



# **Corporate Parenting Board**

## **Surrey Virtual School Education Report for Children and Young People in Care September 2020**

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**EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN CARE**

## **SURREY VIRTUAL SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 2020**

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### **REPORT PURPOSE**

This report provides an overview of the Virtual School's work and focus for the academic year 2020-21, together with analysis of educational outcomes for Surrey's children in care. It sets out the priorities for securing greater individual and cohort progress, better educational experiences and better outcomes for children going forwards. Please note that due to confidentiality reasons, some information and data has been removed from this report – this is noted in italics where this is the case.

### **OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER**

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. That they: -

- Enjoy their education and become positive and resilient learners who know their strengths and talents.
- Benefit from the protective factor of being in care and begin to make better progress and achieve better educational outcomes once they feel stable and secure.
- Are prioritised across all schools and services in line with our collective corporate parent duty.
- Receive the same support from their carers with their education as they would from a good parent
- Have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive.
- Have stability in care and education placement
- Receive good advice and guidance to ensure they can progress into further employment and training and when appropriate university.

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### **THE ROLE OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL**

- The Virtual School Head discharges the LA'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 looked after and previously looked after, and together, improving educational outcomes.
- The Virtual School continues to actively raise awareness across schools and services of our shared statutory corporate parenting duty to prioritise children looked after and their education.
- Due to significant change in recent years in staffing and leadership we are aware that the Surrey Virtual School has suffered from poor visibility and a lack of clarity among stakeholders around its role and function. There have

been significant strides forward in this area with multiagency working developing as a real strength across the team and the work of SVS is now better understood.

- We will focus our energy during the coming months and years on improving this further. Whilst the early findings from our recent education survey for carers highlight inconsistency of understanding about the Virtual School and its role, the survey also provides helpful insight into the support and training needs for this sector. As a result, a year- long programme of support and training is being developed which will increase regular contact between SVS and carers.
- A new newsletter for Designated Teachers (DTs) has recently been launched alongside a year-long programme of training and development, offering both progression in skills and knowledge as well as a focus on current needs in light of transition back to school.
- The Big Survey 2020' reflects a varied awareness and understanding of the Virtual School among Surrey's care experienced children and young people. 51.28% of the looked after children who responded knew what the Virtual School was and the support it provides whilst 48.72% did not. In part this reflects the nature of a Virtual School working 'behind the scenes' and through other professionals such as DTs, carers, social workers to improve the experiences and educational outcomes of the cohort. This may be particularly the case in a context like Surrey's where there is a large cohort of children compared to size of Virtual School team.
- However, it is important that care experienced children and young people know that there is a Virtual School working hard on their behalf and demanding the best possible standards of their education and widest opportunities for them. The Virtual School is working with a small group of UVP bank workers to develop an SVS school brochure for professionals, create a new logo for the team and create a short, animated film for children and young people to help explain more about the Virtual School.

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### PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPS)

- Each child and young person in care has a termly personal education plan (PEP) where they share their views and feelings about their education, and the team around them (social worker, foster carer, (DTs) for children in care and health professionals where appropriate) together plan what support is needed to meet their individual needs.
- In 2018, OFSTED recommended that the local authority should '*urgently improve the quality of personal education planning for children in care...*' (Recommendation 13). This has been a key focus of the Virtual School throughout 2019-20 with a number of measures introduced to improve timeliness and quality.
- The Virtual School team prioritises attendance at PEP meetings where children have significant needs or challenges. For any child without a current school place a team member also acts as a Designated Teacher. Whilst it is

not possible to attend every child's PEP meeting, the Virtual School team does however read every single PEP and provides individualised feedback to DTs and social workers around their quality. Where this falls below the expected standard, it is returned to professionals to amend and improve. The 5-point quality assurance system introduced in 2019 has contributed to a consistent termly improvement in the quality of PEPs. 53% were rated 'green' in the Autumn term 2019, 60% in the Spring term 2020 and 75% in the Summer 2020. An overview may be seen in **Appendix 1**.

- SVS has taken on board the feedback from User Voice and Participation (UVP) members which identified that PEPs are not always shared with the child or young person. This has been fed back directly to Designated Teachers and will be added as a regular reminder to the termly newsletter which has been introduced. SVS has also provided guidance to DTs around the importance of PEP targets that support transition back to school during the Autumn term. This will be monitored during our Autumn term PEP reviews.
- We know from 'The Big Survey 2020' that 57.3% of looked after children agreed that their PEP helped their education however 23% disagreed and a further 19.7% were neutral on this subject. SVS will ensure that this is fed back to Headteachers, Designated Teachers, social workers and other professionals who contribute to children and young people's PEPs.
- During 2020-21 the Virtual School will focus its energies on maintaining consistency in the high standards we expect around timeliness and quality of children's PEPs and securing further improvement. We will also be delivering training to professionals to ensure that PEPs more specifically assess and identify individual needs and barriers to learning and include SMART targets that directly link with those needs. It is possible that for some of the children who felt that their PEPs did not help their education, their targets were too general and were not specific enough to their needs.
- Following our termly quality assurance of PEPs, SVS will aim to share our findings more systematically with stakeholders including Surrey's care experienced children and young people.

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#### **PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

- Recommendation 13 from OFSTED in 2018 also required the local authority to '*closely analyse the impact of the pupil premium in improving children's educational progress*' This has been addressed in a number of ways within the Virtual School throughout 2019-20 and continues to be a priority on the 2020-2021 service and improvement plan.
- During 2019-20 SVS introduced a new Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) policy and monitoring system, linked directly with quality of PEPs. Evidence of active consideration of PPP is one of the 5 criteria used to quality assure each child's PEP. All Pupil Premium Plus spend needs to be costed in the PEP before it can receive a green RAG Rating. This has introduced a greater level of quality assurance and monitoring around the ways in which PPP is spent.

The Surrey Personal Education Plan template also references the Education Endowment Fund's (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit which summarises the international evidence around the impact of different interventions on children's outcomes, though not specifically in relation to care experienced children.

- We recognise that there is further, detailed work needed to fully understand the impact PPP funding is making on our Surrey looked after children's progress and outcomes and to develop and share good practice in relation to its use and impact with a wide group of stakeholders including children and young people.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will conduct a full analysis of PPP spend and impact this Autumn term, prior to the next annual review of PPP policy in January 2021. This will include consultation with stakeholders, including children and young people to fully understand the impact PPP is making from their perspective. We will also draw on available research (including through the EEF and NAVSH – National Association of Virtual School Headteachers) to inform our analysis. During the current financial year, a range of resources will be added to the Virtual School's website, including a flow chart explaining our PPP allocation processes in more detail.

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#### **SCHOOL PLACEMENT AND STABILITY**

- SVS has achieved a reduction in number of children looked after who are recorded as 'missing education' (CME) between April 2020 (33) and the start of September 2020 (6). SVS has focussed particularly on addressing this issue in relation to children with SEND where a reduction from 28 (April 2020) to 11 (end of August 2020) was achieved, 6 of whom have EHCPs.
- A further reduction in the number of young people not in post 16 education, employment and training (NEET) has also been secured – reducing from 30 to 19 for the same timeframe. This has been achieved through a range of approaches - active representation at the county CME Governance Panel as well as monthly quadrant-based CME meetings between SVS, SEND and Education. It is also due to the meticulous work of SVS Education Support Workers whose daily focus is on these children.
- A further contributing factor, around the improvement in access to education and school stability for children with SEND has been the strong advocacy role the Corporate Parent Board (CPB) itself has played. As a result of the support and challenge through CPB to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Directorate, children looked after are being more actively and consistently prioritised within SEND systems and processes, and the partnership between the Virtual School and SEND services has been further strengthened.
- Despite the fact that there will undoubtedly be fluctuation in the number of children who are CME through the year, the Virtual School maintains a weekly focus on this and there will be greater level of scrutiny going forwards around the appropriate use of part time timetables for children and young

people looked after.

- To support this further, the Virtual School will be working with key partners to introduce a county protocol around the education placement of children and young people in the care of Surrey.

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#### ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS

- Overall attendance for Surrey CLA matched with national CLA for 2018-19 (95%) and had reached 92% cumulatively during the winter months (from September 2019-March 2020 before lockdown). During the latter half of the lockdown period when government guidance changed (from June-end July 2020) Surrey's children in care achieved an overall attendance of 53% (Welfare Call data) which included children placed outside Surrey as well as those attending Surrey schools. (*Note: information removed due to confidentiality reasons*).
- The Virtual School commissions Welfare Call to collect daily attendance marks of every CLA no matter where in the country they are placed. This ensures a continuous dialogue with schools, social workers and carers, focusing on attendance. The SVS team reviews attendance of CLA at cohort level on a half termly basis identifying those children with attendance below 95% for further support from SVS Education Support Workers and specialist services where needed. This is supplemented by a focus on attendance as part of each termly PEP quality assurance activity, checking that targets relate to improving attendance where this is an area of challenge for a child or young person. Additionally, the Virtual School Head attends the weekly county 'School Attendance and Monitoring School Absence' group meetings so that the attendance of children in care can be considered centrally alongside other vulnerable groups.
- Together with key partners, the Virtual School will seek to better understand the barriers to good attendance for children and young people who struggle in this area. We have already identified this year that some children looked after with SEND have poorer attendance overall than those who do not and will be developing some stakeholder workshop events to identify how we can better support this group of children. SVS is mindful of the comments made in the 'Big Survey' around children's experience of bullying which reported that 52% of looked after children said they hadn't been bullied compared with 81% (secondary) and 64% primary in the wider non looked after population who answered the same question. This will be considered alongside other factors in understanding attendance patterns within some parts of the cohort. SVS has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Surrey Educational Psychology team and will be able to draw on EP expertise to support schools where needed.
- There were no permanent exclusions of Surrey CLA during 2018-19 (national CLA for this timeframe was 0.05% for comparison). The percentage of children with one or more fixed term exclusion (10.94%) was below national (11.67%) and south east region (12.35%) CLA. This is testament to

the persistent efforts and swift actions of Surrey Virtual School team and others, working alongside schools to find workable alternatives to both permanent and fixed term exclusions. An overview is provided in **Appendix 2**.

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### **EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

- There are no published outcomes this year for children reaching the end of a key stage. For children in the Primary phase, any analysis can only be based on 2019 end of key stage results and the period from September 2019 to March 2020 due to the cancellation of end of Key Stage assessments. Between March and September 2020, the Virtual School's focus has been on ensuring the continuation of each child's learning.
- For those accessing education from home SVS ensured there were digital devices in place either through the DFE scheme or through its own arrangements meaning that 727 children and young people were provided with a laptop (68% of the total cohort). Resources were posted regularly on the Virtual School website, online learning platforms such as SAM Learning were made available, and during the early part of lockdown a curriculum phonenumber was in place to support carers with home learning. All children and young people were provided with vouchers via their carers so that any additional books and stationery could be easily purchased.
- We are mindful of gaps in learning being widened as a result of the lockdown and have focused resources and additional one to one tuition on the most vulnerable children and young people in years 6 and 11 to support transition to the next phase of their education. Where needed, the Virtual School resourced tutoring to continue throughout August for those children and young people most in need of support. Personal Education Plans have continued virtually throughout the lockdown period, with additional support and advice provided to Designated Teachers and social workers. As a result, the Virtual School has secured improvements in the timeliness and quality of PEPs, as described above.
- The Virtual School has continued the analysis of progress and outcomes undertaken by Glynis Weller, (the previous Virtual School Head) and presented to Corporate Parent Board in August/September 2019 with further commentary included below. An overview of current data may be seen in Appendix 3.

### **Early Years Foundation Years**

- Performance was strong during 2019 across all the prime areas of learning. 60% of children achieved a 'good level of development' or GLD compared with 48% of children looked after nationally, which improved further from

2018 (50%). However, caution is needed when interpreting this data as numbers are small and likely to be subject to year on year variation. The Virtual School is fortunate to have an early years specialist within its senior leadership team with oversight of our youngest children. All children have transferred successfully to Reception classes in September 2020 and specialist training will be provided to early years providers during the Autumn term. Each child (including those placed with early years providers and in Year R) will be tracked carefully through quality assurance of their PEP termly and attendance tracking through Welfare Call.

### **Key Stage 1**

- Progress and attainment at Key Stage 1 was also strong during 2019. Surrey children looked after achieved above national CLA results in all subjects, including the combined Reading Writing and Maths measure (RWM) as shown in Appendix 3.
- 64.3% of children in Year 1 were working at or above the national standard in Phonics - matching the national CLA performance. All year 2 children transferred successfully to year 3 in September 2020, including those requiring a new or different school. The Virtual School will focus its efforts on supporting Designated Teachers to maintain the levels of progress and attainment achieved for these children during key stage 1.

### **Key Stage 2**

- The 2019 report to Corporate Parent Board highlighted that the progress of children between Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 had been variable. (*Note: information removed from this section due to confidentiality reasons*). We know that gaps in learning are most often associated with the period preceding the point at which children come into care and it is not surprising that progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 had been impacted. However, this is an important area to address since it significantly affects readiness for secondary school.
- This highlights the need for more specific dialogue with Designated Teachers about identifying and addressing gaps in learning for individual children, taking into account their pre care experiences. The Virtual School will be incorporating this into the scheduled programme of training for DTs and piloting corporate parent visits to schools during which we will focus on pupil progress and our shared expectations around this.

### **Key Stage 4**

- There will not be any nationally published Key Stage 4 results this year, and there has not been an LA level school results collection. However, the Virtual School undertook its own collection as corporate parent, contacting carers of

- the 127 young people on the roll of Year 11 during 2019-20. This not only enabled personalised advice and guidance to be provided around each young person, but also a more successful and swifter results collection
- For 2020, young people in Year 11 were awarded the higher outcome between centre assessed grades or an algorithm that incorporated centre assessed grades but considered school and pupil prior performance. As a consequence of this change in methodology, trend comparisons between years should be treated with extreme caution.
  - However with this caveat, after a disappointing set of GCSE results in 2019, there is a significant improvement in 2020 with outcomes exceeding the national CLA average for 2019 in the measure of children achieving grades 4-9 and 5-9 in both English and Maths (*Please note that the data in Appendix 3 has been removed due to confidentiality reasons*). The Virtual School is conducting further analysis at the current time to fully understand the effects of those factors and characteristics shown by research to make the most impact on progress and outcomes. This has necessitated some further development in the datasets available to the Virtual School team so that multiple factors can be combined with progress and outcomes.  
<http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/301411.pdf>
  - Reflecting on the mixed picture of progress and outcomes for Surrey's children in care in recent years, there are a number of areas requiring some further analysis.
  - (*Note: information from this section has been removed due to confidentiality reasons*). The percentage of Surrey children with an EHCP mirrors the national CLA profile however the percentage with SEND support is significantly smaller than the national CLA cohort (28.7%). This may suggest that some children looked after have unmet learning needs, possibly masked by other presenting needs associated with childhood experiences of attachment, trauma and loss.
  - (*Note: information removed from this section due to confidentiality reasons*).
  - The Virtual School will be providing training and development opportunities for Designated Teachers to support more specific analysis of individual children's needs with a view to incorporating this into the existing PEP template. The template has already been updated to include recording of SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Score) score so that children's emotional and mental health needs can be more systematically incorporated into their targets and support.
  - (*Note: information removed from this section due to confidentiality reasons*). We know that stability (particularly school placement) and length of time in care are factors shown by research to impact on educational progress and outcomes. As with Key Stage 2, this context requires Designated Teachers and subject specialists to be skilled in the analysis of learning gaps associated with the time preceding coming into care as well as understanding the impacts of childhood trauma on learning.
  - Analysis of the data at Key Stage 4 also raises an issue around curriculum

offer. There is a significant gap between the percentage achieving 'any qualification' during 2019 - 57.5% for Surrey CLA compared with 73% for CLA nationally. The Virtual School is working with the Neighbourhood Youth team, schools and other agencies to develop a broader careers guidance and qualifications offer for our most vulnerable young people in Year 11 who need a different or enhanced curriculum offer.

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## Post 16

- During 2019-20 the Virtual School team focused on gaining a more accurate picture of the cohort, both in terms of the available data and knowledge of the young people and their situations. This has been achieved and the Virtual School tracks the attendance of young people at their post 16 setting through Welfare Call and quality assures their Personal Education Plans termly.
- The Virtual School post 16 team is county wide rather than quadrant based and comprises an Assistant Head Teacher with oversight of the team and cohort, as Education Support Worker, an Education Employment Adviser and the lead for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children also sits within this team (though the work spans statutory school age also). As the team is small compared to size of cohort, links and joint working with other services and providers has been key in order to ensure access to sustainable post education, employment and training.
- Early identification of the most vulnerable young people in years 10 and 11 at transition, is contributing to fewer young people not in education employment and training (NEET) in Year 13. At the current time, of the 127 young people in year 13, 20 are recorded as NEET, however this reflects the fact that some young people have experienced a change in their circumstances during the summer and a new post 16 destination is needed. This number has already reduced from 25 at the start of September to 20. The Virtual School maintains a weekly focus on this group, drawing on a range of services and support to help secure a post 16 destination to meet each young person's needs.
- The Virtual School is mindful that young people have expressed concerns about the level of advice and guidance available to them around career pathways with only 45.3% agreeing that it is sufficient, although amongst care leavers this percentage was higher at 75%. (Big Survey 2020). This concern was also echoed within the Virtual School's carer survey in which further support was requested around careers advice, guidance and post 16 funding.
- The Virtual School will include the specific recommendations from the Big Survey 2020 in its updated service and improvement plan and will be in a position to report back to Corporate Parent Board the progress being made towards ensuring these recommendations are actioned. The training offer being developed for carers from the Virtual School will include a specific focus on careers guidance and post 16 funding.

#### **CONCLUSION**

- The Virtual School remains committed to removing the inequality in educational progress and outcomes between children looked after and the wider population of children. This means working in partnership with the whole system for children across schools, education and social care, ensuring that this group of children and young people are consistently prioritised, that their needs are understood and that they receive the support they need to be successful learners and achieve their goals and ambitions.

Term	Completion	Quality Rated Green	Quality Rated Amber	Quality Rated Red
Autumn 2019	80%	53%	14%	33%
Spring 2020	81%	60%	19%	21%
Summer 2020	91%	75%	18%	8%

## Appendix 2

### Attendance: Surrey Children Looked After with national and south east region comparators

Children looked after 2018-19	Overall Absence	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Persistent Absence
National	4.7%	3.2%	1.4%	10.9%
South East Region	4.9%	3.6%	1.3%	11.9%
Surrey	5%	3.7%	1.3%	12.6%
DFE 2019				
2019-20	92% September 2019- March 2020 prior to lockdown			
Internal data (Welfare Call)				

### Exclusions: Surrey Children Looked After 2018-19 with national and south east region comparators

DFE 2019	% with at least 1 fixed term% exclusion	% permanent exclusions
National CLA	11.67%	0.05%
SE region CLA	12.35%	0%
Surrey CLA	10.94%	0%

## Appendix 3

## End of Key Stage Outcomes

### Early Years Foundation Stage

Percentage achieving GLD	Qualifying Cohort	National CLA	All Surrey CLA	Surrey All Pupils
2020 data not available				
2019 (QC 15) Surrey LAC (37)	60%	48%	51.4%	78.9%
2018 (QC 6) (Surrey LAC 23)	50%	47%	52.2%	79%

Source: NCER Nexus

### Key Stage 1

#### Percentage of children achieving the expected standard

2019 Qualifying Cohort (QC) = 20 children

2019 All LAC Cohort = 41 children Key Stage 1	Qualifying Cohort (20)	National CLA (QC 1,740)	ALL Surrey CLA (41)	All Surrey Pupils
<b>Reading</b>	75%	52.0%	63.4%	78.4%
<b>Writing</b>	60%	43.0%	51.2%	71.4%
<b>Maths</b>	55%	49.0%	56.1%	79.0%
<b>Science</b>	75%	60.0%	70.7%	86.3%
<b>RWM Combined</b>	50%	38.0%	43.9%	66.8%

*No KS1 results 2020 due to Covid 19*

### Key Stage 2

#### Percentage of children achieving the expected standard

2019 Qualifying Cohort = 30 children

2019 All CLA Cohort = 41 children KS2	Qualifying Cohort (30) 2019 CLA Outcomes	Qualifying Cohort (30) Greater Depth (Nexus)	National CLA (QC) 2019 CLA Outcomes	National CLA (QC) Greater Depth/HS (Nexus)	All Surrey CLA (41)	All Surrey Pupils	All Surrey Pupils (Greater Depth)
<b>Reading</b>	37%	10%	49%	12%	41.5%	78.9%	35%
<b>Writing</b>	47%	6.7%	50%	6%	48.8%	80.4%	23%
<b>Maths</b>	43%	3.3%	51%	8%	46.3%	82.5%	32.8%
<b>RWM</b>	27%	0%	37%	2%	31.7%	69.9%	13.9%
<b>GPS</b>	53%	10%	53%	15%	53.7%	82.1%	42.1%

*No KS2 results 2020 due to Covid 19*



## Key Stage 4

### Percentage of children achieving the expected standard 2019

Cohort	Total Pupils	5 GCSEs incl E&M Grade 4+	English & Maths Grade 5+	English & Maths Grade 4+
Surrey Eligible Cohort 2019	73	8.6%	5.5%	12.3%
National Eligible Cohort 2019	5410	14.0%	7.00%	18.0%

## Key Stage 4

### Percentage of children achieving the expected standard

*2020 results have been collected by the Virtual School but are not in the public domain and will not be published. However, they do show significant improvement compared with 2019.*



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