

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

14 March 2016

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 validated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2014/15. 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. The Head of the Virtual School role was expanded on 1 May 2015 to become Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Learners. The aim of this combined role is 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. This reorganisation of roles enables increased rigour and cross agency focus to support children who might be vulnerable and on the edge of care.
5. To support this restructure and ensure capacity for the Head of Service to take a more strategic role, a Team Leader for the Virtual School has been appointed and started on 4 January 2016. The post holder is initially focussing on the quality assurance of PEPs, monitoring the effective use of pupil premium particularly in early year's settings and in and out of Central Bedfordshire.
6. The Virtual School 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.
7. In addition, the Virtual School has pupils on roll who are living within Central Bedfordshire and who attend Central Bedfordshire schools, but who are in the care of other councils.
8. The team 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. As at February 2016 the total number of Central Bedfordshire pupils of statutory school age who are part of the Virtual School is 187 (Reception to Year 11). A further 16 pupils left care in the last 6 months. 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. There are currently 21 three and four olds who qualify for pupil premium who are placed in early year settings in and out of Central Bedfordshire. Many of these children are placed with adoptive parents but remain looked after until the adoption has been finalised by the courts.

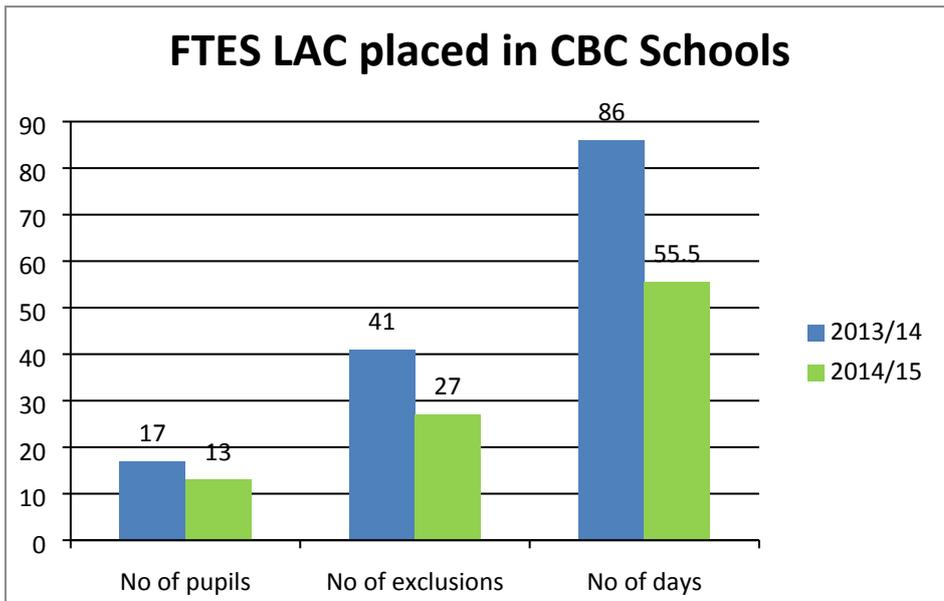
10. There is a statutory requirement to monitor the progress of all LAC and to ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP records children's previous educational experiences and attainment as well as setting targets for future achievement. The nominated social worker and the designated teacher at the school 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 of each child. All Virtual School staff now have access to pupil progress data through Aspire Fisher Family Trust (FFT) which allows them to monitor targets set by schools.
11. The Virtual School are now linking PEP meetings where possible to other statutory meetings for example LAC reviews or SEND reviews to reduce bureaucracy. This enables appropriate support and challenge with regard to ensuring pupils are making expected or better than expected progress. The Team Leader is now robustly quality assuring the PEP process including the documentation.
12. The PEPs now have 2 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 have been some amendments to this section to reflect the new assessment processes in schools. 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.
13. In April 2011 the Government introduced the Pupil Premium. The amount increased in April 2014 to £1900.
14. 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.
15. 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. This will remain the same in 2016/17. The £500 per term is released to the schools following the return of good

quality PEPs that evidence that the funding is being used to meet the needs of the child.

16. There is 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. There are now opportunities for social workers and carers to apply for this additional funding, as well as schools. Examples of how this funding is being used are:
- i. High quality 1:1 tuition as part of a personalised curriculum for some of our most vulnerable learners;
 - ii. Additional adult support in schools to support learners to access learning;
 - iii. Access to IT equipment to support learning;
 - iv. Extended learning opportunities including play therapy;
 - v. Incentive programmes for Y11 learners to encourage attendance and attainment.
17. The Governing Body is now well established and 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

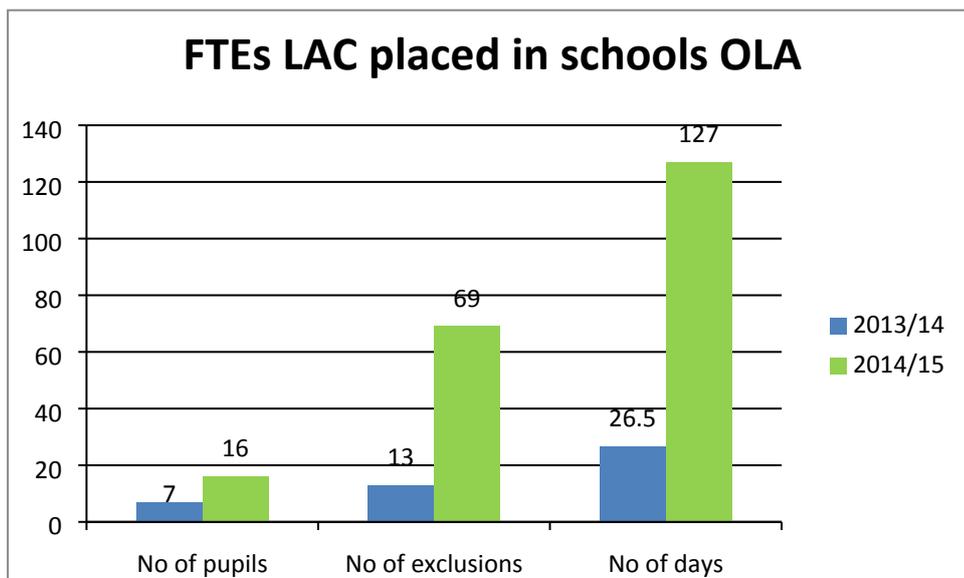
18. There was 1 permanent exclusion during 2014/15 for serious misconduct. The Virtual School worked closely with other agencies including social care, providing 1:1 tuition while the transfer to the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) was arranged. The student is now making good progress at the ACB. There have been no permanent exclusions of a LAC this year to date.
19. 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.
20. In the academic year 2013/14 there were a total of 86 days lost as a result of fixed term exclusions (FTE) 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.



21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.



24. 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

25. 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.

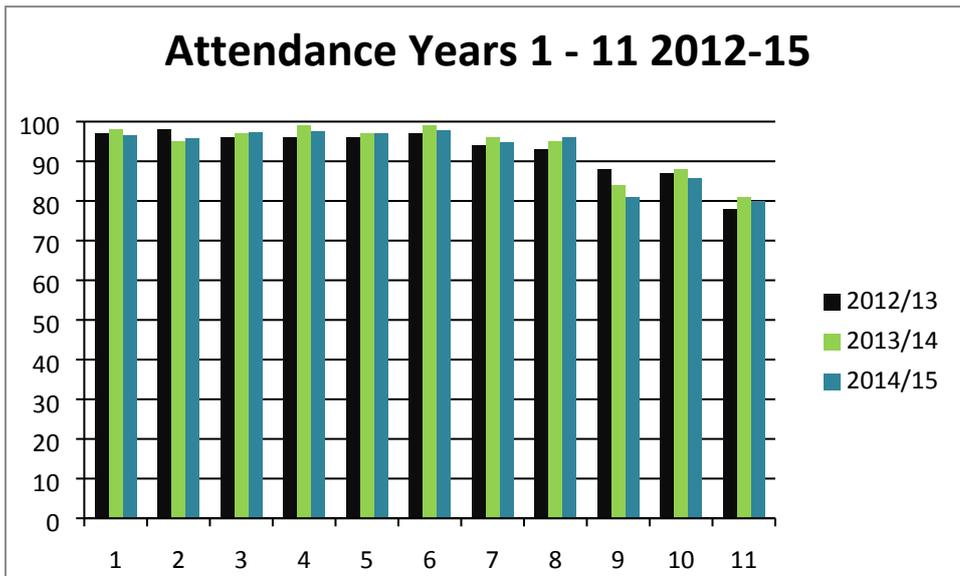
26. Looked After Call contacts all schools where there is a pupil of statutory school age both in and outside of Central Bedfordshire. If a pupil is absent the carer and/or social worker is contacted to ascertain the reason for absence.

27. 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.

28. The Virtual School receives daily updates regarding all pupils on the day they are reported absent if no acceptable reason for this absence has been recorded by the school. 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.

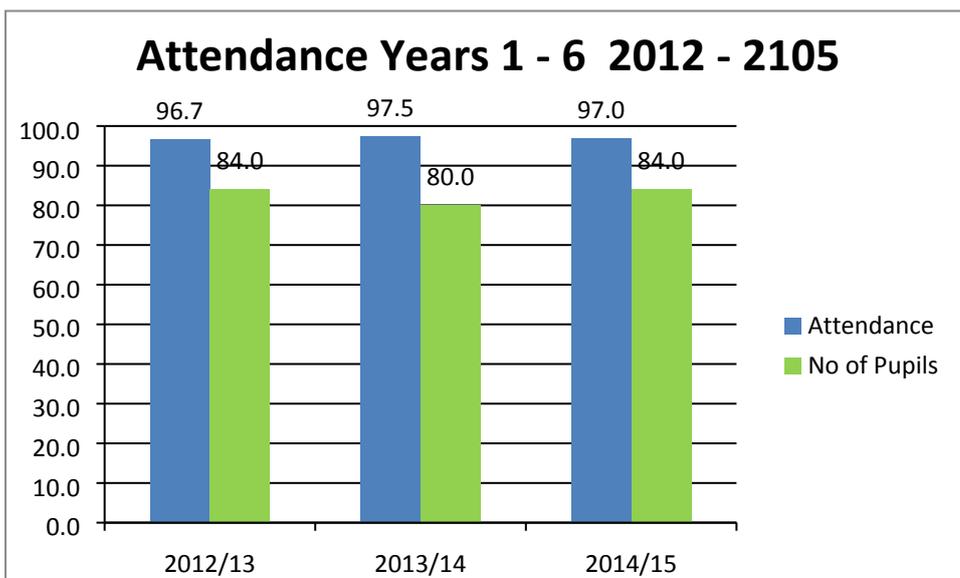
29. Although overall attendance in 2014/15 has fallen, the majority of pupils' attendance is over 95% (106 of 174), with 19 pupils with 100% attendance.

30. 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 year groups, 1 or 2 pupils will have a significant impact upon whole school year attendance.



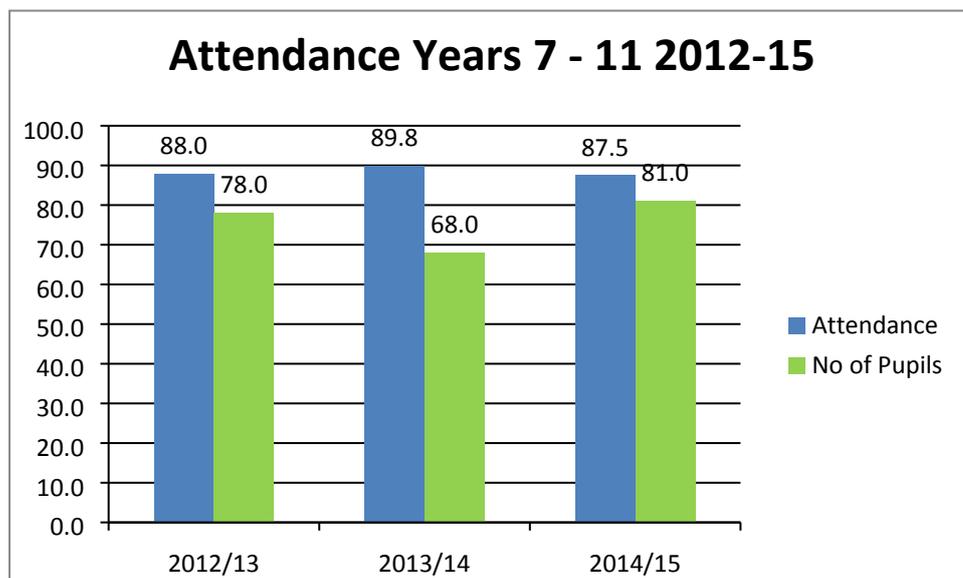
31. The Virtual School is working with schools and young people to re-engage them in learning. Individual tutors are commissioned where the pupil needs it to ensure access to learning if a pupil is not attending school. The Virtual School now has a Personal Adviser who works directly with these young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

32. The following table demonstrates that in the primary year groups overall attendance has reduced by 0.5%. This has been influenced by a number of children undergoing statutory assessment for special educational needs and disability (SEND) resulting in new schools being identified when their additional needs have been identified. Currently whole school data to compare attendance of LAC against non-LAC is not available.



33. 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.



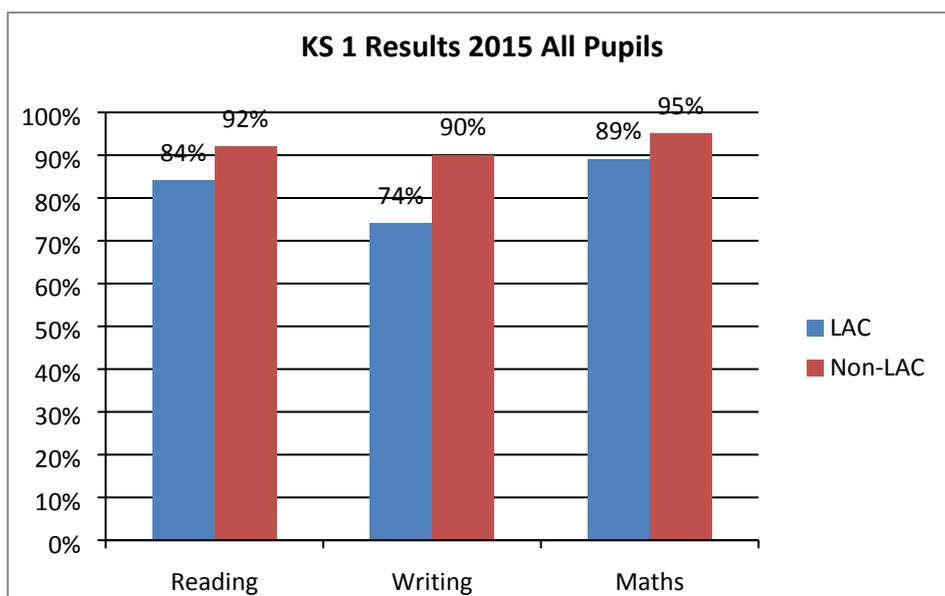
34. Attendance can be low where pupils have moved placement or have spent some time waiting for a school place in other authorities, or where they have had periods on part-time timetables. Currently all pupils where attendance has been identified as a concern are being closely monitored by both the Virtual School and Social Care.
35. 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.
36. 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.
37. 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.
38. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.

Pupils' Achievement

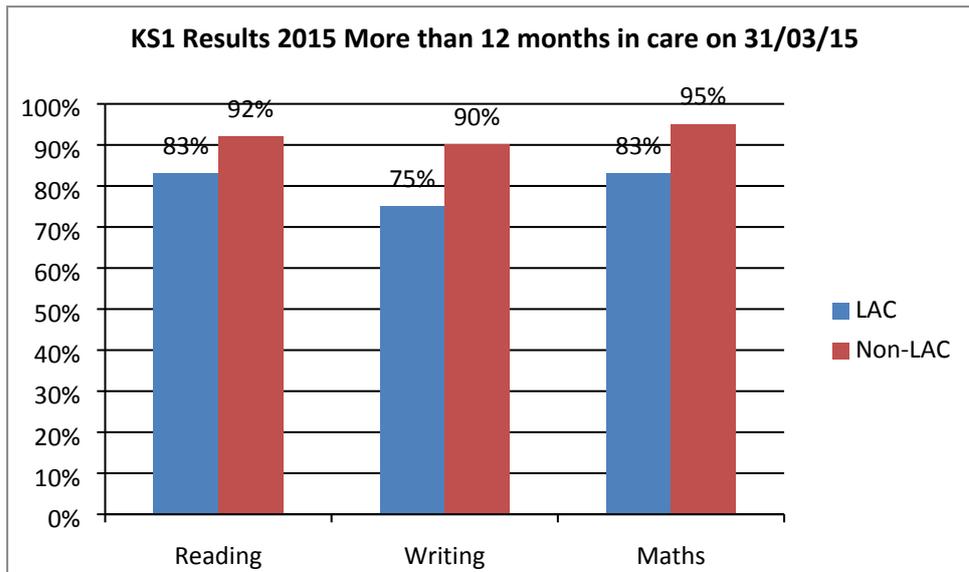
39. Progress and achievement data is collected using the PEP process on a termly basis. The Virtual School analyses the data and works with schools to identify appropriate next steps.
40. The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2015 will be available in March 2016 so national comparisons will be reported in an update in April 2016.

Validated Key Stage 1 results

41. 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/Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for SEND.
 - b) 11 pupils were educated in Central Bedfordshire schools, 8 pupils in schools in other Local Authorities (OLA).
 - c) 16 out of 19 pupils (**84%**) achieved the expected level or above (level 2) in reading, 14 out of 19 pupils (**74%**) in writing, and 18 out of 19 pupils (**89%**) in maths.
 - d) Of these 19 pupils, 13 out of 19 pupils (**68%**) achieved level 2 or above in all 3 subject areas.
 - e) Of the 11 pupils educated in Central Bedfordshire, 10 pupils (**91%**) achieved the expected level or above in reading, 9 pupils (**82%**) in writing and 10 pupils (**91%**) in mathematics.
 - f) Of the 8 pupils educated OLA where we have the data, 6 pupils (**75%**) achieved level 2 in reading, 6 pupils (**75%**) in writing and 7 pupils (**88%**) in mathematics.
42. In comparison with all KS1 pupils in Central Bedfordshire the gap has closed in all curriculum areas. For LAC in Central Bedfordshire schools the gap has narrowed even further, particularly in reading and maths, bringing these pupils' outcomes almost in line with all children.



43. The following data is for pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire **who have been LAC for over 12 months on 31 March 2015 (this is the national measure)**.
- a) 12 pupils were LAC on 31 March 2015 for whom we have data, 1 (6%) of whom has a statement/EHCP.
 - b) 5 pupils are in CBC schools, and 7 pupils 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 5 pupils (**100%**) in maths.
 - d) 4 out of the 5 pupils (**80%**) achieved level 2 in all 3 areas
 - e) Of the 7 pupils attending schools OLA, 6 pupils (**86%**) achieved level 2 or above in reading, 5 (**71%**) in writing and 5 pupils in maths (**71%**).
 - f) 5 out of 7 pupils (**71%**) attending schools OLA achieved level 2 or above in all 3 subject areas
 - g) 10 out of 12 pupils (**83%**) achieved level 2 or above in reading, 9 out of 12 pupils (**75%**) level 2 or above in writing and 10 out 12 pupils level 2 or above in maths (**83%**)



44. In comparison with all KS1 pupils in Central Bedfordshire the gap has closed in all curriculum areas. For LAC in Central Bedfordshire schools the gap has narrowed even further particularly in maths where LAC in CBC schools out-performed non-LAC pupils.

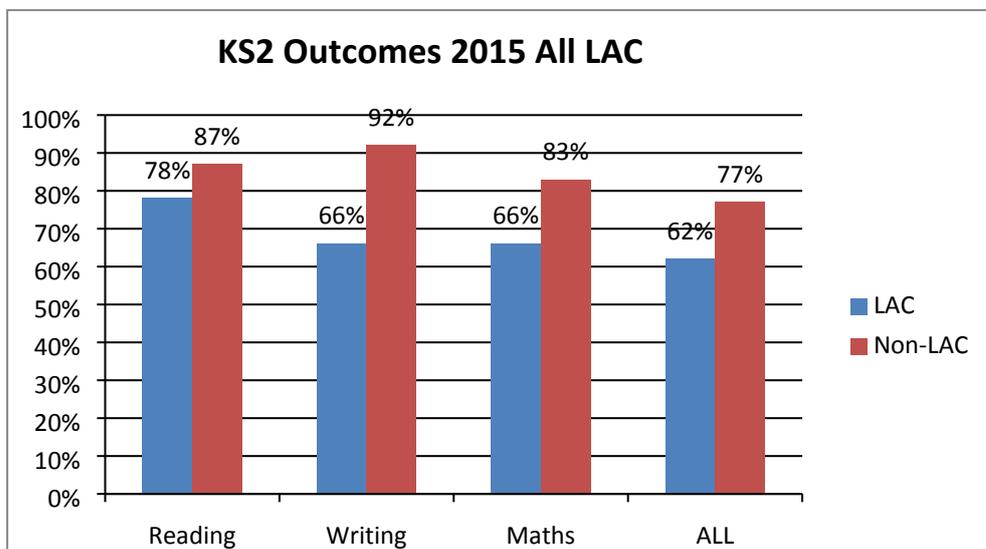
Validated Key Stage 2 results

45. The following data is for **all** pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire, **not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months**. 1 school with 1 pupil with a statement of SEND has had their data suppressed. 1 pupil was educated in Wales and made good progress prior to returning to CBC. **This data therefore 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 1 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. Of the 9 pupils educated in CBC schools 5 pupils (**55%**) achieved level 4 in reading, 3 (**33%**) in writing and 4 (**44%**) in maths.

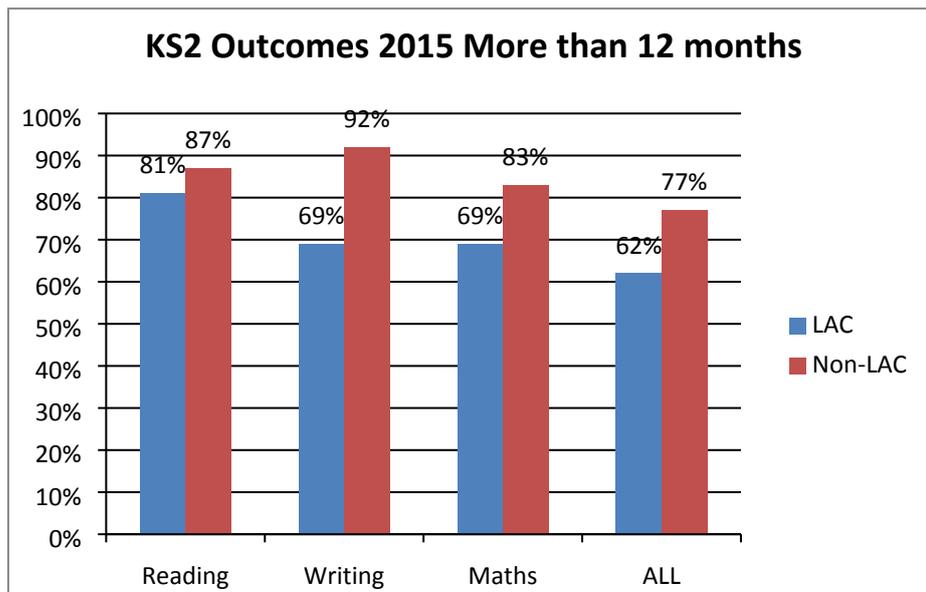
- i. Of the 9 pupils educated OLA 9 pupils (**100%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading, 9 pupils (**100%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading and 8 pupils (**89%**) in mathematics.
- j. 3 pupils out of 18 (**17%**) made **3 levels of progress** between KS1 and KS2 in **writing**
- k. Of the 18 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.
- l. 9 out of 11 pupils (**82%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in **maths**
- m. 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**
- n. 11 out of 18 (**62%**) achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths.
- o. 9 out of 11 pupils (**82%**) without an identified SEND achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths.

46. In comparison with all KS2 pupils in Central Bedfordshire we continue to narrow the gap between LAC and all pupils. Pupils placed OLA performed as well as all pupils. However of the 9 pupils in CBC schools 5 had identified SEND, 3 of whom have statements.



47. 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 pupils (**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



Validated Key Stage 4 Results 2014/15

48. There were 21 CBC LAC students 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 7 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) who arrived after May 2015 (see post-16 section).

The following sets out the results in performance table GCSEs or equivalent as identified by the DfE.

- a. 10 out of the 13 students have an identified SEND including 7 with statements
- b. 8 were educated in CBC, 5 were educated OLA
- c. 6 students (4 of whom had an identified SEND) achieved at least 1 A* – C at GCSE
- d. 8 students achieved at least one pass at GCSE
- e. 3 students achieved 3 A* – G including English and mathematics
- f. 4 students were not entered for any performance table recognised qualifications
- g. 2 of these students failed to engage in the education provision put in place for them and had periods of being missing.
- h. The other 2 students had a statement of SEND, made expected progress and achieved vocational qualifications.

49. All the above pupils continue to access effective support from Social Care and the Youth Support Service as part of their pathway planning.

Year 12 and 13

50. The Youth Support Service provide a detailed report on the outcomes of post-16 learners the next report will be presented at the May 2016 meeting.

51. 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
52. 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
53. 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)

54. Since March 2014 33 UASC were taken into care by CBC and were identified as being between the ages of 15 and 17 at time of entry.
55. The following outcomes have been achieved by some very effective partnership work between the Virtual School, YSS and Social Care.
56. Currently all of those UASC have accessed tuition to learn English or there are plans in place for them to do so.
57. 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.
58. Currently there are:
- 4 Y11 pupils – 3 have started school, 1 is reported missing and is being followed up robustly by social care teams following statutory guidance.
 - 12 Y12 pupils – 7 are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above courses, 5 recently arrived started a programme of learning English as an additional language in November 2015.
 - 12 Y13 pupils – 11 are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above
 - 5 Y14 pupils – all are attending college on Entry Level 1 or above

Summary of strengths

59. Key Strengths:

- Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 continues to improve.
- The number of days lost to fixed term exclusions from pupils placed in CBC schools continue to drop.
- All pupils are now placed in Ofsted judged good or better schools when moving schools.
- Early identification and support for schools to access statutory assessment for KS1 children with SEND where appropriate.
- 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

60. The report supports the priorities in Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan 2015-2020, and in particular ***Improving Education and Skills***.

61. The Council's Executive approved the Partnership Vision for Education in August 2015 which supports our ambition to:

- We will be in the top quartile nationally at the end of each Key Stage.
- The Free School Meals Gap and other Vulnerable Pupils Gap will narrow.
- We will increase the percentage of good and outstanding schools.

Corporate Implications

62. As Corporate Parents all members of the Council have responsibility for supporting improving outcomes for LAC.

Legal Implications

63. 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.

64. 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.

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

Financial Implications

66. 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

67. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

68. Research indicates that education is a key determinant of life chances. As well as being a right in itself, education is an enabling right, allowing individuals to develop the skills, capacity and confidence to secure other rights and economic opportunities. Education-related inequalities have an impact over an individual's life-span, not just in childhood. The Children and Families Act 2014 provides greater protection to vulnerable children in relation to education and learning. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently highlighted that whilst some improvements have been seen in relation to the attainment of Looked After Children, performance remains below that of other pupils and should continue to be seen as a priority.

Key areas for development

69. Key priorities/areas for Development in 2015/2016 (See Appendix A for detail)

- Improving attendance of pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11
- Improving attainment at KS4.
- Improving process for identifying 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.
- Demonstrating effective use of Early Years pupil premium

Appendices

Appendix A – Virtual School Development Plan 2015-16

Background Papers

None