HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	21st October 2021
Title:	Annual Report of the Virtual School Head 2021
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose is to deliver the annual report of the Virtual School Headteacher in Hampshire.

Recommendation(s)

2. The Corporate Parenting Board note and agree the contents of this report.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to review the educational outcomes and experiences of our children and young people in care and to set out the priorities and strategies for improvement for the Virtual School and key partners. This is in line with the statutory duty on the local authority to promote the educational achievement of our care experienced children.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. **Equality Duty**

   The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

   - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);

   - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

   - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

   Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

   - The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

   - Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

   - Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionally low.

2. **Equalities Impact Assessment:** The work led by the Virtual School is contributing to improved educational outcomes and experiences of Hampshire's children and young people in care.

Education and Inclusion Branch Management   **Item No:**

Insert Date 8ᵗʰ June 2021

Insert Report title: Hampshire Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021

Children in the care of the Hampshire

Report for the Director of Children's Services

Nicola Blake Nicola.Blake@hants.gov.uk

VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT (HAMPSHIRE) 2021 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the Virtual School's work and focus during the academic year 2019-2020, together with an analysis of educational outcomes, where published, for Hampshire's cohort of children in care. It sets out the priorities for securing improved individual and cohort progress, educational experiences, and outcomes for children in the care of Hampshire. In March 2020, schools were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the result of this national school closure was the cancellation of formal examinations for KS4 and KS5 and the cancellation of KS1 and KS2 assessments. Therefore, this report will not detail outcomes in some key stages due to the absence of available data.

THE ROLE OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

☐ The Virtual School Head discharges the local authority's corporate parent role as the educational advocate for children in care, as parents are for other children.

☐ Virtual Schools proactively work with others to create a culture of high expectation and aspiration around children in care and previously looked after children. Improving educational outcomes is a collective responsibility across the local authority.

☐ The Virtual School continues to actively raise awareness of our shared statutory responsibilities to prioritise the education of children in care in Hampshire.

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPS)

☐ Following PEP audits each term during 2019-20, actions to improve the PEP process and effectiveness have been implemented

☐ Together with schools, social workers, and carers, we have improved the quality of PEPs through comprehensive training

☐ The Virtual School's PEP Toolkit is a needs analysis resource highly valued by schools

☐ The Virtual School supported the implementation of online PEPs during Covid-19. Training and guidance were provided to all designated teachers. The requirements and expectations around completion and timeliness of PEPs remained in place during this period.

PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

☐ The Virtual School provides an annual report to Schools Forum around the use and impact of pupil premium plus. Arrangements are reviewed annually depending on the needs analysis of the cohort of children in care.

☐ The report highlights the pupil premium plus funded 'Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools' training programme. There are 72 schools participating in Hampshire.

☐ The Virtual School issued all schools with a top-up funding payment to support the needs of children in care during school closure. Pupil premium plus was also utilised to ensure children and young people had access to resources to support home learning where necessary.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

☐ The cancellation of public examinations in the summer of 2020 resulted in students being awarded the higher of the two grades provided by their teacher and a standardisation algorithm at GCSE. In this report, we have drawn data directly from our own records, as obtained directly from schools, and this has been included with analysis and commentary, where possible. There may be slight differences between this and the published data due to some variance in the DfE process for matching

pupil data. All our outcomes were above the average for children in care nationally and in the Southeast region.

☐ In 2020, 28.1 % of our children achieved the 'basics' measure by achieving at least a grade 4 in maths and English, a notable improvement from 13.7% in 2019. There was an improved performance in individual subject with 31.6% achieving at least a grade 4 in maths and 38.6% in English. Average Attainment 8 score in 2020 for Hampshire children looked after was 21.43.

☐ Priorities going forward include the development of the 'Virtual Pre-school' and extending strong practice from the early years into key stage 1. There will be a focus on children in care with SEN particularly those with SEMH needs across the full cohort, since outcomes across all measures including attendance and exclusion are poorer for this group.

☐ Maintaining school stability is a major factor in improving educational outcomes and reducing persistent absence and fixed term exclusions are integral to this.

THE VIRTUAL COLLEGE AND POST 16

☐ In Hampshire, the Virtual College is well established as the post-16 arm of the Virtual School. As part of the Children's Services post-16 Careers and Participation team, the Virtual College is fully integrated into the wider Hampshire Futures service which supports all young people to participate successfully in formal education and training in Year 12 and 13. Since the inception of the Virtual College post-16 participation for Hampshire children in care has improved, with 87.7% in education, employment, and training in 2020 compared to 85.5% in 2019.

CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER (PLAC)

☐ This is widely regarded as an area of strength in Hampshire. Training has been embedded in our Virtual School offer to ensure our schools are meeting their statutory needs regarding previously looked after children. The EPAC (Education Plan for Adopted Children) has been developed as a high quality and comprehensive tool to support progress for previously looked after children within their education setting.

☐ Following last year's positive feedback, a virtual conference was again arranged with a keynote speaker, Sarah Naish, an adoptive parent, and founder of NATP (National Association of Therapeutic Parenting) delivering to our PLAC parent/carer group.

CONCLUSION

☐ The Virtual School remains committed to removing the inequality in educational outcomes between children in care and the wider population of children. This means working in partnership with the whole system for children across schools, education and inclusion and social care, returning constantly to the question for us as corporate parents – '*would this be good enough for my child?'*

Recommendations

a) **That BMT notes that the absence of formal assessment and use of other assessment methodologies in 2020 due to the Covid 19 outbreak requires a qualitative approach to reporting.**

b) **That the Virtual School's priorities are agreed by BMT to secure further improvements to the educational outcomes of Hampshire's children in care.**

c) **That further dissemination of the report is identified and agreed**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To outline and analyse the end of key stage achievement of all children and young people, from early years to 18 in the care of Hampshire County Council (academic year 2019-20) in the context of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic locally and nationally.

1.2. To set out the priorities for improving the effectiveness and impact of the Virtual School so that, together with schools, settings, and post-16 providers, we secure greater individual and cohort progress, better educational experiences, and better outcomes for Hampshire's children in care.

1.3. To review the impact of strategies to improve the educational achievement and learning of children in our care and highlight key areas for further improvement.

1.4. To celebrate the achievements of children in our care and show how their voice is beginning to shape the services provided.

2. Context

2.1. The Virtual School sits within the Education and Inclusion Branch but works closely with the Children and Families branch of Hampshire Children's Services Department (CSD) and the Access, Resources and Business Development Branch, in relation to data, information, and admissions

2.2. The Executive Head Teacher is responsible for the Virtual Schools in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Close working relationships are nurtured with all other services, including SEND, Early Years Advisory Team, Hampshire Futures, and wider health services.

2.3. The Virtual School's role and remit may be seen in the current Virtual School brochure http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/VirtualSchoolBrochure.pdf

2.4. The Virtual School in Hampshire is small in relation to the size of cohort. Therefore, ensuring that all teams prioritise this group of children and building capacity across schools and the wider children's workforce is a key component in our strategy to improve educational outcomes.

2.5. Accurate information is maintained on how children in our care are progressing in their education. The Virtual School intervenes when a child or young person in Hampshire's care is not achieving as well as they can. We provide training and information for schools, foster carers, and social workers. Furthermore, the Virtual School ensures resources, including the pupil premium plus, are distributed effectively and monitors the impact on the educational experiences and achievements of children in care.

2.6. The 2019 inspection of Hampshire Children's Services recognised that, '*the well-regarded virtual school is ambitious for children in care, proactively supporting children to do as well as they can at school'.*

2.7. Since the last VSH annual report, services and processes have been further streamlined and improved, so that children, schools, and other stakeholders experience the same high standards and consistent approaches from the Virtual School.

2.8. Since the introduction of the new duty around children previously looked after (PLAC) in September 2018, the Virtual School's work has developed at pace. The well-established links with the Hampshire's Fostering and Adoption Team have been strengthened and links with Adopt South and other regional partners have been developed.

3. Our aspirations for children and young people looked after

3.1. The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a lead role in promoting the educational achievement of children in its care. However, to meet our aspirational targets, we require all schools, the local authority and partner agencies to share the responsibility and to prioritise their needs as corporate parents.

3.2. Education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievements, with minimum disruption and maximum stability, is central to improving short and long-term outcomes for children in our care. This is strongly reflected in our joint work across schools and services and in our current service plan.

3.3. In line with DfE statutory guidance for local authorities, our aspiration is that all children and young people attend a good or outstanding school which meets their individual needs and have a good school attendance record. We want every child in care to:

- Enjoy their education and become positive and resilient learners who know their own strengths and talents.
- Benefit from the protective factor of being in care and make improved progress and achieve better educational outcomes once they feel stable and secure.
- Be prioritised by schools and services in line with the collective corporate parent duty
- Receive the same support from their foster carers as they would from any good parent.
- Have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive.
- Have stability in their care and education placements.
- Receive good advice and guidance to ensure they can progress into further education, employment, and training and, when appropriate, university.
- Know that their achievement and successes will be celebrated.

4. Reporting arrangements and accountability

4.1. The Virtual School self-evaluates against the overarching Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). It is expected that key priorities are also identified by Hampshire Corporate Parenting Board which scrutinises the work of the Virtual School and holds it to account. The Virtual School Head reports annually to departmental management teams across both Education and Inclusion and Children and Families branches, with regular updates and reports through the year, including within the Inclusion Management Team.

5. Pupil Premium Plus

5.1. In line with the DfE statutory guidance, the Virtual School published a policy document which makes clear the expectations and arrangements in place around pupil premium plus for children looked after.
Pupil Premium Plus and funding | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

5.2. For transparency, the Virtual School Head also reports specifically to Schools Forum on the use and impact of pupil premium plus. Arrangements for distributing the pupil premium plus grant are reviewed annually.

5.3. The Virtual School updated the pupil premium plus policy in 2020 following feedback received during the year from stakeholders and in view of the impact of COVID-19.

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

6.1. The Virtual School uses an internal (non-commercial) Personal Education Plan (PEP) template which has been developed over time. The process is managed by the Virtual School team in collaboration with social care and school-based colleagues.

6.2. In the last two years, the Virtual School has driven forward joint work with designated teachers and social workers to improve the percentage of PEPs completed and submitted to the Virtual School. This focus led to an increase to 79% in autumn term 2019.

6.3. The impact of Covid-19 and the disruption to education planning and delivery have affected the upward trajectory of our compliance data on PEP completion.

6.4. As a Virtual School, we recognise the priority need to improve the compliance and quality of the PEP process, as it is a key tool to drive forward progress for our children and young people. A targeted piece of work is being led by the Transforming Children's Services Team to evaluate the current PEP template, process, and effectiveness with a view to making rapid improvement.

6.5. The Virtual School undertakes a termly audit of PEPs which enables us to quality assure the process and to provide targeted feedback to designated teaches and social workers to improve the quality and specificity of PEPs.

6.6. The PEP audit undertaken in July 2020 focused on 126 PEPs of which 122 were provided with a rating using our Hampshire Virtual School audit tool. It is notable that in this audit, the inclusion of a high-quality action plan was weighted, meaning that any PEP which failed to include this was immediately judged to require development. This was the case with 24 of the PEPs audited. The majority (70.5%) had some characteristics of a good PEP although areas for further development were identified. It is pleasing that in 50 PEPs, the social worker's contribution was judged as excellent.

6.7. The recommendations arising from our PEP audits feed directly into our training programme for designated teachers. This has been strengthened since we have utilised our Moodle platform, which allows for bespoke and specific training to be accessed by practitioners on demand.

6.8. Children in care have access to a wide range of leisure activities, sports, clubs, and recreational pursuits in a similar way to their peers. These needs are considered within their statutory care plan, where their enjoyment and achievement in OOSHL (out of school hours learning) is planned for and reflected. The wider responsibility of county council services to meet the needs of children in care, as part of their corporate parenting role, is increasingly well understood and is a message reinforced by the Virtual School in all training materials

7. The role of the Virtual School during Covid-19 (March 2020 – August 2020)

The work undertaken during Covid-19 lockdowns to promote high levels of attendance by vulnerable groups, including children in care, exemplified the strong partnership working developed between social care, schools and education services in Hampshire. All schools remained open to children in care and those with a social worker. A system was developed to track vulnerable children's attendance which led to timely intervention by social care and the school improvement team. Throughout the pandemic, the attendance rate of children open to social care, including children in care, was well above national levels. The Virtual School has a key role in supporting social workers, carers, designated teachers, and schools to ensure they understand and can meet the specific educational needs of children in care at this time. We are aware of the ongoing and significant challenges. Some

children in care lost valuable time in education away from a formal school setting and many already had gaps in their learning, curriculum knowledge and skill acquisition. Children also required help to rebuild their trust in key adults, regain their sense of belonging and readjust to the routines and stability of school life when they returned.

7.2 **_Strategic Approach_**

During the first Covid-19 school closure, the Virtual School developed its practice, policies, and procedures to ensure key professionals were provided with appropriate guidance, training, and support in a timely way. We provided high quality individualised support and a comprehensive package of training to all involved professionals. The development of our Moodle platform has enabled practitioners to access bespoke guidance on key practice areas. Our partnership working has been critical to this success and enabled more joined up and proactive support to be provided to designated teachers and schools, such as in the development of our transition guide. We are confident that our children and young people in care were provided with appropriate educational provision during this time and that we have been responsive to the training and support needs of our social workers, carers, and schools.

The work of the Virtual School included:

- Developing a Moodle platform to facilitate a 'self-serve' model for practitioners to use flexibly according to their training and support needs. The analytics provided a facility for us to monitor demand and service needs so we could constantly update our training offer.

- Amending our PEP guidance and format to ensure it could be delivered virtually in line with statutory requirements.
- Providing guidance and a format to support schools to continue to contribute to looked after review meetings.
- Providing 'YouTube' training to designated teachers on delivering PEPs.
- Providing 'support and transition guidance' for designated teachers on supporting vulnerable students to move to a new educational setting.
- Developing a 'learning at home guide' for parents and carers that was circulated around the national network by NAVSH (National Association of Virtual School Heads).
- Working in collaboration with HIAS, HIEPS, SEN and the NHS Foundation Trust to produce 'Transition Back to School After Covid-19' guidance which focuses on how to support the emotional well-being of children and young people.
- Working jointly with HIAS to deliver the DfE/DHSC joint training materials on 'Wellbeing for Education Return' to schools and college.
- Maintaining our attendance tracking to include children and young people placed out of county via Welfare Call. This provided us with a clear picture of attendance for all year groups, across all settings,
- Adjusting the budget to allow for additional needs arising from Covid-19 to be considered. School settings can apply for additional pupil premium plus funding to meet the specific needs of children to reduce the impact of school closure and expedite progress.

7.3   *Operational Approach*

The Virtual School worked in close partnership with children's social care, schools, and education to ensure as many children in care as possible were able to attend school during the initial, and subsequent, school closures. By the end of summer term, 69% of children in care were attending school in Hampshire. The remaining children in care were educated remotely during this period with schools ensuring they had access to appropriate learning and resources at home. Hampshire schools continued to offer all children in care a school place during the Easter holidays to ensure that learning and routines were maintained during this period. Children's social care led on the assessment and decision making for each individual child and a risk assessment was undertaken on every child not attending school. During this period, the Virtual School's priority worked included:

- Providing specialist advice and guidance to social workers, carers, and schools to ensure the most appropriate educational provision was in place for each child and young person in line with their risk assessment and learning needs.
- Weekly monitoring and reporting on the attendance data for children in care at schools/PVI settings by Education Officers in the Virtual School
- The Virtual School provided all children in care with additional resources to access education within the first four weeks of school closure. The Virtual School supported social care teams to apply for equipment from the DfE scheme as required.
- Continuing our schedule of corporate parent visits to schools on a virtual basis to discuss the progress of individual children based on concerns arising from data analysis, school rating, PEP quality or inclusive practice within the school.
- Virtual delivery of a bespoke transition planning programme delivered jointly with the Educational Psychology Service providing support to Year 6 children moving to secondary school in September.
- Delivery of scheduled designated teachers' training via Teams which included focus on supporting care experienced young people to return to school.
- The Virtual College maintained contact remotely with all individual young people and their personal advisers to sustain links, to provide support and to proactively plan for the return to college.
- Delivering a lockdown challenge to enable care experienced children and young people to capture and share an image of a piece of work they were proud of (such as art, cookery, or sculpture) to enhance a feeling of connection with key adults and to celebrate creativity and achievement.
- The 'Big Activity Week' in August 2020 provided a week of new experiences, physical activities and fun in Hampshire and was free to all care experienced children in school years 4 – 9 , building on the successful programme in 2019 which had been attended by 76 children and young people.
  Examples of Covid specific activity can be found in Appendix 1.

8.   Summary of performance for the academic year 2019-20

Attainment and progress of cohorts by chronological age

8.1.   A full analysis of published results for the academic year 2018-19 may be viewed in the previous VSH annual report.

8.2.   The following analysis refers to children in care in the 'OC2' or 'published' cohort during 2019-20 academic year. That is children who have been in care for a year or more as of 31st March 2020.

8.3.   Data is drawn from internal Virtual School data collections due to the cancellation of summer examinations and assessments across all key stages.

8.4.   There may be some differences between the internal local authority and verified KS4 dataset, due to rounding and some unmatched data where not all children's results have been included. Where this is the case, it is clearly indicated on the datasets used.

8.5.   Please note that the analysis will rely on qualitative data to draw conclusions.

Outcome for Hampshire's children in care

9.   EYFS results

9.1.   A 'good level of development' or GLD is defined as having achieved the age expected level in Communication and Language (CL), Personal Social Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development (PD) Literacy and Mathematics. In 2019, there was an improvement in outcomes across all measures. In the early years, 51.5% of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) compared with 48% nationally as indicated by NEXUS data.

9.2.   There were no formal assessments in 2019-20 for EYFS due to COVID-19 and therefore we are unable to include formal results in this report.

9.3.   The Year R LAC numbers indicated there were 43 children who has been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2020. Of this cohort, eight were in out of county schools, one had no school place as decelerating was in process and one was decelerated.

9.4.   The Virtual School focused on PSED (personal, social, and emotional development) in EYFS. This became a focus for county moderation and became central to the Year R project funded by the Virtual School. This involved 29 delegates from across 26 schools in Hampshire.

9.5.   There has been an increased focus on close working with the Admissions, Inclusion and Advisory Teams to ensure that information is shared on applications in a timely way and that good schools are identified. Support provided in schools was reviewed so that priority focus could be given to specific PVI settings.

9.6.   The Virtual School agreed a service level agreement with Services for Young Children to ensure expertise and support was provided to this cohort. A strategic group was formed with three advisory teachers. Termly meetings and support work focused on support visits to schools and settings, moderation of PEPs and transition work.

9.7.   Data collected during Autumn Term 2020 indicates that 19 children (39.6% of children with returned PEPs) were working at the expected national level in the term following the end of their EYFS curriculum. This would indicate the need for additional in school support following school closure to expedite progress.

9.8.   The Virtual School provided direct support to children during school closures. This support ranged from ensuring appropriate education provision was in place at a

school site, providing access to technology to assist home learning or to the provision of resources to promote progress.

10. Primary phase

10.1. As identified in the previous VSH annual report, one impact of the current curriculum and assessment methods in place is that there are parts of the curriculum that many children in care, due to the turbulence in their lives, have simply not had time to learn securely by the end of the key stage. This implies that their final scores may reflect the lack of time they have had to learn the content rather than their capabilities.

10.2. This needs to be very carefully considered this year, considering the Covid-19 impact, and given that formal assessment did not take place in 2020. The Virtual School, alongside its national association, is working with OFQUAL to raise awareness of the likely impacts on this cohort of children and will ensure that any findings or recommendations are shared with our schools and colleagues across the Education and Inclusion branch.

11. Key stage 1 performance

11.1. There are no DfE national published outcomes available for children in care at key stage 1 in Hampshire. This includes phonics tests in KS1.

11.2. There were 77 children in the 2019 - 20 cohort in KS1. 47 of the children are classified as OC2 (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2020). Three children were in receipt of an EHCP.

11.3. Data collected during Autumn Term 2020 indicates that 22 children (25.6%of children with returned PEPs) were working at the expected national level in the term following the end of key stage 1.

11.4. The Virtual School will continue to use data to ensure schools and settings prioritise assessment, support, and intervention for children by effective PEP needs analysis and target setting and use of pupil premium plus.

12. Key stage 2 performance

12.1. There are no DfE national published outcomes available for children in care at key stage 2 in Hampshire.

12.2. There were 84 children in the 2019 – 20 cohort in KS2 (Year 6) and 62 were classified as OC2. Fifteen of these children had an EHCP

12.3. A thorough transition support package including bespoke resources and training was implemented to support the young people moving from year 6 to year 7 in 2020. All primary and secondary schools, in and out of county, were offered training and a transition plan was developed for each child.

13.   Key stage 4 performance

The cancellation of public examinations in the summer of 2020 resulted in students being awarded the higher of the two grades provided by their teacher and a standardisation algorithm.

Measure	2019 (OC2 cohort of 124)	2020 (OC2 cohort of 114)
English and maths at 5 or above	4 (3.2%)	18 (15.8%)
English and maths at 4 or above	17 (13.7%)	32 (28.1%)

13.1.   The table above shows the outcomes drawn directly from our own data records as obtained directly from schools. In view of the changed methodology to calculate GCSE results this year, trend comparisons between years should be treated with caution. Historically we know, however, that outcomes improved continuously in Hampshire from 2015 to 2018, rising from 16.7% achieving a grade 4 or above in English and maths in 2016 to 19.1% in 2017 and 21.6% in 2018. The outcomes in 2019 were disappointing (falling to 13.7%) despite improved performance in both maths and English as individual subjects.

13.2.   In 2020, there were significant improvements in GCSE results for our whole cohort of children in care. Of the 114 children who had been looked after continually for at least 12 months, 18 children (15.8%) achieved English and maths at grades 9-5 and 32 (28.1%) at grades 9-4. This compared to 3.2% and 13.7% in 2019 and 6.9% and 21.6% in 2018.

13.3.   The cohort had a significantly higher number of boys (62.3%) and eleven of the young people were UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children).

13.4.   It is notable that of the overall cohort, only 54.3% attended a mainstream school by the end of key stage 2 and most children achieving GCSEs were in this group.

13.5.   In relation to published data, Hampshire's cohort of children in care performed well at key stage 4 in comparison to our statistical neighbours. Of those local authorities who had data published, we had the highest percentage of children achieving the 'basics' 9-5 measure (16.7%) and the second highest percentage score for children achieving the 'basics' 9-4 measure (38.3%). We had a higher number of pupils than all our statistical neighbours (120) with the next largest authority (Hertfordshire) having 91. We had the fourth highest average Attainment 8 score at 22.7. All our outcomes were above the average for children in care nationally and in the Southeast region

13.6.   The virtual school will continue to support the placement and school stability of young people in care to ensure they are supported to remain in mainstream settings wherever this is possible.

Analysis

o There were 114 in the OC2 cohort for Year 11 in 2019 - 20 (in care for one year or more as of 31st March 2020), 10 less than the previous year.

o As of March 2020, 85.1% of our key stage 4 cohort attended schools rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. For our whole OC2 cohort (Year R to Year 11), it was 89.1%. The Virtual School continues to prioritise corporate parent visits to schools with a 'requires improvement' rating to ensure that our children and young people are making good progress in these settings.

o The cancellation of public examinations in the summer of 2020 resulted in students being awarded the higher of the two grades provided by their teacher and a standardisation algorithm. Grades awarded above a 4 rose nationally by 8.9 percentage points in 2020.

14. Factors affecting educational outcomes

14.1. There are several factors which impact on the educational outcomes of children in care. A study by the Rees Centre (Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford) noted that, controlling for all factors, there are several which consistently contribute to low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools. These include the length of time children are in care, the number of changes in placement (with each additional change in placement after age 11 associated with one third of a grade less at GCSE) and the number of school changes (with young people who change school in key stage 4 scoring over five grades less than those who did not). School absence and exclusion are also significant factors as are placement and school type with young people in residential settings, special schools or pupil referral units scoring lower than those with similar characteristics in mainstream schools.

14.2. The Virtual School ensures that these factors inform the practice and priorities of their work as outlined in section 20 of this report. We place significant focus on ensuring, through training, that designated teachers and schools have a better understanding of children's social, emotional and mental health needs to ensure they can be supported to remain in the best mainstream schools wherever possible.

14.3. We monitor attendance and exclusion data for all our children in care to identify young people at risk of non-engagement and to ensure appropriate assessment, intervention and support packages are in place in a timely way where needed.

14.4. The Virtual School also works closely with social work colleagues to ensure that, where placement moves are essential, school moves are avoided especially in the final years of schooling.

14.5. We also ensure that our children and young people are prioritised to attend schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. We ensure that the network around children focus on progress over time in recognition that many children take longer to make significant progress.

14.6. The progress of children in care does, of course, show much variation, which suggests that interventions do need to be tailored to the characteristics and experience of individual children and should be reflected in the needs analysis and actions plans in their PEPS. It is important to remember that children in care will also experience multiple factors simultaneously and will feel the impact of these vulnerabilities in individual ways. It is evident that a number of children

enter care during their secondary school years, 273 in 2019-20, so important that our schools can identify and address gaps in a timely way.

14.7. In 2019-20, it is also evident that school closure arising from Covid-19 had a significant impact on our children and young people.

15. Post-16 The Virtual College

15.1. The Virtual College is the post-16 arm of the Virtual School and supports our care experienced young people on their post-16 journeys. The 2019 inspection of Children's Services commented positively on the contribution made by the Virtual College noting that, 'the recent establishment of a virtual college is beginning to improve the quality of provision for young people aged 16 to 18 years, with emerging evidence'.

15.2. As part of the Children's Services post 16 Careers and Participation team, the Virtual College is fully integrated into the wider RPA (Raising Participation Age) statutory functions supporting all young people to participate successfully in formal education and training in year 12 and 13.

15.3. The Virtual College model uses a robust and wide-ranging dataset to target resources effectively and provides a dedicated 'Education Participation Adviser' to each young person in Hampshire, to support and enable effective transition from year 11, monitor and track their progress and to ensure they sustain their post 16 placement.

15.4. The Virtual College team collected key stage 5 results for August 2020 (see table below) although it should be noted that grades were awarded differently due to the pandemic.

Qualification	Pass	Withdrawn/ Not achieved	Total	Ongoing (To complete 20/21)
Entry Level	11	3	14	8
Level 1	17	5	22	3
Level 2	16	5	21	
Level 3	22	1	23	14
GCSE	2	0	2	
ESOL	2	1	3	1
TOTAL	**70**	**15**	**85**	**26**
	82.35%	*17.64%*	100%	

15.5. Early identification of the most vulnerable young people in years 10 and 11 at transition, based on indicators such as attendance, exclusion, SEN, engagement, and stability has contributed to fewer young people not in education employment and training (NEET), as seen in Table 1 below. As of April 2020, of the 88 young people in care in year 11 resident in Hampshire, 74 had applied for colleges and another 12 planned to access a training provider or

apprenticeship and only two were still undecided or refusing post 16 offers. The Virtual College has established through experience that a high number of interactions is needed with most vulnerable young people in care, before a situation is resolved and moves forward. The work therefore involves several bespoke interventions on an individual basis and is dependent on the quality of relationships, keeping in touch regularly, participation in year 11 PEPs, providing careers advice, progression coaching and linking with post 16 EET (Education, Employment and Training) providers. During the Covid-19 period, the Virtual College has provided support virtually to young people in care to Hampshire, both in and out of county.

15.6. There are effective and robust tracking and monitoring systems for the Hampshire cohort, capturing information on engagement, EET status and participation on a monthly basis. This ensures that no young person is missed out and early college leavers are engaged as early as possible.

15.7. Throughout the period January 2019 to January 2020 the level of activity undertaken by the Virtual College was as follows:

- 605 young people have received Virtual College support

- 7,719 interactions have taken place with young people and/or their related professionals.

- Most significant interactions include guidance interview and professional contacts. Professional contacts include involvement in looked after reviews, personal education plans, pathway plans, EHCPs, contact with social workers and personal advisers. The level of significant interaction activity highlights a) professional relationships and networks between Virtual College and other stakeholders have been consolidated and developed further; b) the nature of Virtual College work requires a high number of interactions before a young person's situation can be resolved or moved forward.

- 683 - Guidance (interviews)

- 4583 - Professional contact

15.8. Young people in England are required to participate in formal education or training until their 18th birthday, under 'Raising of the Participation Age' (RPA) legislation. Therefore, every young person in the Hampshire Virtual College cohort must have an appropriate offer of education or training. Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to support young people aged 16 and 17 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs) to participate in education, and is held to account by the DfE for its performance against this duty on the basis of data collected as part of the September Guarantee (a statutory entitlement to a place of learning for all 16 and 17 year olds), the proportion of young people in education, employment and training (EET) or not (NEET) and the proportion of young people whose activity is unknown. Hampshire Futures delivers the council's RPA statutory duty, including for children in care, as part of the key work of the Virtual College. In 2019, 100% of young people in Virtual College had a positive September Guarantee.

15.9. The proportion of Hampshire young people within the Virtual College cohort who are not in education, employment or training is significantly lower than national average for 16–17-year-old care leavers which was 23.9% in December 2019.

Table 1 2019/2020 destination breakdown by age. Source: Annual average NCCIS monthly DfE data returns							
	EET	EET %	NEET	NEET %	Unknown	Unknown %	Total
Year 12	88	91.7%	7	7.3%	1	1%	96
Year 13	83	83.8%	15	15.2%	1	1%	99
Year 12 & 13 combined	171	87.7%	22	11.3%	2	1.0%	195

15.10. Table 1 illustrates the impact of intensive support and tracking of young people's activity provided by the Virtual College which has resulted in low levels of unknown activity. The level of unknown activity for young people in the Virtual College cohort is consistently lower than the wider Hampshire year 12 and13 Cohort (2% in March 2020). The rate of participation in EET for young people within the Virtual College cohort is higher in year 12 compared with those in year 13. This trend is mirrored across the wider Hampshire year 12 and 13 cohorts.

Table 2 compares the Virtual College destination data Feb 2019 – 2020. Source: NCCIS Monthly DfE data returns							
	EET	EET %	NEET	NEET %	Unknown	Unknown %	Total
Feb 2019 Cohort	196	85.5%	30	13.1%	3	1.3%	229
Feb 2020 Cohort	171	87.7%	22	11.3%	2	1.0	195

15.11. Table 2 shows the impact of the Virtual College upon rates of participation, NEET and unknown activity. Rates of participation in EET increased from 85.5% in 2019 to 87.7% in 2020. The proportion of young people within the Virtual College cohort who were not in education, employment and training decreased from 13.1% in 2019 to 11.3% in 2020. Rates of unknown activity also decreased between 2019 and 2020.

15.12. The Virtual School collects an update from Hampshire and neighbouring local authority colleges annually around their specific offer for children in care, so this is visible to young people and their carers as they make their post 16 choices. The 2021 edition of 'What's Next' is now available online http://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/cic-virtual-college-what-next.pdf

16. Children with SEN

16.1. The Virtual School works closely, and effectively, with Hampshire's SEN team and communicates at an early stage around any changes which may impact on a child or young person's education.

16.2. In the academic year 2019-2020, of the overall cohort of 1205 children in care, 19.7 % (237 children) had a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 8 (0.7%) had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Forty-five children had been the subject of a request or were currently being assessed or awaiting their plans to be finalised (4.4%). There were 915 children (75.9%) with no EHCP.

17. Previously looked after children (PLAC)

17.1. Previously looked after children are those who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship (SGO) or child arrangement (CAO) order.

17.2. DfE statutory guidance requires Virtual Schools to promote the educational achievement of this group of children by providing advice and guidance to those with parental responsibility as well as to schools and services as part of their statutory duty. The DfE provides a time limited grant to support this work and our activities have focused on building capacity and developing an information and resource base which will be stainable once the funding has ceased.

17.3. In Hampshire, the grant has been used to fund a specialist Education Officer focusing on previously looked after children. The post holder has built a wide network of local and regional partners, including Adopt South, and has successfully developed the offer to schools and parents jointly across the region.

17.4. To meet the requirements of the statutory duty, the Virtual School conducted a survey with adoptive parents and guardians across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in March 2019 which generated 356 individual responses and 284 fully completed surveys. Findings have informed the work of the Virtual School and Education Officer in this area and have been shared widely. They can be viewed here. http://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/report-results-plac-survey-2019.pdf

17.5. As a result of the survey, the Virtual School hosted a conference (December 2019) attended by around 80 adoptive parents, guardians, foster carers and connected carers focusing on therapeutic parenting. This success was built upon in 2020 through a webinar hosted by Sarah Naish, adoptive parent, and founder of NATP (National Association of Therapeutic Parenting). The webinar welcomed delegates from across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

17.6. Feedback from this conference was overwhelmingly positive with one delegate stating 'I *feel like I have finally found something that will help me to help these children and meet their needs'*.

17.7. Whilst there is no requirement, or capacity, to provide direct casework, inevitably this has been part of the work, with the post holder supporting a range of queries from parents expressing concerns around individual children, and has proactively signposted them to appropriate services, such as SEN, school transport and the Inclusion Support Service. These queries have also helped shape the resources and information that are being offered centrally to parents via the Virtual School

website and Moodle. This has contributed to a constant flow of information and helped to reduce frustration whilst parents seek the help they need for their children.

18. Attendance

18.1. Attendance reporting was formally suspended by the DfE during the first national lockdown in March 2020. The Virtual School continued to monitor our children in care's attendance during this period. We also collaborated with social care and school-based colleagues to ensure children were accessing school provision where appropriate. The DfE published updated attendance codes to allow for accurate accounting during periods of both bubble and school closures.

18.2. The table below reflects our attendance data for children in care across the last three academic years, 2018 – 2020

Present Category	2020		2019		2018	
	Number of Pupils	% of Pupils	Number of Pupils	% of Pupils	Number of Pupils	% of Pupils
100% Present	136	15.5%	99	11.8%	61	7.7%
95% and above	577	65.6%	579	69.2%	542	68.7%
90% and above	688	78.3%	668	79.8%	635	80.5%
less than 90% Present	183	20.8%	163	19.5%	144	18.3%
Unknown / Not Recorded	8	0.9%	6	0.7%	10	1.3%
Grand Total	879	100.0%	837	100.0%	789	100.0%

18.3. The attendance data included in the above table relates only to pupils who have been in care for at least 12 months as of 31st March 2020. It is pleasing that the percentage of children in this cohort who have achieved 100% attendance has increased from 11.8% to 15.5% which represents 37 more children than the previous year.

18.4. There has however been a slight decrease in the percentage of children achieving over 95% this year (65.6% currently and was 69.2% in 2019). The percentage figure for those persistently absent (attending less than 90%) has also increased slightly (to 20.8% from 19.5% in 2019).There has also been a slight increase in those children with less than 90% attendance (20.8% currently from 19.5% in 2019).

18.5. During the lockdown, attendance was monitored closely to ensure children in care were accessing school provision where possible. Risk assessments were completed by social workers to identify the reasons why a child may or may not be accessing school provision. The attendance of children in care at school slowly rose week on week from March 2020 to July 2020. By the end of summer term, 69% of children in care were attending school in Hampshire and 28% of the children placed and educated out of county. The remaining children in care were educated remotely

during this period with schools ensuring they had access to appropriate learning and resources at home.

18.6. The Virtual School will continue to monitor attendance carefully to ensure that we target children and young people who are at risk of persistence absence. This is especially important in the context of supporting our most vulnerable students to transition back into school following the challenges of Covid-19

19. Exclusion

19.1. No Hampshire child in care was permanently excluded in 2019 – 20 whilst in care.

19.2. During the academic year 2019-20, exclusions were monitored by the Virtual School. 188 young people were subject to exclusion, of which 107 were in the OC2 cohort and in care at the time of the exclusion.

19.3. The majority of exclusions were for secondary age pupils who were subject to exclusion for one day or less. Of the total 482 instances of exclusion, 300 were for one day or less (62.2%) and 38 instances (7.9%) were for five days or more.

19.4. For the OC2 cohort, there were 247 instances of exclusion, 141 were for one day or less (57.08%) and 18 instances (7.28%) were for five days or more. This would suggest that our work with designated teachers and schools is able to be impactful for children who remain in care for a longer period and reflects the increased risk of trauma on behaviour and engagement experienced by children new to care.

20. The Virtual School's approach to improving educational outcomes

20.1. During 2021-22 and beyond, the Hampshire Virtual School and College will consolidate its approach as an 'all through' integrated service with a view to ensuring consistency of approach and promoting collaborative working to improve educational experiences and outcomes. Priorities are summarised below but captured in more detail within the service plan:

20.2. **Raising awareness of corporate parent duty:** The Virtual School will continue to work with a range of teams and services to explore what good corporate parenting looks like in different contexts, raising awareness, developing the evidence base of good practice, and developing increased accountability around the statutory duty, so children in care are consistently prioritised.

20.3. **High quality training and development in relation to designated teachers for children in care:** The quality of bespoke training and support for designated teachers in their statutory role has contributed significantly to the capacity and expertise that exists in our schools in meeting the needs of care experienced children. This core element of the Virtual School's work has featured strongly in recent inspections. Our training offer is wide, from core training using the Hampshire PEP Toolkit, to our Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools and Settings (ATAS) programme, which is being evaluated by the Rees Centre at Oxford University. Designated teachers with Hampshire children on their school roll are senior leaders, in line with DfE statutory guidance. The emphasis going forward is on designated teachers disseminating their knowledge and expertise widely within their school community through training, development, and peer

support. It is expected that approaches, such as emotional coaching will be shared with key members of staff to promote a whole school ethos. As a result, designated teachers can influence what happens in the classroom in real time, supporting colleagues to co-regulate with children who struggle with their emotions, which may de-escalate situations which could result in sanctions, such as a fixed-term exclusion. We will continue to develop our virtual offer to designated teachers and widen use of the Virtual School Moodle.

20.4. **Training and support for foster carers:** The Virtual School is collaborating with colleagues across Hampshire to develop our online training offer for foster carers. Guidance and support are offered on a bespoke basis at present as face-to-face training was suspended due to Covid 19.

20.5. **Early Years:** The partnership with the Advisory Teacher Team within the Early Years Advisory Team (EYAT) has been strengthened, resulting in a joint approach, targeting intervention at those children most vulnerable at point of transition into year R. The focus this year will be to continue to increase the number of children securing a Good Level of Development (GLD) according to teacher assessment. This data will not be formally reported for 20/21. A specific training course for teachers of Year R children will run online in 2021. We hope this will build professional knowledge across settings and schools, around the impact of attachment and trauma on our youngest children and how to best meet their development needs.

20.6. **Key stage 1:** Over the coming year, there will need to be an emphasis on mitigating the impact of Covid 19 in terms of addressing any gaps in the learning and identifying the emotional and developmental needs of the cohort. The Virtual School will draw particularly on the expertise of our EYAT colleagues to help develop approaches which support care experienced children back into school.

20.7. **Key stage 2:** Approaches outlined above will also extend to children in key stage 2. Whilst there will undoubtedly be negative impacts from Covid 19, there is also an opportunity to think creatively and build on the relationships developed during school closures.

20.8. **Key stage 4:** The Virtual School will continue to review the progress and outcomes of care experienced children in year 10 and 11. We are working closely with designated teachers and the SEN team to support our cohort; focusing on ensuring targets within PEPs are SMART and supported by bespoke intervention. We are working closely with the Virtual College to ensure post-16 routes are supported and encouraged for those young people at the end of key stage 4.

20.9. **Key Stage 5:** Together with the Virtual College, we will support foster carers and social workers to provide the right advice and guidance for young people in key stage 4 to succeed in their learning and beyond. This will include ensuring that each young person receives bespoke careers advice and guidance which is flexible enough to withstand unexpected changes in their circumstances.

20.10. **Maintaining school stability:** The Virtual School continues to work closely with social workers and their managers on maintaining school stability. Wherever possible and appropriate, children have continued at their school whilst care placement changes have taken place. This work is underpinned by the Virtual

School's protocol around school provision.
https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/virtual-school/guidance

Conclusion

The Virtual School remains committed to removing the inequality in educational outcomes between children in care and the wider population of children. This means working in partnership with the whole system for children across schools, education and inclusion and social care, returning constantly to the question for us as corporate parents – '*Would this be good enough for my child?'*

Appendix 1

Covid specific activity and resources:

- Lockdown Challenge 2020
- Learning at home guide – attached
- Transition guide – attached
- Training for new designated teachers https://youtu.be/OzK_Tthm_cw

- Transition following Covid-19 https://youtu.be/bgbmwcNbO6Y

- Transition back to school after Covid-19 https://cscommunications.hants.gov.uk/schoolcommunications/details.php?ref=17818