

Virtual School Governing Body

Virtual Headteacher update – October 2016

The purpose of this report is to provide regular updates to the Virtual School Governing Body and the Corporate Parenting Panel. It will enable the Governing Body to scrutinise, challenge and support the work of the Virtual School. It will also ensure that elected members are kept fully informed of the progress of the work of the Virtual School throughout the year. Elected members will have the opportunity to ask questions relating to the update at Corporate Parenting Panel meetings.

Updates:

a. Attendance & Exclusions

Looked After Children (LAC) should be given every opportunity to achieve their full educational potential through promoting opportunities for learning within and outside of school. As a minimum legal requirement, Looked After Children should be attending suitable education on a full time basis from the term following their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which they are 16. The place where children receive their education will be based on the age, aptitude and ability and any special needs they may have. For most children, this will be a mainstream school.

Parents and others with parental responsibility are legally responsible for the children in their care receiving education. They are responsible for ensuring their children attend school (with the appropriate lunch, uniform and equipment) and for supporting their learning. This includes making arrangements for the child to get to and be collected from school. They are expected to contact school if there are attendance problems and to work with the school and other professionals concerned to resolve them. They are expected to arrange any medical and other appointments outside school hours wherever possible and to avoid taking family holidays during term time.

Foster carers are expected to do all things a good parent would do to promote their child's education and attendance at school.

2015/16 LAC Attendance

The data in Tables 1 and 2 below is for the 2015/16 academic year, and is taken from the local authority's data systems for in authority children, and from the Virtual School's records for children in schools out of authority.

Table 1: Attendance at In Authority Schools

NCY	No. in Year Group	Present	Total	Average Attendance %
-1	9	1306	1495	87.4%
0	14	4292	4565	94.0%
1	13	3914	4233	92.5%
2	17	5566	5791	96.1%
3	13	3981	4150	95.9%
4	20	6302	6444	97.8%
5	16	5618	5812	96.7%
6	14	4433	4572	97.0%
7	13	4174	4337	96.2%
8	18	5448	6076	89.7%
9	26	6124	7312	83.8%
10	24	5852	7551	77.5%
11	27	5373	7245	74.2%
Total	224	63820	71168	89.7%

NCY	Under 90%	90% or over	% Under PA Threshold
-1	4	5	44%
0	2	12	14%
1	3	10	23%
2	2	15	12%
3	2	11	15%
4		20	0%
5	1	15	6%
6	1	13	7%
7	2	11	15%
8	6	12	33%
9	13	13	50%
10	11	13	46%
11	16	11	59%
Total	63	161	28%

Persistent absence threshold changed from 85% to 90% in the 2015/16 academic year.

The attendance data for Rotherham schools is currently taken from the Capita ONE system. There are a number of issues with this data:

- The system does not necessarily hold all the data required.
- Some schools do not update the system in a timely manner.
- If pupils are LAC the system is not always up to date with Local Authority 'Became Looked After' and 'Ceased to be Looked After', so data does not always reflect the relevant care period.
- There is no statutory duty on schools/academies to provide this information.
- The system did not allow the local authority to know on a daily basis whether the child is in school or not.

The Virtual School has commissioned Welfare Call to monitor attendance from the start of the 2016/17 academic year to address the issues outlined above.

Table 2: Attendance at Out of Authority Schools

NCY	No. in Year Group	Available sessions	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Total Absence	Sessions present	Average Attendance %
0	2	282	6		6	276	97.9%
1	4	994	85		85	909	91.4%
2	4	1090	95		95	993	91.1%
3	5	1346	17		17	1329	98.7%
4	7	2247	5	1	6	2240	99.7%
5	12	3426	32	2	34	3390	98.9%
6	12	4032	115	3	118	3909	96.9%
7	12	3937	76	2	78	3856	97.9%
8	14	4063	275	6	281	3683	90.6%
9	19	4496	382	11	393	3827	85.1%
10	21	5577	308	14	322	4679	83.9%
11	19	4248	237	9	246	3446	81.1%
Total	131	35738	1633	48	1681	32537	91.0%

Welfare School contact schools, education providers and tutors on a daily basis to ask whether each looked after child is accessing education that day. Attendance monitoring reports are provided to the Virtual School on a daily and weekly basis, and issues where children are not in attendance can be investigated in a timely manner.

Table 3: 2014/15 and 2015/16 Exclusions:

	2014-15	2015-16*
Rotherham all pupils:		
Total number of school-age pupils (Spring census)	39142	39403
Total number of fixed term exclusions	4192	4156*
Total number of exclusion days lost to education	8568.5	7728.5*
Total number of permanent exclusions	55	55
Rotherham LAC:		
Total number of school-age LAC (in and out of authority - March census)	325	345
Total number of fixed term exclusions	234	204*
Total number of exclusion days lost to education	457	510.5*
Total number of moves to avoid permanent exclusions	8	9 (8 pupils)

NB LA data taken from Capita which presents a limited picture.

***These exclusion figures will change because not all schools have submitted their exclusion data for 2015-16 yet**

b. Personal Education Plans (PEPs):

- % of LAC with up-to-date PEP:
 - Social care data
 - 95.6% of compulsory school age children had an up to date PEP at the end of July (based social care data recorded in CCM). This had fallen to 93% in August as no ePEPs were completed in the month due to schools being closed.
 - Virtual School data (summer term 2016)
 - 100% (25 of 25) of Early Years children aged 3-4 had ePEPs
 - 97% (155 of 160) compulsory school age pupils had ePEPs
 - 98% (40 of 41) post-16 young people had ePEPs.
- ePEP quality assurance (ePEP QA):
 - Of the ePEPs signed off this term:
 - 71% are good or better
 - 3% are inadequate

The issue with those that have areas for improvement is that the targets are not SMART
- Current key ePEP issues:
 - To increase the number of foster carers accessing the ePEP system.
 - Capacity issue within the Virtual School team to address increased numbers.
 - Attendance and participation of some social workers in the ePEP process.
 - Impact of turnover of social workers on consistency of approach.
 - The percentage of non-completion of social worker section in ePEP.
 - Delay in schools completing and submitting specific, measurable, achievable and realistic ePEPs after the ePEP meeting.
 - Some schools not using SMART targets or seeking LAC pupil premium funding.
 - Quality of data within Capita in order to inform effective planning and evaluation.
 - Level of school aged LAC exclusions.

c. Staffing update:

- Vacancies:
 - The post of post-16 LAC advocate is currently vacant (since end August 2016). Approval has been given to recruit to this post.

- Approval has been received to seek a business support Apprentice for the Virtual School.
- CPD:
 - Staff are still completing Liquidlogic training that will enable them to access the new system.
 - Pete Douglas (Assistant Virtual Head, Secondary) and Dan Chedgzoy (Data Manager & ePEP Coordinator) are now part of the 'Rising Stars' programme. Tina Hohn is waiting to hear whether she has been successful in accessing management training through ADCS.

d. Finance/budget update:

Following the withdrawal of the DSG, LAC PP funding was used in the financial year 2015/16 to fund part of the Virtual School costs (£100,000). This is a legitimate spend of LAC PP as the role of advocates to champion LAC education at every PEP meeting to help improve outcomes is not a core function. This financial year it is the LA's intention to fund from the High Needs Block.

e. Training others:

It is the Virtual School Head's role to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children. (Statutory guidance – 'Promoting the education of looked after children' – July 2014).

The following is an outline of the training arrangements in place:

- 'Attachment Lead' training:
 - Schools participating in the accredited Attachment Lead training are:
 - Virtual School
 - Brinsworth Academy
 - St Bernard's Catholic High
 - Dinnington High
 - Canklow Woods Primary
 - Maltby Redwood Primary
 - Rawmarsh Ashwood Primary
 - Coleridge Primary
 - Newman School
 - Milton School
 - The Willows
 - Rotherham Aspire
 - Each school is required to send a member of their SLT and an additional member of staff (usually pastoral). Pete Douglas and Tina Hohn from the

Virtual School are participating with the specialist LAC Educational Psychologist in attendance.

- Each school will receive £2000 (LAC pupil premium) to support the work they will do across the whole school to develop their practice with respect to LAC. They are required to provide a case study to the Virtual School for sharing with others and are also required to present their case study/workshop to other schools at the Designated Teacher conference at the end of the Summer Term 2017.
 - The development of a keyworker network is planned, this will be supported by the Virtual School including the LAC EP.
- Social Care training:
 - Strategic discussions are currently taking place with social care to develop and embed induction and ongoing training on education issues & processes for all social workers including supervisory, duty, locality and EVOLVE.
 - A themed training offer for foster carers is in place and covers all age phases of education. It is the intention that this training be made mandatory.
 - Pre-approval and induction training for all foster carers on education is currently being developed and will become a mandatory part of their training.

f. Other updates:

- A specialist LAC Educational Psychologist has been commissioned as part of a 2-year project from the LA's EP service. Two EP's have been appointed as a job-share secondment from the existing EP service to fulfil this role. The start date is anticipated to be early November. This post is being funded from LAC pupil premium.

The objective of the project is to develop the understanding of all professionals involved on issues around the emotional health and well-being of the child. This role will have responsibility for all the Attachment & Trauma work, the MAST project (Multi Agency Support Team) and other training for education settings in this area with the aim of stabilising those placements.

Initial assessments around the emotional health and well-being of the child (Boxall profiles) are being commissioned from the Inclusion Support Service for children new into care. The specialist LAC EP will also be working with schools to develop and embed the use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires which can be used to support the identification of SMART targets on social, emotional and mental health issues. This will form part of the school's graduated response to the child's needs.

Lorraine Dale

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7th October 2016