which was set up in Bromley as a response to the high numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions in Bromley. This group has overseen the commissioning of an external review of SEMH and Alternative Provision, undertaken by a specialist adviser. It was recognised that a more comprehensive range of alternative provisions was needed for children for whom it has become clear that mainstream (alone) was not the ideal provision and who were likely to experience multiple fixed term or ultimate permanent exclusion. This work has resulted in a new, KS4 alternative provision, opening in September 2019, which several children were invited join during the 2019 summer term.

#### **6.2.4** Achieving 3 high quality PEPs per year for all children

- PEP completion is now reported on a weekly basis alongside other Children's social care performance indicators. This has succeeded in bringing PEP activity into focus for managers as they monitor performance and as a consequence we seen a dramatic increase in the number of PEP meetings taking place. 90% of children had 2 or more PEPs during the academic year.
- The quality of PEP work is vastly improved. This has been achieved through the provision of regular training for social workers, including bespoke sessions for NQSWs; modelling of good practice by the Virtual School and personal feedback from the PEP Quality Assurance Officer and the VSH. The improvement in the quality of post-16 PEPs is particularly notable.

#### **6.2.5** Increasing the numbers of young people achieving Level 3 qualifications.

- The Virtual School continues to drive the underpinning that will enable Bromley to achieve better outcomes at KS3 and beyond. We are confident that the current improvement in the numbers of young people who enter, and remain in, post 16 ETE provision will translate into increased numbers eventually securing level 3 qualifications, even if these are not achieved by the end of YR13.
- A large proportion of the post-16 cohort of young people are late entries to care or unaccompanied minors. The Virtual School effectively tracks and monitors the engagement of these young people and through regular contact with social workers, and through our recently commissioned post-16 attendance tracking. We have a

record of providing a rapid response to the needs of young people who become CLA without education or training provision or who chose to leave their courses. Our experienced Education Adviser who is responsible for young people aged 16 plus has a broad knowledge base of local resources and opportunities and is quick to research the availability of the same for children further away from Bromley.

## 7 Addressing key challenges in 2019/20

### 7.1 Challenge 1

<p>What is the challenge?</p>	<p><b>Persistent absence rates in the most recently published figures (2018) for Bromley Children Looked After are too high at 19% and above national average for Children Looked After.</b></p> <p>This remains a concern and is carried over from last year.</p>
<p>Current Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily attendance monitoring</li> <li>• Weekly reviewing of attendance reports to identify children at risk of poor attendance.</li> <li>• Discussions with social workers and foster carers</li> <li>• Meetings in school where necessary</li> <li>• Children with no school place provided with tuition within 1 working week wherever possible</li> <li>• Ongoing work with schools to reduce fixed term exclusions</li> <li>• VS attendance at monthly monitoring of Children who may be Missing Out on Education (CMOE), chaired by the Director of Education.</li> </ul>
<p>Future work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit to Education Support Worker role to create additional capacity for monitoring, and responding to, absence</li> <li>• Increase challenge to schools and offer alternatives to zero tolerance for CLA</li> <li>• Increase access to aspiration-raising activities across key stages 3 and 4</li> </ul>
<p>What are our performance indicators / success</p>	<p>Bromley CLA attendance figures to be at least as good as all other Bromley children.</p> <p>All Bromley CLA to have access a full time school</p>

criteria?	offer.  Any CLA who is not in education to be provided with 1:1 tuition in the placement as an alternative to school within 1 working week and on a school roll within 20 days wherever possible.
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## 7.2 Challenge 2

What is the challenge?	<b>Poorer than expected academic progress between key stages for Bromley CLA</b>  It is recognised that cohorts change on a daily basis so average progress scores across a cohort at the end of a key stage can be misleading but better recording and monitoring of progress should enable the Virtual School to provide more effective interventions if a child slips behind their individual progress targets.
Current Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking of attainment against age-related expectation at the first PEP for each child which is attended by and Education Adviser from the Virtual School</li> <li>• Use of PEP and termly teacher assessment data to inform progress reporting on the Virtual School data set. This is a live document which allows reviewing of progress information for individuals or year group cohorts.</li> </ul>
Future work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake review of data management systems</li> <li>• Institute monthly Key stage/year group progress review meetings in the Virtual School team to ensure that the progress of all children is understood and action is taken if necessary</li> <li>• Provide targeted booster activities</li> </ul>
What are our performance indicators / success criteria?	<p>Bromley CLA make progress between key stages that is at least as good as all Bromley children</p> <p>Bromley CLA make better than expected progress against national progress measures.</p>

## 7.3 Challenge 3

What is the challenge?	<b>Improving outcomes for children with SEND</b>  Social Care contributions to EHC plans lack depth
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	<p>and quality and plans may not have been amended to reflect changes in the circumstance and needs of children.</p> <p>Improved alignment of PEPs and EHC plans is required. This is beginning to be seen for children with disabilities but needs to be universal practise.</p> <p>The Virtual School needs a better understanding of the progress and outcomes for children who have SEN but do not require an EHC plan (children at School Support).</p>
Current Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist SEN Education Adviser role in place within the Virtual School</li> </ul>
Future work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of SEN status of all CLA to inform improved data</li> <li>• PEP training to include good practise on inclusion of EHCP targets</li> <li>• Emails to Designated teachers before PEPs to ask for IEPs to be made available to the Virtual School and in meetings</li> </ul>
What are our performance indicators / success criteria?	<p>SEN status of all Bromley CLA to be understood by the Virtual School</p> <p>Progress measures for individual CLA with disabilities to be understood by the Virtual School</p> <p>Reporting on progress for children working below pre-key stage standards to be included in Virtual School reporting.</p>