

Decision Maker: Children, Education and Families PDS Committee

Date: Tuesday 25th January 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **Bromley Virtual School Annual Report 2020/21**
‘A trauma-informed approach to teaching vulnerable children including those in our care’

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Chief Officer: Richard Baldwin, Director of Children, Education and Families

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

- 1.1. To provide the Scrutiny Committee with a regular update on the performance of the Virtual School for children in care and children previously in care currently adopted or cared for under a Special Guardianship Order.
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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1. The Committee note and comment on progress made towards the actions identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy as laid out in the outcomes and evaluation section of this report.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

- 2.2. Summary of Impact: The academic year 2020/21 was a successful year in unusual times. We may not be able to measure our successes in the same way as usual, but our young people had success at Key stage 4 and 5, managed some transitions very well and are continuing to make us all proud in the way that they are continuing their learning through all these events.
- 2.3. COVID19 was again a major event of the academic year, with many of our young people learning from home for a period, and all having their education disrupted to some extent. The Virtual School staff focussed their efforts on ensuring PEPs continued to challenge and support all to ensure that children were able to continue learning, supporting any child who needed to be at home for some of that learning time and focussing on catch up support.
- 2.4. Reporting of GCSE grades will be without comparators as statistical reporting from the DFE did not take place. We have of course collected our own data which shows that our young people have performed well in their GCSE and at level 3. The vast majority have achieved or exceeded their predicted grades and cohort statistics compare well with previous years. Progress measures have also been hard to collect from schools as their own internal assessment cycles have been disrupted. However, our holistic progress measures taken from discussions at PEPs show good number of young people making progress
- 2.5. We continue to play a significant role in planning and delivering the Corporate Parenting Strategy through membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, the achievement and participation sub-group, as well as attending the health sub-group. The actions identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy are at the core of our service improvement plan and all the actions and success criteria are addressed in the outcomes and evaluation sections of this report.
- 2.7. Progress continues to be made has been made with the quality and effectiveness of PEPs. It demonstrates increased professional 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.
- 2.8. The Virtual School is developing the work brought about by the demands of increased statutory duty imposed by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and now the 2021 guidance on promoting the education of children with a social worker.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: N/A
 4. Total current budget for this head: £ N/A
 5. Source of funding: N/A
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All Bromley children in care.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

3.1. The Purpose of the Virtual School

3.1.1 The role of the Virtual School is to promote the best educational outcomes and raise attainment of all children looked after (CLA) by Bromley, and those that have been placed in our schools by other authorities. The children we look after are being educated across many different schools and local authorities. The Virtual School therefore has a powerful role in tracking their progress as if they were in a single school: combining expert school leadership with being the best of parents. Our key question every day is “Would it be good enough for your child?”

3.1.2 Bromley Virtual School works on the following four core, crucial, statutory areas of responsibility:

- To make sure that there is a system to track and monitor the attainment and progress of all children we look after.
- To ensure that all CLA have a robust and effective PEP and monitor the use of the Pupil Premium grant where a child is eligible.
- To champion the educational needs of CLA and care leavers across the authority and those placed out-of-authority.
- To champion the educational needs of those children who were previously CLA and are now adopted, or in a Special Guardianship arrangement, or a subject of a Child Arrangement order.

From September 2021 we will have additional duties to “Promote the Education of all children with a social worker”

3.1.3 This report outlines the activity and impact of Bromley Virtual School during the academic year 2020/21 and provides full details of the educational outcomes of Bromley CLA. It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for our children.

3.1.4 Data contained in this report is for children who were in the care of the LB Bromley for the academic year 2020/21 and is now wholly based on internal data for all children as the Statistical First Release has not provided us with any outcome data for the last two years.

3.1.5 Due to the impact of COVID19 much of the data usually available will not be available or comparable with previous academic years. We have measured impact in other ways wherever possible and given an overview as to how the impact of COVID19 on our children’s education has been mitigated.

3.1.6 We were fully staffed at the end of 2020/21 although we are planning two new posts to cover the new duties along with the 2017 duties, currently being covered by an agency worker.

3.1.7 COVID19 Response:

During the year the team has continued to respond flexibly as the government guidance and situation changed regularly. During lockdown we increased attendance monitoring and contact with foster carers. Advisors continued to attend PEPs, mostly online, but as things started to open, we reverted to face to face where agreeable. Going forward we will continue with a blend. Remote meetings mean we can attend more meetings due to reduced travel time and have a

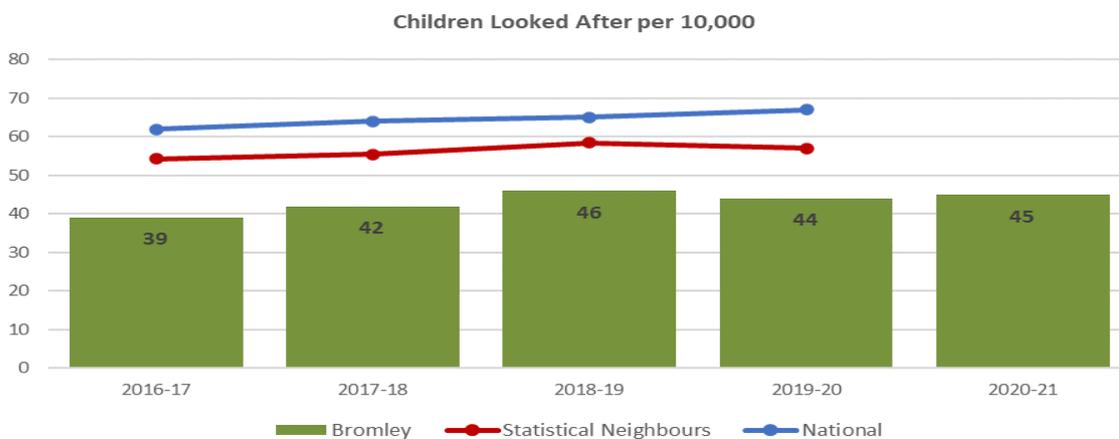
better attendance of the network. However, it is crucial that we visit each child in their setting and get the opportunity to see their lived experience and hear their voice. At PEP meetings staff were able to address any “catching up” or other needs that emerged because of the period of the pandemic.

3.2. Our Children

3.2.1 Children Looked After: numbers on 31st March 2021.

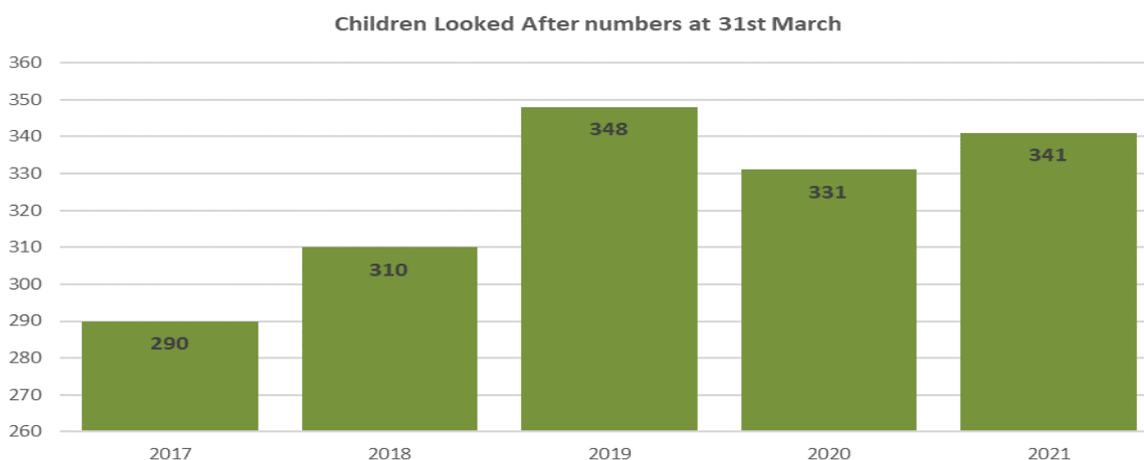
There has been an increase in the number of CLA in Bromley from last year (2019/20). The numbers per 10,000 in Bromley remain much lower than those in statistical neighbours and significantly lower than the National picture.

3.2.2 CLA rates per 10,000, including statistical neighbours and national statistics:



3.2.3 Around 350 CLA and care leavers aged under 18 were in the Virtual School at any point in the academic year 2020/21. 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.

3.2.4 Numbers of CLA with historical context:

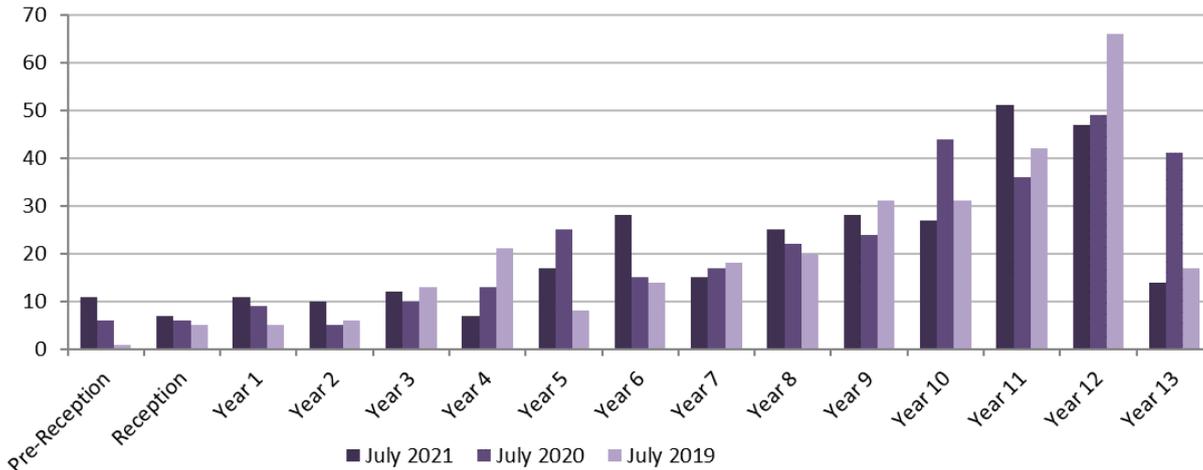


3.2.5 Of the cohort in care at the end of the academic year, 37% of statutory age children were in schools outside the borough. Some of these were schools close to Bromley, in neighbouring authorities, and some further away. Around 30% of Bromley CLA in schools outside Bromley were in special schools or alternative provision, including those having tuition at home. This contrasts with those who remained in school in Bromley, of whom around 16% were in special or alternative school provision.

3.2.6 Older children continue to feature disproportionately in the Virtual School: with year 11 ending the year with 51 children. Years 8, 9 and 10 all have 25+ 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 3.2.7. – the year 6 cohort in 2020/21 was particularly large with 28 children. The proportion of children with an EHC plan in these groups is much higher than in the rest of the population.

3.2.7 Bromley Virtual School Year Group Cohorts as at end July:

Number of Children Looked After by year group



3.2.8 We had particularly high numbers of year 11 children in 2020/21, many of them coming into care during this crucial last year of school. Year 11 is not a good time to change schools so the challenge is to find placements where the child can continue at their current placements. We have improved joined up with social workers on this but there is still some work to do. However, because of good work on home and school placements, 95% of young people were in a school that is rated at least good by OFSTED. The Virtual School should be consulted by social workers when a child needs to move school because of a placement change as the advice of the Virtual Headteacher should be “given due weight” in placement decisions (Statutory Guidance 2018). In most cases this will happen but going forward we need to find ways to ensure this is more consistent. The Virtual School staff work hard to minimize possible gaps in education. Education Advisers work closely with admissions, SEN staff, schools, and other Virtual School teams to secure appropriate school places as quickly as possible.

3.3. Educational Outcomes

3.3.1 Progress measures for all children:

Progress measures are collected twice per term for each pupil. There is a data drop once per term at the end of the term, collected by Welfare Call. Progress data is also collected once per term when the PEP is reviewed. The latest data we have is from the Summer term in 2021. Due to the lockdown, school’s assessment cycles have been affected, meaning that there are some gaps in assessment. By the Autumn term we should have progress data that we are more confident in.

3.3.2 The table below shows numbers of CLA making expected progress or better in school. This includes all CLA at the Summer data drop, irrespective of how long they have been looked after.

	Summer Term 20/21 Progress	Cohort size on 23rd July 2021	CLA with Progress data provided English and Maths	Making Expected Progress - English	Making expected progress - Maths	Making Expected Progress - English	Making expected progress - Maths	CLA making Expected Level of overall progress based on Cohort on 23rd July 2021	CLA making Expected Level of overall progress based on Cohort on 23rd July 2021
	Numbers	Numbers	Numbers	Numbers	Numbers	%	%	Numbers	%
Po Statutory School Age CLA	KS1	18	13	9	9	69%	69%	12	67%
	KS2	59	45	31	34	69%	76%	47	80%
	KS3	63	39	28	26	72%	67%	38	60%
	KS4	74	33	23	23	70%	70%	44	59%
	In borough	134	76	52	52	68%	68%	86	64%
	Out borough	85	57	42	43	74%	75%	61	72%
	EHCP	83	50	32	34	64%	68%	54	65%
	SEN (not EHCP)	11	9	7	6	78%	67%	5	45%
	No SEN	126	74	55	55	74%	74%	88	70%
	All Pupils	220	133	94	95	71%	71%	147	67%
Post 16	55	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22	40%	

3.3.3 COVID has undoubtedly had an impact on progress. Firstly, schools have struggled to accurately assess pupils, and, secondly, most pupils have lost some learning time over the year despite many managing the online learning very well. This has meant that in English and Maths 71% of pupils made expected progress in the summer term compared with 82% last year. We are carefully monitoring pupils and putting in interventions such as one to one tuition where appropriate. Schools also have a range of “catch up” interventions and we are ensuring our young people can access these where needed.

3.3.4 Key Stage 1 Summer 2021 (7-year-olds)

Key Stage 1 SATS were cancelled due to Covid. However, 67% of children in Key Stage 1 were making expected progress during the summer term. It is not surprising that then Key stage 1 data has one of the lower percentage of children making progress. In general, these children are new in care and have not yet had the time to catch up from the missed opportunities and education that their previous experience has invariably led to.

3.3.5 Key Stage 2 Summer 2021 (11-year-olds)

Key Stage 2 SATS were cancelled due to Covid. However, 80% of Key Stage 2 pupils were making at least expected progress during the summer term. All year 6 pupils had a quality transition planning process, and all started in a secondary school place in September.

3.4. Key Stage 4 Outcomes 2021

3.4.1 51 children in care ended year 11 in August 2021. Of these, **28** had been continuously looked after on roll in year 11 for at least 12 months (to 31st March 2021) and these pupils form the **reporting cohort**.

3.4.2 The lockdown meant that GCSE exams were cancelled. Grades were instead assessed by teachers based on the evidence they had collected through mock exams and other assessments that had been done throughout the year. Teachers then gave their best prediction of how the

young person would have performed in the exam. Our children were assessed fairly, and all achieved the grades they, and we, were expecting.

3.4.3 31% of the reporting cohort achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 4 and above including English and Maths. 36% achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or above. 62% of pupils achieved at least one GCSE. 14 pupils gained Maths and English level 4+.

3.4.4 The table below shows GCSE outcomes in 2021 with historical context.

N.B. it should be noted that national reporting is based on the number of CLA on roll in year 11.

	2021 Reporting cohort of 39 pupils	2020 Reporting cohort of 28 pupils	2019 Reporting cohort of 31 pupils	2018 Reporting Cohort of 20 pupils	2017 Reporting Cohort of 19 pupils
5 at grade 4 and above incl. English and Maths	31% (12 pupils)	21% (6 pupils)	29% (9 pupils)	15% (3 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)
5 at grade 4 and above	36% (14 pupils)	25% (7 pupils)	29% (9 pupils)	20% (4 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)
5 GCSEs	46% (18 pupils)	46% 13 pupils	45% 18 pupils	65% (13 pupils)	47% (9 pupils)
1 GCSE	64% (25 pupils)	71% (20 pupils)	58% (18 pupils)	80% (16 pupils)	84% (16 pupils)
% cohort with SEND	56% (22 pupils)	61% (17 pupils)			
% cohort with EHCP	38% (15 pupils)	43% (12 pupils)			
% cohort in borough	39% (28 pupils)	50% (14 pupils)			
% cohort in care 1-2 years	23% (9 pupils)	18% (5 pupils)			
% cohort 2-5 years in care	36% (14 pupils)	36% (10 pupils)			
% cohort 5 years +	41% (16 pupils)	46% (13 pupils)			
% in mainstream provision	72% (28 pupils)	61% (17 pupils)			
% special provision	15% (6 pupils)	7% (2 pupils)			
% alternative provision	13% (5 pupils)	18% (6 pupils)			

3.4.5 GCSE exams were once again cancelled and young people were awarded their grades through a process of teacher assessment. This was a very stringent process. The results for our young people were pleasing this year and most of our young people who were entered for GCSE and BTEC exams achieved the grades that they were predicted.

3.4.6 15 young people in the reporting cohort have an EHC plan. This equates to 38% against a national figure of 37% (all children). A further 7 were receiving additional support in school without recourse to an EHC plan, making a total of 56% with identified special or additional

needs. Children with special educational needs are more likely to be placed in schools outside Bromley even if they live in the borough and those 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.

3.4.7 Within this cohort, young people accessed their education in a variety of settings:

- Mainstream: 72% compared with 61% last year
- Special Schools: 15% compares with 7% last year
- Alternative Provision: 13% compared with 18% in 2019-20.
- No young people had no recorded school compared with 3 last year

3.5. Post-16 Young People

3.5.1 Our vision is that all young people over 16 who are looked after, or care leavers will be engaged in education, employment, or training (EET) commensurate with their ability and aspirations and be making significant progress towards recognised career ambitions.

3.5.2 The academic year 2020/21 has seen a continued focus on transition at 16+ years old and improving the quality of post-16 PEPs. We are embedding the use of PEPs beyond 18 for those still completing Key stage 5 education where young people wish to continue receiving support. The Virtual School is part of the EET Strategy Group, sitting on the EET panel.

3.5.3 Once again we used our successful partners “Fresh Start in Education” during the spring and summer terms and provided intensive independent careers advice and guidance support to year 11 students making choices about post-16 progression. 92% of CLA started year 12 with a secure place in a sixth form or college in September 2021. This is a 20% increase in the last 4 years. Of the 16 (most likely to be NEET) who engaged with “Fresh Start” over the summer, 14 are still in their college place as of November 2021.

3.5.4 We work closely with the CLA and care leavers service to ensure that any young person who is NEET has every opportunity and support to re-engage in education and training. The Virtual School contribute to the EET strategy and post 16 advisors attend the EET panel. Being part of the panel has improved the working together practice and this has resulted in improved EET figures at post 16 and beyond.

3.5.5 In the Ofsted Report of 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.”

3.5.6 In total in 2020/21 we had a total of 24 enrolled in higher education L4+ courses, compared with 22 last year. We have 8 care leavers who have started an undergraduate course in 2021. We are exceptionally proud of them for continuing with their studies.

3.5.7 KS5 Outcomes Table

The table at 3.5.9. shows what a complex range of learning abilities and stages are associated with our older cohorts. A much higher number of young people have SEND and 39% have an EHCP.

3.5.8 The table does not represent the final tally of level 1, 2, or level 3 qualifications that will be achieved by these young people. A few 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.

3.5.9 The table shows qualifications gained at the end of 2020/21 by our reporting cohort of year 13 students.

	2021 Reporting cohort of 28 pupils	2020 Reporting cohort of 28 pupils
% attaining L1	39% (11 pupils)	14% (4 pupils)
% attaining L2	36% (10 pupils)	25% (7 pupils)
% attaining Level 3	25% (7 pupils)	7% (2 pupils)
% SEND	43% (12 pupil)	28% (10 pupils)
% EHCP	39% (11 pupils)	21% (6 pupils)
% EET	61% (17 pupils)	68% (19 pupils)
% in care 1-2 y	14% (4 pupil)	39% (11 pupils)
% in care 2-5 y	43% (12 pupils)	36% (10 pupils)
% in care 5 y +	43% (12 pupils)	7% (2 pupils)
UASC	4% (1 pupil)	43% (12 pupils)

3.5.10 Case study: NEET to EET

Child A had been disengaged from education in Key Stage 4. He had been encouraged to make applications to post 16 courses. We found he had missed his interview with his chosen college. Our post 16 advisor contacted the college and persuaded them to offer another interview. Following support, he was successful at interview and started college at the end of September. Regular contact with the college and his carers at his placement and the young person was kept up to ensure he was settling well and that there was a good plan to support him in college. Because of the close monitoring we were alerted when his attendance started to drop off. The college policy is to withdraw a student's place if attendance drops too low without good reason, and he was in danger of this. However, our advisor advocated for him ensuring they knew how challenging his circumstances were and further support was put in place to support him. Our young person not only passed his course but has decided to stay at the college to study another course. He still struggles with his attendance from time to time, but he now has a strong network of professionals both in the college and in the local authority who are clear about his needs and work together to overcome any obstacles as they arise.

3.6. Regular Attendance at School

- 3.6.1 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 CLA, and academic achievement is the key to a successful and productive adult life and breaking the cycle of neglect and life in care.
- 3.6.2 The Virtual School utilises a service provided by “Welfare Call” to monitor attendance at school and alternative provisions daily by an individual phone call to check every child is at school. The carer is contacted if there is an unauthorised absence, and the allocated Social Worker is notified. Attendance reports are reviewed at weekly Virtual School team meetings, identifying children at risk, and appropriate strategies discussed with the network. Due to COVID19 and lockdown we are not able to benchmark attendance or compare in the same way to previous years.
- 3.6.3 The table below shows attendance from September 2020 to 22nd June 2021. CLA were classified under the Vulnerable children cohort during the periods of Covid lockdown. When absent from school (even if working from home) they were marked as absent, this therefore did not reflect well on their attendance. Welfare Call have supplied the analysis for CLA below if they are shown as absent during the lockdown in Spring 2021 and if they were not shown as absent during the Spring lockdown (when working from home), this was a one-off manual task for Welfare Call and unfortunately were not able to redo for the full academic year 20/21 at the end of July.

<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Sept – 22nd June 2020-2021 (including spring lockdown as absence)</i>	<i>Sept – 22nd June 2021 - academic year 2020-2021 (not counting children working from home in Spring lockdown as absent)</i>
Number of CYP 5-16 as at 22/06/21 excluding new to care	215	215
All CYP - (5-16)	82.7%	93.3%
Primary	89.3%	97.6%
Secondary	78.8%	90.7%
KS1	89.1%	96.7%
KS2	89.5%	97.9%
KS3	85.9%	96.2%
KS4	73.2%	86.1%
School in borough	83.3%	93.4%
School out of borough	84.1%	93.2%
SEND without an EHCP	83.0%	96.9%
EHCP	87.5%	94.3%
Unauthorised Absence	1.6%	1.8%
Persistent absence	54.9%	25.1%

- 3.6.4 Overall attendance for younger children remains excellent, with primary age children average attendance at 97.6%. Persistent absence was 25.1% for all CLA in 2018/19 which is more

comparable with the academic year 2020/21 which again remains at 25.1%. As in previous years the majority of CLA falls within the Secondary age pupils (94%), in addition a few pupils identified as Persistent absentees are also subject to an EHC plan (26%)

- 3.6.5 Once again there is a correlation between those who are late into care and have experienced multiple placement and school changes. For some of those children there was too long a delay in securing a suitable new school. This related to the placement planning issues referred to. Where children are out of school tuition will be organised on site. Persistent absence is usually a result of refusal to engage with education. This is often relating to young people coming into care as teenagers where they are already disengaged from education.
- 3.6.6 Alternative provision is now put in place more rapidly than has previously been the case when a child is moved in an emergency. This is often in the shape of one-to-one tuition. The Virtual School has managed to substantially increase the number of tuition providers on its dynamic purchasing system. Work started last year on a new policy and process on improving the timeliness and quality of tuition. This work has been co-ordinated by our graduate trainee.
- 3.6.7 Schools closed between 4th January and 6th March 2021. However, many schools had sent their children home before the Christmas holiday because of staff shortages or sheer numbers of covid cases. The DfE required schools to provide in school provision for vulnerable children. They required all looked-after children to be in school and said they should be marked as “C” if we decided that a child should learn at home rather than go into school. It’s important to be clear that the curriculum received by vulnerable children going into school in almost all cases was the same as the curriculum provided to those at home: most schools provided a supervised space for children to access online lessons.
- 3.6.8 As in the previous lockdown we reviewed each child’s case and made sure that if they needed to be in school that was facilitated. There were a few cases where this was difficult if there were other clinically vulnerable children or adults at home. However, most children where it was felt the child would benefit to be in school did go into school. Although still learning online they were able access the support of teaching staff if they need that support.
- 3.6.9 A significant cohort of young people did not want to take up the offer of learning in school. Most of these young people felt that they were able to access the online learning as well as their non-looked-after peers. They did not want the stigma of being seen to be a “vulnerable child”. For some young people who had a long journey on public transport the negatives of the journey and risk did not outweigh any small benefits of being in school completing the work. These young people were monitored by the virtual school and the plan to support each child captured in their PEP.
- 3.6.10 Lower attendance to previous years is therefore explained by extra periods of illness or isolation due to those affected by COVID, as well as the large number of children marked “absent” despite all professionals including the school agreeing the best place for the child to learn would be from home.

3.7. Exclusions

3.7.1 There have been NO permanent exclusions of looked-after children in 2020-21.

3.7.2 Fixed term exclusions (suspensions)

	2018-19 total	2019-20* total	2020-21 total
No of children with FTE	17	18	23
No of days FTE	123	70	92.5

3.7.3 In the academic year 2020/21 there were 23 young people who were subject to a fixed term exclusion from school, equating to 92.5 days lost from school and 41 separate episodes. In 2019/20 18 young people had a fixed term exclusion and this represented a total of 70 lost days from school which is not comparable with the academic year 2020/21 when there were fewer in school days due to Covid. In 2018/19 there were 25 young people who had a fixed term exclusion from school. This totalled 123 lost days of school and 54 episodes. This data suggests there are fewer re-occurring episodes of fixed exclusions from school. When a fixed term exclusion occurs, prevention strategies are put in place to ensure the young person is supported and behaviour can improve.

The pandemic has without a doubt had an impact on our children's ability to regulate in school. We saw a cluster of exclusions in the weeks following the return to school after each lockdown. With each notification we are working with schools and the network to support the young people to ensure that there is no re-occurrence of the behaviour than led to the exclusion. New process and practice and the slightly increased capacity has meant that when an exclusion takes place action can be swiftly taken to getting a new plan in place with the network to prevent re-occurrence.

3.8. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

3.8.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to maintain PEPs 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.

3.8.2 The table below shows number of PEPs against eligible CLA through the academic year.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Autumn Term	Cohort	205	188	197
	Completed	94%	89%	89%
	Authorised	80%	77%	85%
Spring Term	Cohort	216	207	188
	Completed	78%	85%	91%
	Authorised	31%	93%	97%
Summer Term	Cohort	210	223	219
	Completed	96%	90%	92%
	Authorised	90%	88%	98%

Autumn 2018/19 data from Virtual School dataset and cohort is of all statutory school aged children spring 2018/19 onwards CLA PEP report from CareFirst and those statutory school aged children looked after for 28+ days.

3.8.3 The table below shows multiple PEPs against number of eligible CLA through the academic year.

2020/21	2 <i>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</i>	3 <i>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</i>
<i>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</i>	92% (194 of 211)	77% (162 of 211)

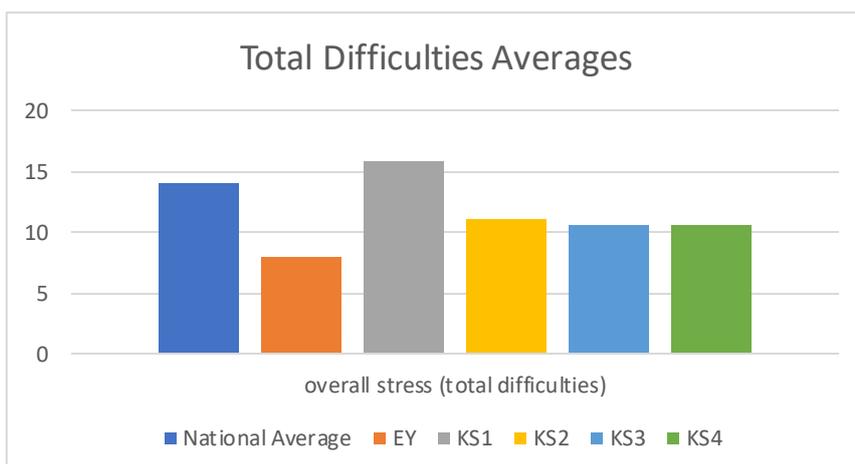
Cohort is of statutory school aged children continuously looked after for 12+ months as of 1st March 2021 and those still looked after at the end of July 2021.

3.8.4 PEP compliance has been improving over the last couple of years and records show that, although there are still a small number of PEP meetings that do not get recorded each term, almost all CLA in year groups R-13 had 2 or more PEPs completed on the system and authorised during the academic year. 77% of young people had their PEPs reviewed 3 times.

3.8.5 There has been a sustained improvement in the quality of PEPs over the year. The work of the Quality Assurance officer combined with advisors authorising all PEPs for their cohort and with regular fortnightly audits by the Headteacher has meant that we have seen improvement in the quality of targets and the use of pupil premium as well as the child and young person's voice.

3.8.6 For the first time we have included Strength and Difficulty questionnaires (SDQ) in the PEP. This is in addition to the SDQ generally completed by the foster carer. This took place in the spring term PEP and going forward this will be an annual expectation. We were successful in ensuring that 75% of the cohort had an SDQ completed by a member of staff and embedded in their PEP. Guidance was issued to designated teachers in schools and we offered targeted support to staff who were struggling. Where issues emerged from the SDQ, a discussion could take place at the PEP meeting to consider next steps, e.g., further assessment or interventions which meant that the pupil premium could be targeted where it was needed. In 2021/22 we need to ensure more of these discussions are captured in the PEP write up.

3.8.7 The chart below shows the overall findings. The overall stress score for the cohort was 11.3, lower than the national average of 14.1 and very similar to the score generated by the foster carer SDQ's at 11.02. The age group with the highest scores were Key stage 1, although this is partly explained by the much smaller cohort with several children new in care who display higher levels of distress. It was these very children where this screening tool proved very useful for discussion in the school to consider appropriate next steps at the PEP meeting.



3.8.6 Training sessions on PEPs were offered and delivered to Social Workers; both new staff and those who needed a refresh. Bespoke team training was also delivered.

3.8.10 Case study to show good multiagency work:

Prior to becoming CLA, Child B, who was supported by an EHCP, was struggling at their local secondary school. The school and SEND had agreed that the school was no longer able to meet their needs. Prior to Virtual School becoming involved over 10 schools/educational provisions had been consulted, over several months. All schools stated that they were unable to meet the presenting needs of the young person.

Once in care, the Virtual School were able to identify the issue. We consulted colleagues and the EHCP was updated to reflect the child's current needs.

The VS was able to bring all the professionals together including CAMHS and our EP to make the adjustments needed. We then re contacted a school that we have excellent relationships with, a school that had initially refused the child. We were able to discuss all concerns and behaviours and what the child was like in school. We were able to reassure the school that their school was a good fit for this young person. Following this, the school were able to invite the young person in for a 2-day taster and they started soon after. Child B has had a very successful start to this school, and we are hoping they will go from strength to strength.

3.8.11 Planning for Children with Special Educational Needs

The Deputy of the Virtual School is our SEND lead. Close joined up work with the SEND team has developed this year, meeting regularly to look at complex cases and ensure timeliness of plans and reducing time out of school for children who need a new provision.

3.8.12 An audit took place of children with EHCP. 31 out of 102 children's cases were looked at, with 11 social workers. Interviews took place with the social workers and their EHCPs were scrutinised. Out of 31 files, 20 were of very good quality. 11 needed some adjustments, some were missing pieces of information, for example health input. Some were draft plans and need the final plan confirmed.

The social workers felt that plans reflected the current needs of their young people were confident attending annual reviews, although they appreciated the Virtual School attending and that they felt that was helpful. There was less certainty about the procedure for transitions between Key Stages and the Year 9 preparing for adulthood review. These were not always carried out within the correct timescales.

3.8.13 As a result of the EHCP audit several actions are underway:

- The Virtual School will attend as many annual reviews as possible with social workers this year
- The VS will ensure that all social workers have an up to date and final copy of the EHCP
- SEND Lead for the Virtual School is now a member of the multiagency group within the borough that is currently quality assuring EHCP
- Transition planning is to be written into the annual calendar for the SEND joined up meetings

3.9. Pupil Premium Plus Funding for CLA Financial Year 20120/21

3.9.1 The Purpose of Pupil Premium Plus

Children who have been in local authority care for 1 day or more attracted £2,345 of Pupil Premium funding in the financial year 2020/2021. 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 Headteacher to distribute funding. Funding should support children to meet their targets in the PEP.

3.9.2 In 2020-21 we amended the process by which the pupil premium was distributed to schools to improve impact and reduce administration. This is linked to our “pupil progress days” where we check the progress data each term of all children on our roll. If children are making progress and there is a good quality PEP on the system, we automatically allocate £400 for that term. If the child is not making progress or the PEP is not on the system further scrutiny is needed, the PEP chased or amended, or more clarity on what interventions will be put in place to help the child meet their targets. A few initial payments of the full allocation of £2,345 or more were made where the Virtual School team was aware that schools were already funding expensive resources for children. If a child needs a higher level of funding due to individual circumstances, then this is discussed through the PEP and allocated at the end of each term.

3.9.3 All allocations are therefore now termly, making evaluation of impact on the child more responsive. It also means that school changes are dealt with and new schools automatically get the money for the term the child starts to attend.

3.9.5 Centrally Held Funding

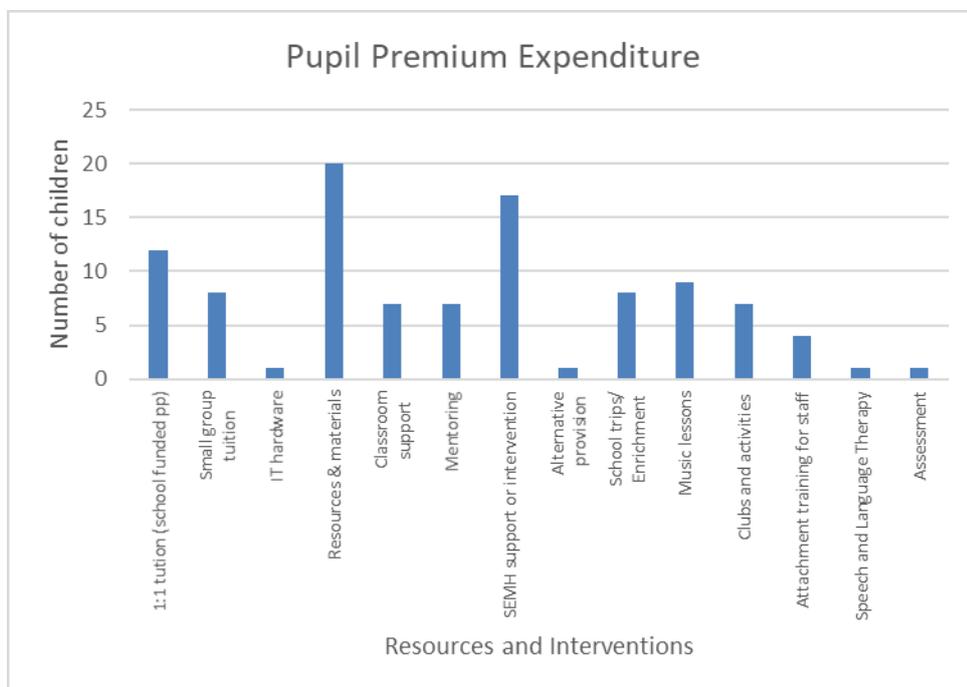
The principle of withholding an element of each child’s funding enables us to provide necessary interventions for the right child at the right time, ensure that we have good quality targets for each child and that the pupil premium is being used to help the child meet these targets. It also enables us to put in interventions that are managed by the Virtual School when school is unable to provide what is needed.

3.9.6 In the financial year 2020/21, withheld funding was used for the following:

- Two 0.2 FTE Education Psychologists 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 who reviews all PEPs to ensure that personal education planning is robust, offering support and training to Social Workers and Designated Teachers.
- 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, for example during a fixed term exclusion.
- Year 11 Transition Project with “Fresh Start”.
- Laptops, tablets, and software for our CLA.
- Whole school training on attachment awareness and emotion coaching for schools that wish to participate.
- Training for Designated Teachers, Headteachers, and 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.

3.9.8 The chart below shows use of Pupil Premium Plus funding delegated to schools.



3.9.10 Pupil Premium Case Study Example: supporting young people with centrally held funds.

Child C was a Year 11 student in an out of borough SEN secondary school. There were growing concerns about increasing impulsive and aggressive behaviours towards staff. Following a serious incident at school an emergency EHCP review meeting was held. It was agreed that the school were unable to meet his needs. The Virtual School worked closely with the out of borough SEN authority and our EP (paid for by centrally held funds) to plan provision and we undertook school suitability assessments with two identified schools. This was incredibly difficult due to the child needing a school placement just for the last 4 months of statutory age schooling. However, a school was located, planning meetings were held, and pupil premium was agreed to support intensive tuition alongside the curriculum. The young person was able to leave school with grade five in Maths, and grade four in English and move on to their first-choice course Post 16.

3.10. Children Previously Looked After and all children with a social worker

3.10.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed significant new statutory duties on the role of the Virtual School Headteacher, 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.

3.10.3 We have used the new duties grant to put in a post which has 2 days a week dedicated to it. Responding to schools and adoptive or Special Guardian parents 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. In addition, enquiries

from admissions and SEND regarding these children are also adding to the resources needed. With the new duties this role has now been linked with the CIN and CP children meaning we have a new deputy role from September that will oversee primary age children, and “all children with a social worker”

3.10.4 In June 2021 new guidance was issued expecting virtual Schools to take on a new role from September 2021 “promoting the education of all children with a social worker”. We have been given grant funding to carry out this work. With that in mind we have been preparing for this work and have created two new roles: A Deputy for “Vulnerable Children” and a new advisor role. Each of these roles will work with early years and primary age children (most likely to be adopted or move to an SGO) as well as previously looked after children and vulnerable children. A baseline analysis of CIN / CP data is planned, an action plan will be created, and work will start as soon as we have appointed staff.

3.11.1. Evaluating the success of 2020/21

3.11.2 Challenge 1: Improve persistent absence for statutory age children

Persistent absence has not reduced - we were hoping to reduce by half the PA but because of the effect of COVID on attendance that has not been possible. However, our oversight on children’s attendance has improved – COVID absence was constantly monitored by a single member of staff and monthly attendance planning meetings take place with the whole team. Welfare Call have supported us to ensure we have the reporting that we need to keep a tight rein on all attendance matters and we have the structures in place to tackle issues quickly. Fixed term exclusions also affect attendance and we have had a drive on reducing exclusions. This has not yet paid off in terms of number of exclusions, but we have kept down the number of days that children have been out of school for by challenging schools to look at alternatives such as internal exclusion.

Placement planning has improved – we have established presence on both permanence and placement panel which means there is a clear message to social care staff around planning for education whilst planning for placement change. There are still issues when children come in to care in an emergency. This is often due to communication through the changeover of social worker that takes place as children move through the services. Training needs to take place with staff working at the front door to ensure that education issues are considered as much as is reasonably possible.

3.11.3 Challenge 2: Improving outcomes for children with SEND

Joined up meetings with SEND take place monthly to forward plan and proactively plan for placement changes, school changes, and for COVID19 related issues. This has enabled assessments and finalising of plans to happen more quickly. However there has been a delay in getting the single point of contact staff member in SEND so the impact of these meetings will improve further next year when we now have single points of contact for each SEND team and attendance from HOS CLA as well as moving to tracked action minutes for each case and a planned annual agenda to enable pro-active planning.

We have started to plan for the join up of EHCP reviews and PEPs, contributing to the guidance / training given out to schools by SEND.

An audit of EHCPs took place over the year which involved meeting with all social workers to look at quality of plans, process, and practice and to ensure we have dates for the following review in place.

The deputy with responsibility for SEND has been part of the SEND multiagency audit.

Our EP service has been well developed to include regular monthly consultation sessions for the whole VS staff as well as EP's completing assessment and advisory work. This has also contributed to plans being updated or issued more quickly and with improved quality.

3.11.4 Challenge 3: Improving outcomes through supporting the transition into care, to new placements, and out of care to adulthood

The new in care policy has been developed and agreed with all staff in the team. Once we are aware of a child coming into care, we move quickly to establish their educational strengths and needs and get a quality PEP in place. We need to continue to raise awareness with social care colleagues to ensure they are working with us from the very first moment the child enters care to ensure that young people's education is well supported.

School changes at normal transition points have improved hugely and all year 6 children had an identified school place and started on the first day in year 7. In year transitions are greatly improved and this work has led to 95% of our children being in good or better schools. Any children who are not in a good or better school have a careful review of their placement to ensure that it is the right setting for them.

Post 16 PEPs for those over 18 but still completing their post 16 courses are well embedded now and monitored by the Post 16 education advisor.

The post CLA advisor has developed the role well and has set up good multiagency links to support parents and young people who are adopted or on an SGO and are struggling with their education.

3.11.5 Challenge 4: Improve quality of PEPs, particularly better target setting, use of SDQ's and more accountability for Pupil Premium

The SDQ was successfully introduced in 2020-21. 75% of our children who are of statutory age had this completed by their teachers and embedded in their PEP. For many children this became a focus of discussion and a link to future actions and use of the Pupil premium plus. Next steps are to increase the compliance on this and develop the use of the scores, ensuring all are discussed in the meeting.

In addition to the quality assurance provided by our quality assurance officers, education advisors also assure each PEP when they are authorising PEPs. The Virtual head also audits around 6-8 PEPs a fortnight when children are presented at permanence panel. This has meant that the quality of PEPs has improved significantly, especially in the use of pupil premium. Pupil voice has also improved.

Training was delivered to cohorts of social workers and all AYSE's now have training on PEPS and education as part of their induction programme. Designated teachers training was delivered to 18 of those new to role and as a refresher to current staff.

One to one tuition is a significant part of the use of pupil premium and a common action coming from PEPs. The graduate intern has been tasked with the project of improving the timeliness and quality and has built in a process for checking tuition is in place and that tutors are meeting children's needs.

Recruiting to the new secondary post in March increased capacity. Children in key stage 3 and 4 can have the most challenging needs and are at the most critical stage of their education. Caseloads were too high before. The new postholder is really experienced and hit the ground running. The two advisors are now able to have a better oversight of these young people, attending more PEPs, having more capacity to support with behaviour and learning issues and school placement moves. Importantly in the post covid world staff can pick up on COVID issues through authorisation and support with these.

The countdown to the CareFirst shutdown was managed very well and despite this shutting down 3 weeks before the end of term we managed to achieve 92% compliance. However, since moving to liquid logic, social workers have struggled to open PEPs as it is linked to a workflow system

with many approval points in it. We are seeking to detach the PEP from this workflow system, but autumn term compliance rates will be affected.

3.2 Challenges for 2021-22

3.21 Attainment and progress

- Improving overall progress %
- Maximise numbers going to HE
- Improve post 16 EET figures
- Increase % of those in Key stage 4 accessing one to one tuition

3.22 Improve attendance and behaviour of all young people.

- To reduce PA by half of stat age children.
- To reduce exclusions
- To improve EET figures for post 16.
- To increase the number of schools who have received whole staff attachment and trauma training

3.23 Improving transitions into care, to new placements, to new schools and out of care to adulthood.

- Over 90% of children in good or outstanding school provisions.
- Reduce the number of school changes
- Develop training for social workers of all vulnerable children
- Secondary school places all approved before deadline
- All year 12's have destination and start a post 16 placement in September

3.24 Improve quality of PEPs: particularly better target setting, use of SDQ's and more accountability for pupil premium.

- SDQ return at least 80% in first term
- Develop rag rating for quality of aspects of the PEP

3.25 Leadership and learning

- Improved outcomes for CIN/CP children
- Improved outcomes for SEND children
- Improved wellbeing for staff and young people

4 IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

See Section 2.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy Implications, Financial Implications, Personnel Implications, Legal Implications, Procurement Implications
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