

APPENDIX A

The Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual Report 2010-2011

1. Background

Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after. They also have a particular duty to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they live. In Central Bedfordshire, this duty is delivered through the work of the Virtual School for Looked After Children.

The governing bodies of all maintained schools are required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of looked after children who are on the school roll.

The Virtual School for looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire was established in September 2009. It has pupils on roll who are in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council and who are being educated in Central Bedfordshire schools or in schools in other authorities. In addition, the Virtual School has pupils on its roll who are living within Central Bedfordshire, and who attend Central Bedfordshire schools, but who belong to other authorities which brought them into care. The total number of students of statutory school age who were part of the Virtual School at any point over the last academic year was 212.

There is a statutory requirement to monitor the progress of all children who are looked after and to ensure that each looked after child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP for a looked after child is the main means by which the Virtual School and designated teachers in school monitor the educational attainment and progress of every looked after child. The PEP records children's previous educational experiences and attainment as well as setting targets for future achievement. The social worker is responsible for instigating the writing of the PEP with the designated teacher. Completed PEP's are held in the Virtual School.

Staff in the Virtual School liaise with Designated Teachers to support schools in setting appropriate, measurable targets for progress. There is a quality assurance checklist for all new PEPs to ensure that PEPs are of a consistently high standard. PEPs are reviewed at least every six months. Appropriate challenge is provided where issues are identified, and advice is given to designated teachers on available national and local support as it became available e.g. 1:1 tuition; the home access programme for computers; Every Child a Reader; Every Child a Writer.

A Personal Education Allowance (PEA) of up to £500 pounds per year for 70% of the Council's looked after children was available to support students in danger of not achieving national targets. This was administered through the PEP. The Government withdrew the statutory duty to provide a PEA in April of this year when they introduced the new Pupil Premium paid to schools for all looked after children who have been in care for six months or more.

Amendments to the PEP as a result of the recent Care Matters legislation include a question on how the school intends to use the Pupil Premium for eligible children to enable the Virtual School to track its use. There is also a section on the

arrangements in place to minimise the disruption of the child's education and training where a change in the child's educational arrangements is unavoidable.

2. Outcomes for Looked After Children 2011

During the 2010-11 academic year, progress and attendance information was collected on a termly basis from Designated Teachers.

Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions

In 2010-11 there were a total of 53 days lost by fixed term exclusion from schools. There were two permanent exclusions. One permanent exclusion was the subject of an appeal by the Council as Corporate Parents but was upheld by the Governors. In the case of the second permanent exclusion the parents chose not to appeal.

The Virtual School works with the Inclusions Officer to support schools in recognising the impact of exclusion on a looked after child and the Council's expectation that exclusion is used as a last resort

Attendance

Attendance data for the 2010-11 academic year is not yet available. Attendance information returned by schools to date indicates that Central Bedfordshire was above the national all pupil results for 2010 in year groups 1-6 and year 9, and was slightly below the national in year groups 7,8,10 and 11.

Attendance data for 2010-11 over five half terms:

| Year Group | No Pupils | Sessions | | Attendance | National All Pupil 09-10 |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | | Attendance | Total | | |
| 1 | 4 | 875 | 906 | 96.6% | 94.2% |
| 2 | 10 | 2372 | 2467 | 96.1% | 94.7% |
| 3 | 6 | 1633 | 1668 | 97.9% | 95.0% |
| 4 | 17 | 4177 | 4312 | 96.9% | 95.0% |
| 5 | 14 | 3584 | 3762 | 95.3% | 95.0% |
| 6 | 16 | 3694 | 3838 | 96.2% | 95.0% |
| 7 | 16 | 4013 | 4332 | 92.6% | 94.6% |
| 8 | 15 | 4226 | 4593 | 92.0% | 93.7% |
| 9 | 29 | 7506 | 7936 | 94.6% | 93.1% |
| 10 | 33 | 7031 | 8020 | 87.7% | 92.6% |
| 11 | 38 | 9127 | 10258 | 89.0% | 91.5% |
| Total | 198 | 48238 | 52092 | 92.6% | 94.0% |

Where attendance is low this tends to be where pupils have moved placement and have spent some time waiting for a school place in other authorities, or where they have had periods on part-time timetables.

New "Care Matters" regulations suggest that unless it is an emergency, students in Key Stage 4 should not move care placement unless a school placement is available. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.

Results by Key Stage

Results are provided for Central Bedfordshire children who have been in care for a year or more (the OC2 Cohort). Results are also provided for the Whole School Cohort of looked after children on roll in the Virtual School during that academic year. The latter includes those pupils who have had variable amounts of time in care and who may also belong to other authorities.

These are provisional results. National and statistical neighbour information for 2011 is not yet available¹.

Key Stage 1 OC2 results at Level 2+

There were four pupils in the OC2 cohort. Two students were disapplied, both of whom had a statement of special educational need and recorded P levels below the Key Stage 1 attainment range. One pupil achieved Level 2 in English and two achieved Level 2 in Mathematics.

Key Stage 1 Whole School Cohort Results at Level 2+

There were seven pupils in the Whole School Cohort. Two were disapplied, one of whom had a statement of special educational need recording P levels. Three pupils achieved level 2 in both English and Mathematics. Three pupils achieved Level 2 in English and five achieved Level 2 in Mathematics.

Key Stage 2 OC2 Results at Level 4+

There were 3 pupils in the OC2 cohort. One was disapplied because the pupil was working below the National Key Stage 2 levels. One pupil achieved Level 4 in English. No pupils achieved Level 4 in Mathematics.

Key Stage 2 Whole School Cohort Results at Level 4+

There were 14 pupils in the Whole School Cohort. Four were disapplied. Six pupils had a statement of special educational need, five of whom attended special schools. One pupil achieved a Level 4 in both English and Mathematics. Five pupils achieved Level 4 in English. One pupil achieved a Level 4 in Mathematics.

Key Stage 4 OC2 GCSE results

¹ National results for children looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March 2010 and of the age where the child is eligible to sit key stage assessments and tests were as follows:

- Key Stage 1: 58% achieved the expected level in reading and 62% achieved the expected level in mathematics.
- Key Stage 2: 36% achieved the expected level in both English and mathematics.
- Key Stage 4: 12% achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics.

This information includes only GCSE passes. Some students took alternative vocational awards and others took a mixture of both. This information is not yet available.

There were 14 students in the OC2 cohort, of whom four had a statement of special educational need and were attending specialist provision. No students achieved 5 GCSE passes including English and Mathematics at grades A*-C. Six students achieved at least 5 passes at grades A*-G, including English and Mathematics (14.3%). One student achieved 11 GCSE's. Of the remaining students, three achieved three passes at A*-G, one did not take any examinations, and one took entry level qualifications below GCSE level.

Key Stage 4 Whole School Cohort

There were 37 students in the whole school cohort. Five (13.5%) achieved at least 5 A*-C grades including English and Mathematics. Five achieved 5 A*-G passes including English and mathematics. Five achieved fewer than 5 A*-G passes including English and mathematics but achieved a GCSE in both English and mathematics. Three students achieved 2 GCSE's at grades A*-G with either English or Maths grade C-G. Three students with a statement of special educational need did not take GCSE's. One student with a statement of special educational took entry level qualifications below GCSE level I. One student followed an alternative curriculum and one student did not take any examinations.

3. Conclusion

The Virtual School continues to work with designated teachers, social workers and independent reviewing officers to drive up standards for looked after children. Following the ending of the Personal Education Allowance, the Virtual School intends to track the use of the Pupil Premium to ensure that, where possible, schools are using this funding to support this vulnerable group of pupils.