

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

9 November 2015

INTERIM REPORT - VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

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Purpose of this report:

This report provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the unvalidated outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2014/15. The validated outcomes will be reported at Corporate Parenting Panel in March 2016. It also identifies the steps the Virtual School is taking in the current Academic Year 2015/16 in partnership with other agencies including schools and social care to raise the achievement and progress of all LAC.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to:

1. consider this report, the progress made to date, and comment on the steps identified to improve outcomes for LAC in Academic Year 2015/2016.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This report is not scheduled to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny, as it is the responsibility of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Background

2. Councils work in a number of ways to drive improvement in the educational achievements of the children they look after. In Central

Bedfordshire this is managed through the work of the Virtual School for LAC.

3. The Virtual School must ensure that each child achieves optimum educational outcomes at each stage of his or her schooling. In order to achieve this the Virtual School:
 - a) Ensures that there is a system to regularly track, monitor and challenge the attendance, attainment and progress of LAC;
 - b) Ensures that each LAC has a robust and effective personal education plan (PEP);
 - c) Works with schools to improve overall attainment of LAC by challenging schools to improve the achievement and progress of individual children through good use of their resources;
 - d) Works with social workers to improve attendance, attainment and progress of LAC;
 - e) Ensures that LAC who are educated in schools outside of Central Bedfordshire Council receive the right support to achieve the best educational outcomes;
 - f) Manages the Pupil Premium funding allocated for LAC including monitoring the effective use and impact of this funding by schools and settings.
4. In September 2014 a permanent head of the Virtual School was appointed to drive improvement in the attainment of LAC in Central Bedfordshire. This includes working closely with schools and social care services to identify and intervene with those who are at risk of disengagement or under achievement.
5. The post holder became Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Learners on 1 May 2015. In this new role there is an opportunity to create greater links between the Access and Inclusion team which works with schools to support pupils at risk of exclusion and those with poor attendance and the Virtual School. As a result of this a new post of Team Leader for the Virtual School has been created to maintain the progress made in championing the educational achievement of children looked after by Central Bedfordshire.
6. The Virtual School has pupils on its 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.
7. In addition, the Virtual School has pupils on its roll who are living within Central Bedfordshire and who attend Central Bedfordshire schools, but who are in the care of other councils.
8. It also works closely with Virtual School Heads from other Local Authorities who have LAC placed in Central Bedfordshire schools, and where Central Bedfordshire has LAC placed in their schools.

9. At October 2015 the total number of Central Bedfordshire pupils of statutory school age who are part of the Virtual School is 187 (Reception to Year 11). This does not include 56 Y12 and Y13 young people still in care who are being monitored by the Virtual School in partnership with the Youth Support Service.
10. There is a statutory requirement to monitor the progress of all LAC and to ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP records children's previous educational experiences and attainment as well as setting targets for future achievement. The nominated social worker and the designated teacher are responsible for instigating the writing of the PEP. Completed PEPs are held by the Virtual School. Currently PEPs take place termly where appropriate to enable the Virtual School to closely monitor academic progress. This enables appropriate support and challenge with regard to ensuring pupils are making expected or better than expected progress. There is a quality assurance checklist for all PEPs which helps ensure that they are of a consistently high standard.
11. The PEPs now have two distinct elements. Section A is managed by social care and is updated by social workers prior to the meeting. Section B is managed and completed by the school and returned to the Virtual School. There has been some amendments to this section to reflect the new assessment processes in school. The Virtual School Educational Advisers continue to take a proactive role in managing the PEP meetings to ensure there is rigour and consistency in these meetings.
12. In April 2011 the Government introduced the Pupil Premium. The amount increased in April 2014 to £1900.
13. Through PEP reviews, schools are challenged to identify the impact of Pupil Premium funding on the achievements of LAC. Amendments to the PEP now include a question on how the school uses the Pupil Premium for eligible children and what the impact of this is on the pupil's progress. This enables the Virtual School to track its use and enables schools to demonstrate impact to governors and Ofsted.
14. After consultation with schools and other stakeholders it was agreed that the Virtual School would retain £400 from the £1900 allocated per pupil. The remaining £1500 is given termly to schools to support them in raising educational achievement.
15. There is now a clear application process for schools to request additional funding to support LAC at risk of disengagement or under-achievement. This allows significant additional support to be allocated to those pupils who need it. 1 example of how this funding was used alongside funding from social care to support a Y7 pupil at risk of permanent exclusion to access high quality 1:1 tuition while social care identified an appropriate placement for her.

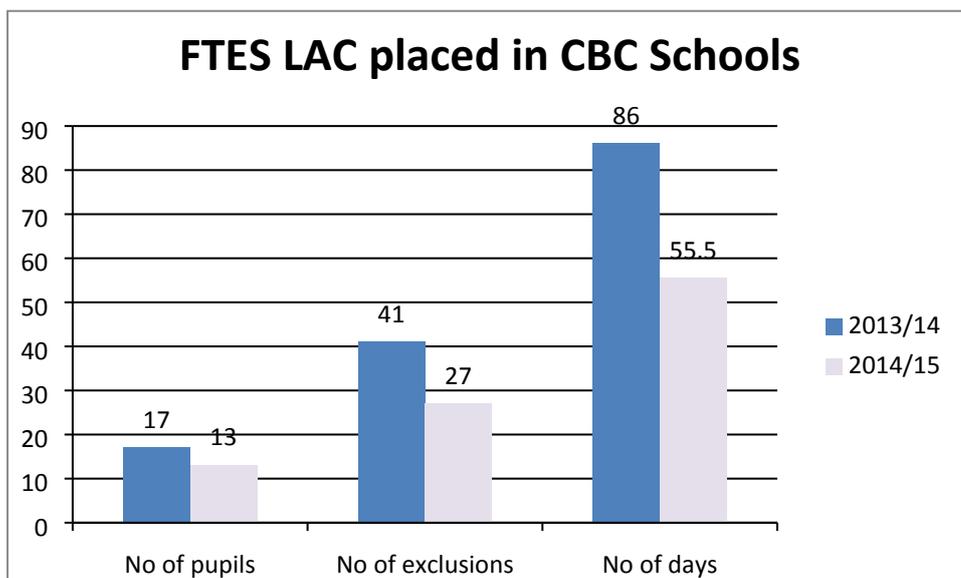
16. The Governing Body is now well established and has met on 3 occasions in the year 2014/15. It continues to be well attended and offer appropriate challenge as well as support. The current chair will remain in post for this academic year 2015/16.

Exclusions

17. There was 1 permanent exclusion during 2015/16 for serious misconduct. The Virtual School worked closely with other agencies including social care, providing 1:1 tuition while the transfer to the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) was arranged. The student is now making good progress at the ACB.

18. Whenever there is the threat of a permanent exclusion the Virtual School will contact the school to explore all the options available including a change of placement. Schools are actively discouraged from permanently excluding LAC, and all other options are explored.

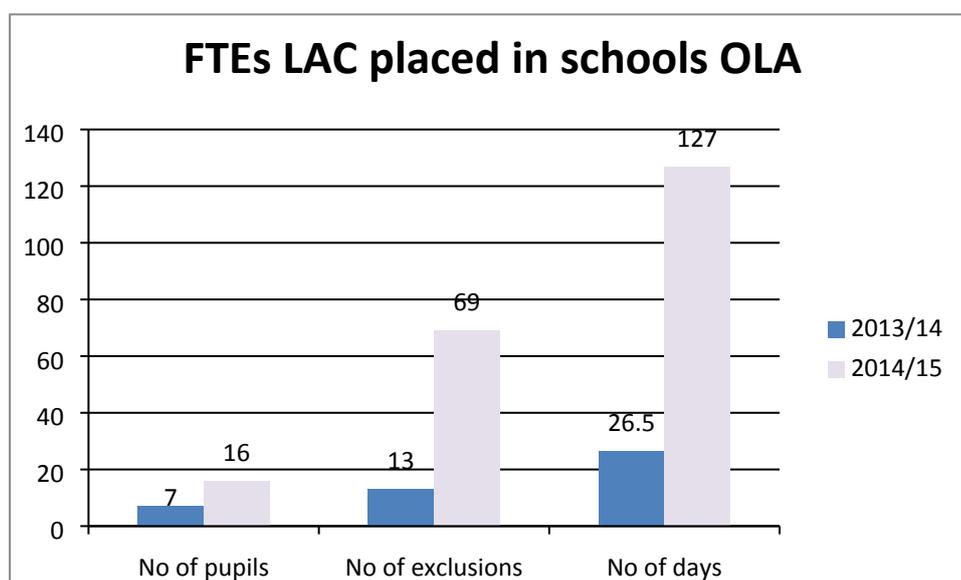
19. In the academic year 2013/14 there were a total of 86 days lost as a result of fixed term exclusions of LAC from Central Bedfordshire schools. In 2014/15 this reduced to 55.5 days. This reflects the effective cross agency working to reduce the need to exclude.



20. In the academic year 2013/14, there was a total of 26.5 days lost as a result of fixed term exclusions of LAC placed in schools and settings outside of Central Bedfordshire (including therapeutic care homes with onsite educational provision). In 2014/15 this increased to 127 days.

21. 5 young people (all male) contributed to 53 days of this figure. In most cases these are our children/young people with the most complex needs, some with several placement breakdowns over a relatively short period of time.

22. There has been considerable multi-agency working and investment to engage these young people into education or training. This remains a priority for the Virtual School and partners.



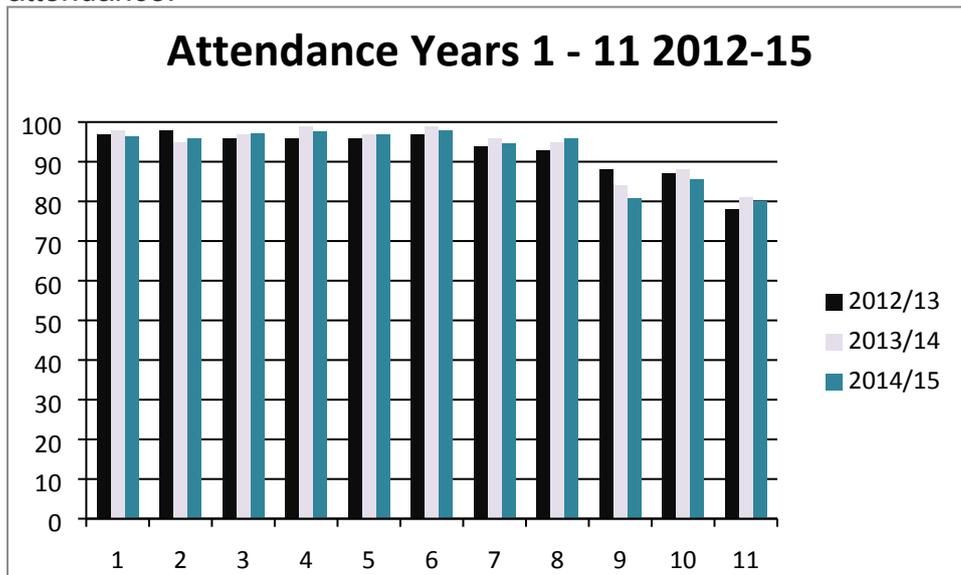
23. The Virtual School is immediately informed by the Inclusion Officer when an exclusion of a LAC occurs from a schools in Central Bedfordshire. The school is immediately contacted by the Education Adviser to discuss day 1 provision and plan a re-integration meeting to prevent repeat exclusions.

Attendance

24. The contract to monitor attendance is now with Looked After Call as a result of a competitive re-commissioning process in August 2015. This continues to be used in an effective way to monitor and challenge the absence of LAC.
25. Looked After Call contacts all schools where there is a pupil of statutory school age both in and outside of Central Bedfordshire. If a pupil is absent the carer and/or social worker is contacted to ascertain the reason for absence.
26. This system ensures rigorous procedures are in place for safeguarding, as well as accountability for absence from school. It enables the Virtual School to generate attendance data which can be regularly interrogated and shared, and appropriate actions identified immediately to support pupils' improved attendance.
27. The Virtual School and Social Care Managers receive daily updates regarding pupils who have had periods of absence of more than 3 days. This is followed up by the Education Adviser in discussion with the Social Worker. If there is no acceptable reason for absence a multi-professional meeting is called.

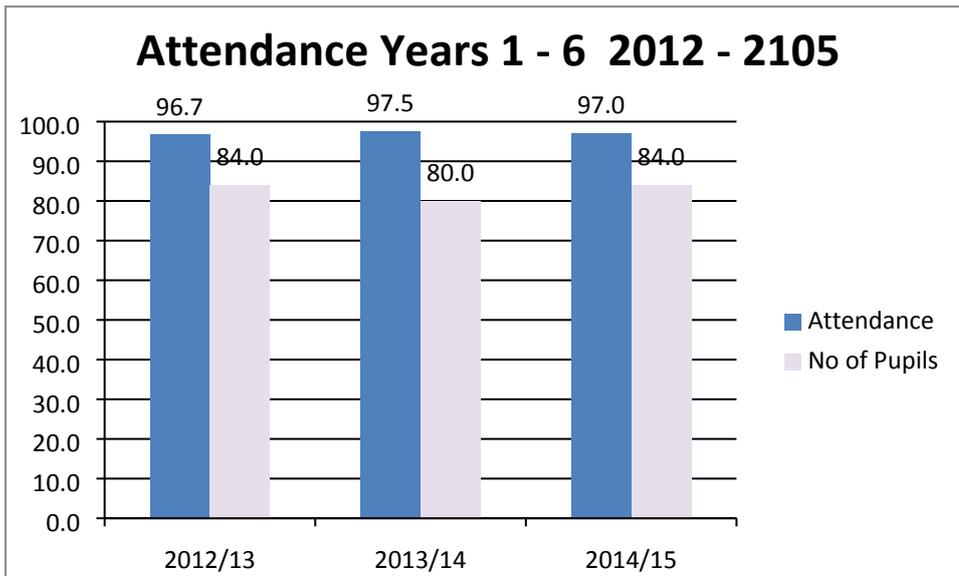
28. Although overall attendance in 2014/15 has fallen, the majority of pupils' attendance is over 95% (106 of 174) with 19 pupils with 100% attendance.

29. The following table illustrates the overall attendance data over 3 years. Attendance in Years 9, 10, and 11 still remains the key challenge and therefore key priority. Please note that with small cohorts in some years that 1 or 2 pupils will have a significant impact upon whole school year attendance.

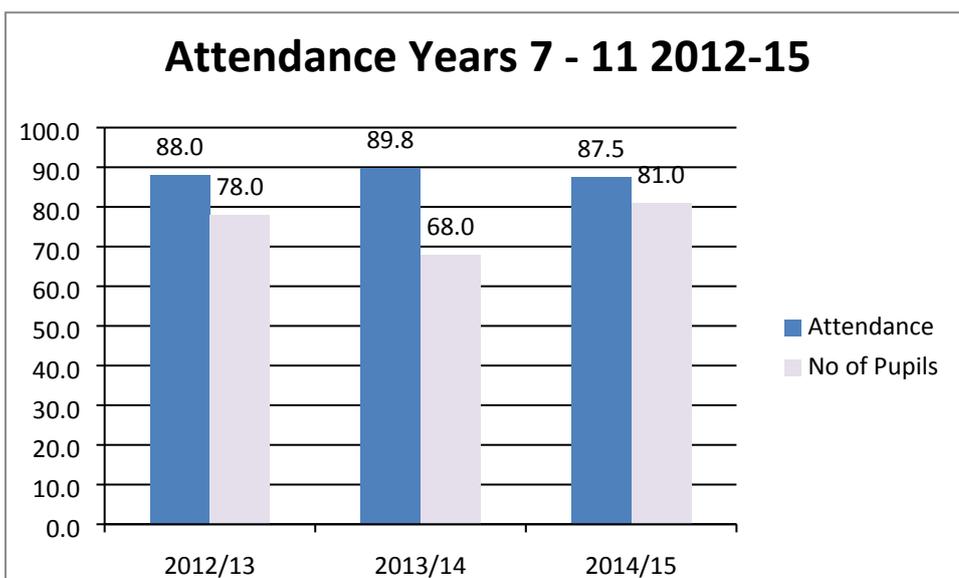


30. The Virtual School is working with schools and young people to re-engage them in learning. Individual tutors are commissioned where needed to ensure access to learning if a pupil is not attending school. The Virtual School now has a Personal Adviser who works directly with these young people at risk of dis-engaging from learning.

31. The following table demonstrates that in the primary year groups overall attendance has reduced by 0.8%. This has been influenced by a number of children undergoing statutory assessment resulting in new schools being identified when their additional needs have been identified. As yet whole school data to compare attendance of LAC against non-LAC is not available.



32. The following table demonstrates that in the secondary year groups, overall attendance has reduced by 2.3%. This has been influenced by a group of pupils (4 in Y9, 4 in Y10, 5 in Y11) who have had placement breakdowns or have absconded.



33. Attendance can be low where pupils have moved placement or have spent some time waiting for a school place in other authorities, or where they have had periods on part-time timetables. Currently all pupils where attendance has been identified as a concern are being closely monitored by both the Virtual School and Social Care.

34. If appropriate a part-time timetable may be agreed if it is in the best interest of the child. However it is closely monitored by the Virtual School and only seen as a short term arrangement.

35. Care Planning Guidance and Regulations (2010) suggest that unless it is an emergency, students in Key Stage 4 should not move care placement

unless a school placement is available. There were 3 Year 11 pupils, 5 Year 10 pupils and 4 Year 9 pupils who moved placement in the academic year 2014/15. This was as a result of either an irretrievable placement breakdown or concerns about the young person's safety.

36. The Virtual School worked closely with social care to minimise the disruption to the young person's learning for example supporting access to an Alternative Provider for a young person who moved to Leicester. However a placement breakdown that results in a school move often impacts temporarily on school attendance.
37. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.

Pupils' Achievement

38. Progress and achievement data is collected using the PEP process on a termly basis. The Virtual School now analyses the data and works with schools to identify appropriate next steps.
39. The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2015 will be available in December 2015 to allow for national comparisons and will be reported in the March report.

Provisional Key Stage 1 results

40. The following data is for **all** pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire, **not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months**.
- a) 19 pupils were LAC in July 2015, 1 (6%) of whom has a statement/EHCP of SEND.
 - b) 11 pupils were educated in Central Bedfordshire schools, 8 pupils in schools in other Local Authorities (OLA).
 - c) Of these 19 pupils, we have school reported data for all pupils in Central Bedfordshire schools but await data for 1 pupil educated OLA.
 - d) Of the 18 pupils, we have data which indicates that 17 out of 18 (**94%**) achieved the expected level or above (level 2) in reading, 14 out of 18 (**78%**) in writing, and 17 out of 18 (**94%**) in maths.
 - e) Of these 18 pupils 11 out of 18 (**71%**) achieved level 2 or above in all three subject areas.
 - f) Of the 11 pupils educated in Central Bedfordshire, 10 pupils (**91%**) achieved the expected level or above in reading, 10 pupils (**91%**) in writing and 10 pupils (**91%**) in mathematics.
 - g) Of the 7 pupils educated OLA where we have the data, 7 pupils (**100%**) achieved level 2 in reading, 5 pupils (**71%**) in writing and 7 pupils (**100%**) in mathematics.
41. The following data is for pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire **who have been LAC for over 12 months (this is the national measure)**. We

are still awaiting school level data from 1 child educated outside of Central Bedfordshire

- a) 10 pupils were LAC in July 2015 for whom we have data, 1 (6%) of whom has a statement/EHCP of SEND.
- b) 5 are in CBC schools, 5 are in schools OLA
- c) Of the 5 pupils attending CBC schools 4 pupils (80%) achieved level 2 or above in reading, 4 pupils (**80%**) in writing and 4 pupils (**80%**) in maths.
- d) 3 out of the 5 pupils (**60%**) achieved level 4 in all three areas
- e) Of the 5 pupils attending schools OLA, all 5 pupils (**100%**) achieved level 2 or above in reading, 4 out of 5 (**80%**) in writing and all 5 pupils in maths (**100%**).
- f) 4 out of 5 (**80%**) pupils attending schools OLA achieved level 2 or above in all three subject areas

Provisional Key Stage 2 results

42. The following data is for **all** pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire, **not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months**. One school with 1 pupil with a statement of SEND has had their data suppressed. One pupil was educated in Wales and made good progress. This data refers to 18 pupils.

- a. 9 pupils were educated in Central Bedfordshire schools, 9 pupils in schools in other LAs
- b. 7 pupils out of 20 (**40%**) have identified SEND, 4 pupils out of 20 (**20%**) have statements
- c. Of the 18 pupils we have data for, 14 pupils (**78%**) including one with a statement) achieved level 4 or above in **reading** with 6 pupils achieving level 5 (**33%**)
- d. 11 out of 11 pupils (**100%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in **reading**.
- e. 7 pupils out of 18 (**39%**) made **3 levels of progress** between KS1 and KS2 in **reading**.
- f. Of the 18 pupils we have data for, 12 pupils (**66%**) achieved level 4 and above in **writing**
- g. 10 out of 11 pupils (**91%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in **writing**
- h. 3 pupils out of 18 (**17%**) made **3 levels of progress** between KS1 and KS2 in **writing**
- i. Of the 18 pupils we have data for, 12 pupils (**66%**) including 1 with a statement achieved level 4 or above in **maths** with 1 pupil achieving level 5 and 1 pupil achieving level 6.
- j. 9 out of 11 pupils (**82%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in **maths**

- k. 3 pupils out of 18 (**17%**) made **3 levels of progress** and **1 pupils made 4 levels of progress** between KS1 and KS2 in **maths**
 - l. 11 out of 18 (**62%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths.
 - m. 9 out of 11 pupils (**82%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths.
43. The following data is for **16** pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire, **who have been LAC for over 12 months**.
- a. Of the 16 pupils who have been in care more than 12 months 13 out of 16 (**81%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading, 11 out of 16 (**69%**) in writing and 11 out of 16 (**69%**) maths.
 - b. 10 out of 16 (**62%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths.

Provisional Key Stage 4 Results 2014/15

44. There were 15 students LAC by CBC in July 2015. **This data is for the 13 out of the 15 students who have been in care for more than 12 months on 31st March 2015.** This does not include Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) who arrived after May 2015 (see post-16 section)

Please note these results are subject to confirmation and as such may change

- a. 10 out of the 13 students have an identified SEND including 7 with statements
- b. Of the 6 students without a statement all students were entered for GCSEs and 5 achieved the following grades:
 - 5 students achieved the equivalent of 5 A*- Gs
- c. Of the 7 students with a statement
 - 1 student achieved 5 A* - D including English and maths
 - 2 students made expected progress
 - 1 student achieved FS Maths Level 1, FS English Comprehension Level 1 and Level 2, FS English Written Level 1 and level 2, Functional Skills ICT Level 1 plus a range of vocational qualifications
 - 1 student achieved no accredited qualifications

Pupils not entered for GCSE.

45. 2 students were not entered for any accredited qualifications as they have complex needs being addressed by social care.

Year 12 and 13

46. There are currently 22 Y12 students being supported by the Youth Support Service (YSS) and Virtual School
- 18 attend a school or college
 - 2 NEET
 - 2 Other
47. There are currently 34 Y13 students being supported by the YSS and Virtual School.
- 19 attend a school or college
 - 7 attend training providers
 - 1 with CBC
 - 5 NEET
 - 1 Volunteering
 - 1 Other
48. All the above students have an identified Personal Adviser who works directly with the young person helping them overcome barriers to accessing employment and training for example transport problems, access to IT, 1 to 1 tuition.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC)

49. Since March 2014 33 UASC were taken into care by CBC and were identified between the ages of 15 and 17 at time of entry.
50. The following outcomes have been achieved by some very effective partnership work between the Virtual School, YSS and Social Care.
51. Currently all of those UASC have accessed tuition to learn English or there are plans in place for them to do so.
52. There is clear evidence of students progress quickly through levels to allow them to access college places. This is due to some outstanding work by YSS Personal Advisers acting as an advocate for students with colleges.
53. Currently there are:
- 5 Y11 – 2 have started school, 3 who recently arrived social workers are currently identifying and applying for school places through the admission process
 - 11 Y12 – 7 are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above courses, 5 recently arrived and will be starting a programme of learning English as an additional language by the end of November
 - 12 Y13 – 11 are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above
 - 5 Y14 – 5 are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above

Summary of strengths

54. Key Strengths:

- Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 continues to improve
- Number of days lost to fixed term exclusions from pupils placed in CBC schools continue to drop
- All pupils now placed in good or better non-residential schools when moving schools.
- Early identification and support for schools to access statutory assessment for KS1 children
- Effective partnership working with the Youth Support Service and Social Care to engage 15 – 19 year old Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) in education
- Maintaining the most vulnerable learners engaged in learning while appropriate placements are found
- Partnership working with other VSHs to prevent the exclusions of LAC placed in CBC schools from other LAs
- Partnership working with schools in and out of LA to prevent the permanent exclusion of young people.

Council Priorities

55. The report supports two of the priorities in Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan: 'Improve educational attainment' and 'protect the vulnerable', and also Central Bedfordshire's Medium Term Plan: Delivering your priorities – Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016 within the specific priority of Improved Educational Attainment.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

56. The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children it looks after regardless of where they live. In Central Bedfordshire, this duty is delivered through the work of the Virtual School for LAC in partnership with schools and other services.

57. 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.

58. The Virtual School Head became a statutory post in June 2014.

Financial Implications

59. The Virtual School is fully funded through the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) High Needs Block. It also holds the retained element of the Pupil

Premium as agreed by schools which is allocated for individual pupils according to their particular needs

Equalities Implications

60. As Corporate Parents our aim is that Looked After Children have the same life opportunities as all children

Key areas for development

61. Key issues/areas for Development (See Appendix A for detail)

- Attendance of pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11
- KS4 attainment.
- School placements for children/young people with statements/EHCPs placed out of CBC.
- Reduce the number of days lost to fixed term exclusions of pupils placed in schools outside of CBC.

Appendices

Appendix A – Virtual School Development Plan 2015-16

Background Papers

None