

Virtual School Annual Report 2021-2022



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Early Years & Primary**

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Secondary & Post 16**



Virtual School Rotherham
Belong, believe, achieve

Our Vision

Rotherham Virtual School will work together, with all partners, to ensure we are the team of champions our young people deserve. Providing support and encouragement to all our young people so that they:

- experience stability and feel safe, cared for, valued, supported, and trusted as part of our wider Rotherham Family
- are confident, have a strong sense of identity and are empowered to be independent to enjoy learning and have fun
- achieve well both academically and socially and reach their full potential
- above all, we want our young people to be proud of who they are, who they are becoming and to own their story.



Rotherham's Promises to Children in Care & Care Leavers

We will...

- help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm
- help you to explore and be ready for the world of work
- help you to be happy and healthy
- help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs
- help you take part in activities that you enjoy or that you are interested in
- help you to learn new skills as you grow up and become an adult
- fully involve you in plans and decisions about you and your future
- help you to learn and do your best in your early years setting, school and college
- listen to what you have to say and make sure it makes a difference



Virtual School Head Summary

Rotherham's looked after children have shown resilience and capacity to adapt and change. Schools and education settings returned to the 'new normal' and to standard statutory assessments. Despite the challenges of navigating this landscape, our children continue to inspire and fill us with pride as they meet and exceed expectations.

Our children's success is built on their dedication and hard work, and the support and commitment of a wide team of adults who work with and for them. Virtual School provides high level support to all stakeholders, rigorous tracking and monitoring of our children and ensure good quality, termly PEP meetings for all. Building on the support, training, and development opportunities from our team of Education Advisers, Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists, Rotherham Virtual School has continued to adapt, develop, and strengthen the offer available to our children. New interventions provide our children the opportunity to fulfil their potential, despite the barriers they face throughout their learning journey:

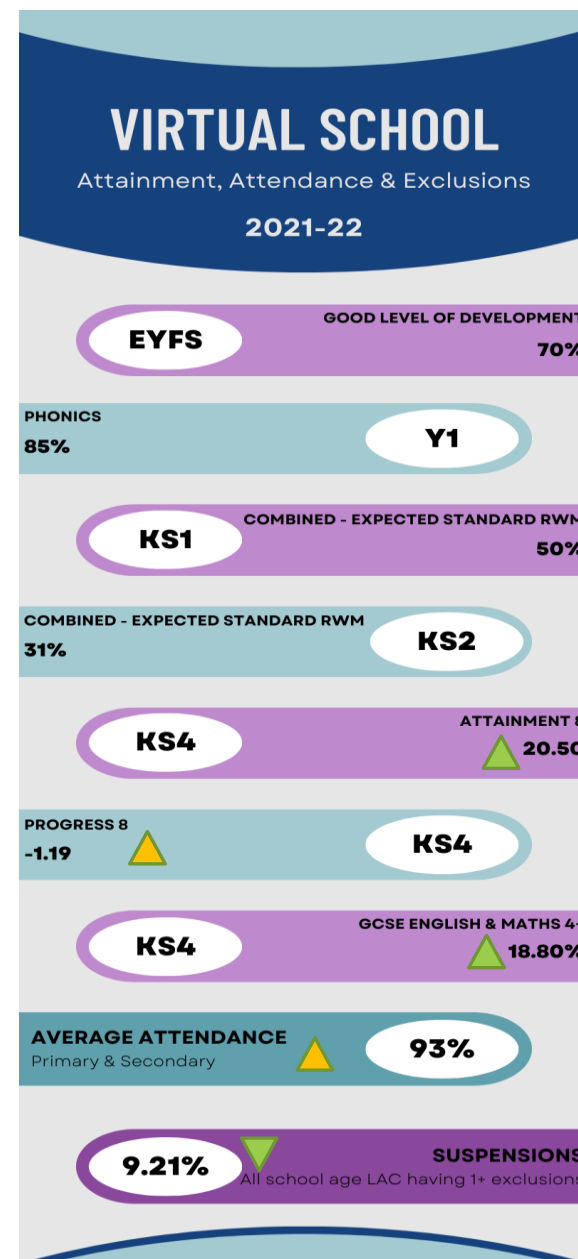
- Letterbox club for our key stage 3 children to support reading.
- New into care packages providing a range of books and materials to enhance literacy and encourage a love of reading.

- Sensory support and toolkit to support advice and training to primary schools, parents/carers and children and other agencies including the LAC nursing service.
- EMOSI - a transcultural therapeutic service for primary aged children, which supports children to recognise and have a sense of personal identity.
- Emotional Based School Avoidance training to schools and care providers to improve understanding and support children back into education.
- Careers guidance support to children who are NEET.
- Consultations for Designated teachers were provided by the Virtual School Education Psychologists.

The team are adapting to life after Covid. They have been returning to schools to support PEP and other meetings. The opportunity to meet some of our children for the first time in person has been a pleasure.

This is the first year of validated Early Years and Primary data since the COVID 19 pandemic.

National attainment at GCSE grade 4 and above in English and Maths, dropped by 4%. For the same measure, Our children's GCSE outcome data improved from last year by 5%



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Purpose and role of the virtual school

Rotherham Virtual School is determined to raise educational achievement for all Looked After Children and provide them with the best start in life. We have the highest aspirations for our children and support their emotional health and wellbeing to ensure they can reach their full potential. We work with an increasing number of agencies to guarantee our children are able to access the right support, at the right time and provide wider opportunities to increase their cultural capital and enhance their world of experiences.

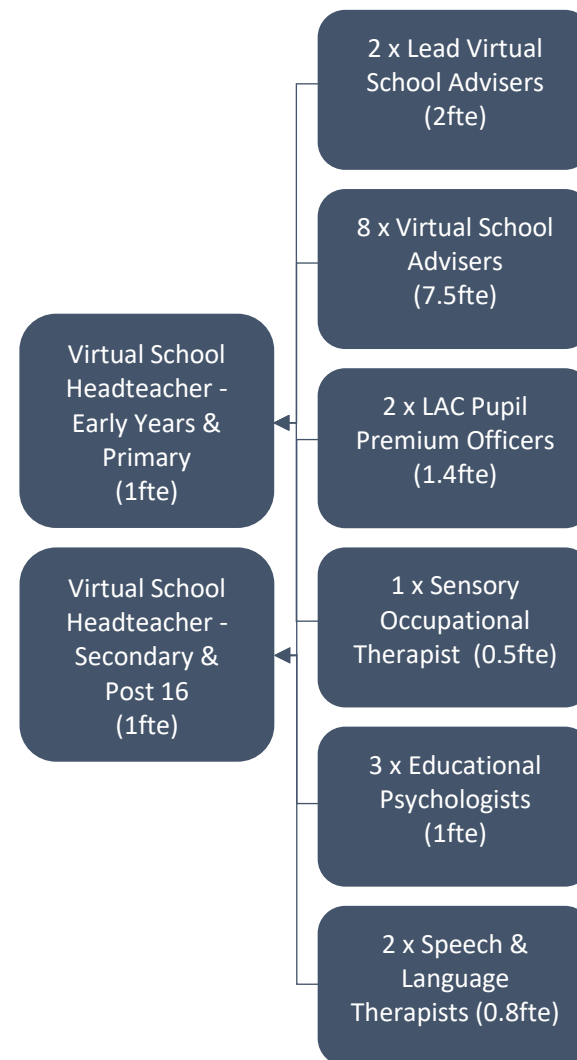
The Virtual School will support and empower children and young people in our care by:

- Ensuring all our children’s needs, both in and out of borough, are thoroughly understood and that each child has a detailed, up to date, termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) that clearly outlines the plans in place to meet these needs.
- Tracking and monitoring the progress, attainment and attendance of Looked After Children and provide support and challenge where needed.
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are identified and appropriately supported in a timely manner.
- Ensuring that the emotional, mental and physical health needs of our children are understood and appropriate support

from a wide range of specialist agencies is made available.

- Training the team who support our children, equipping them to fully understand their needs and develop appropriate strategies to remove barriers.
- Working with schools, SEND teams and admissions authorities to ensure our children are placed in the right school within timescales.
- Ensuring any child on a part-time timetable is receiving an appropriate offer and that all parties are working together to support a swift return to full time education.
- Providing bespoke support, from the wider Virtual School team (EPS/SALT/Sensory) to schools and other settings to reduce and prevent exclusions.
- Virtual School commissioning a number of wider activities and support to raise aspirations and increase the breadth of experience for our children.

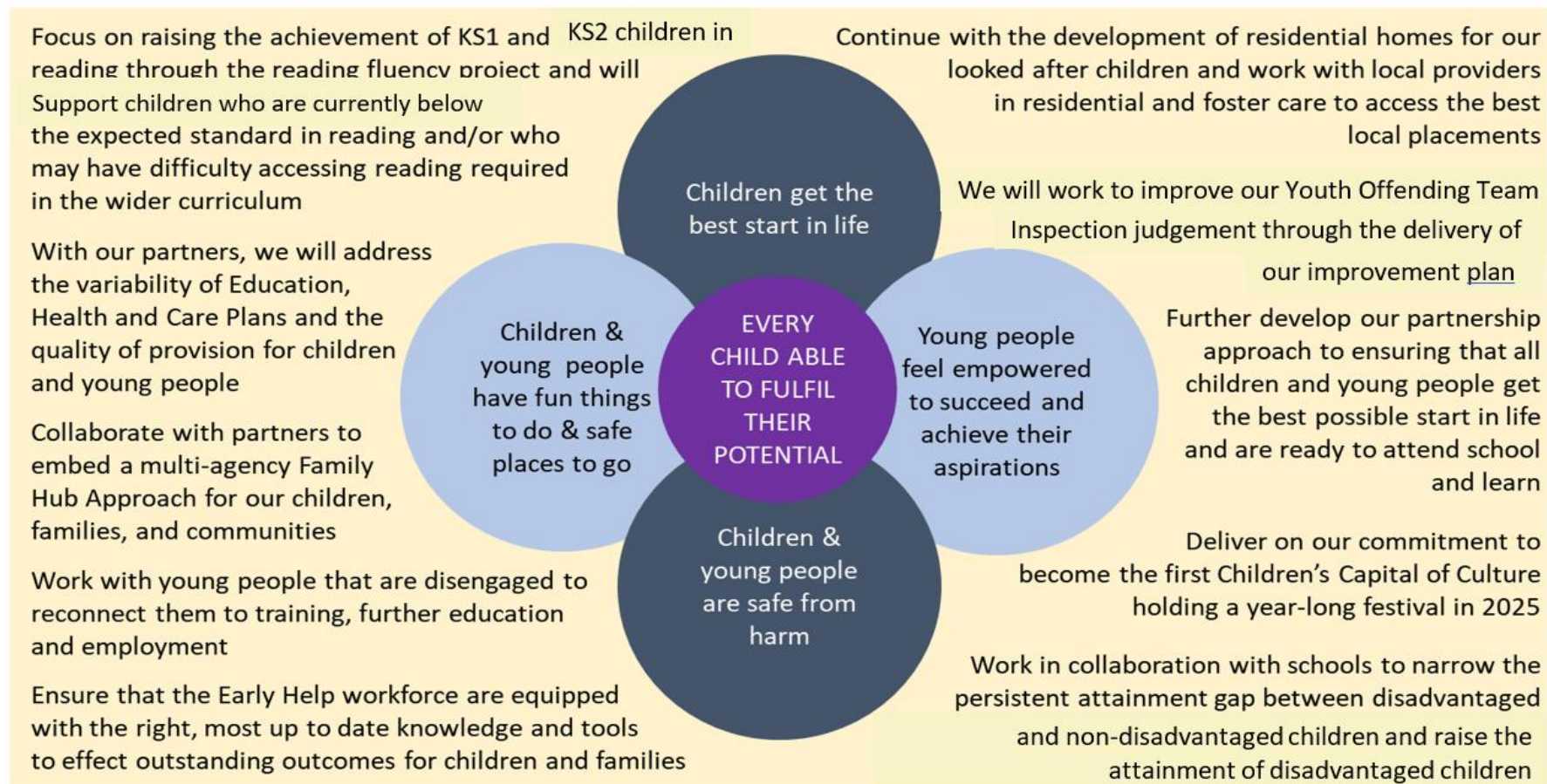
Virtual School works closely with schools, Social Care and other agencies, providing high support and high challenge to ensure that all our children are resilient, successful and safe.



Supporting Rotherham's Council Plan

Part of the Virtual School's role is to support the wider Children & Young Peoples service in delivering against the outcomes laid out in the Rotherham's Council Plan. This plan outlines themes for each directorate with 'Every child able to fulfil their potential' being the theme for Children and young people services (CYPS). Within this theme there are four key outcomes which are: Children get the best start in life; Children and young people are safe from harm; Young people feel empowered to succeed and achieve their aspirations; Children and young people have fun things to do and safe places to go. The Virtual School has a key role to play across each of these outcomes.

The diagram below shows the Rotherham Council theme, with each of the four outcomes and the outlined strategic objectives showing how we will fulfil the outcomes.



Wider Responsibilities

Previously Looked After Children

The Virtual School headteachers continue to support Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).

Virtual School headteachers have:

- Provided advice and guidance to schools, social workers and parents/carers around education concerns and challenges for previously looked after children (PLAC).
- Provided access to all Virtual School training including education, attachment and trauma and speech and language to all parents/carers of PLAC.
- Worked alongside the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to develop a regional understanding of the challenges and offer available to parents/carers of PLAC.
- Planned together with the RAA to ensure that a consistent support, advice and guidance offer is available, and any local variations are understood and effectively communicated to parents/carers of PLAC.

Next steps:

- Support the RAA to launch and embed the 'one plan' education planning tool for PLAC.
- Support networking between RAA and school leaders to facilitate information sharing.
- Work alongside the RAA to create and maintain an education frequently asked questions document to support parents and carers of PLAC.
- Provide bespoke education specific training to parents and carers of PLAC.

Extension of the Virtual School Headteachers role

The Virtual School headteachers have continued to develop their role as education champions for all children with a social worker.

Virtual School headteachers have focused on:

- Developing a detailed understanding of the needs of this group through discussions with school leaders, Social Care colleagues and other agencies.
- Raising the profile of this group of children in strategic meetings within the authority and across the education sector.
- Close working with strategic leads within Social Care and Early Help to ensure this group are considered in strategic planning.
- Creating data sets with the performance team to support analysis of the cohort and development of strategic planning and intervention.
- Implementing recommendations, through Child Protection Chairs, for all EYFS children within this cohort to be signed up to Children's Centres.
- Supporting closer links between school leaders and senior managers within the authority.
- Providing education advice and guidance to Early Help and Edge of Care Teams.

Next steps:

- Form a safeguarding and designated safeguarding best practice working party to improve attainment, progress and attendance.
- Organise a safeguarding network meeting to share good practice across the borough and provide networking training
- Provide joint training opportunities with social care and education safeguarding leads to support shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and promote effective collaborative working.
- Finalise a performance scorecard to support monitoring impact.
- Develop a toolkit for schools around supporting this group of children.

Challenges for the Virtual School

Challenges

Increasing emotional health needs and higher levels of anxiety due to the impact and trauma experienced through COVID 19.

Attendance impacted by increase in children presenting with Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

Opportunities for monitoring and assessing learning were minimised, this caused disruption and barriers to learning.

Reduction in the number of settings offering post 16 provision.

Readiness for key transition points.

Action

Further developed the support offer available to schools, carers and our children by incorporating Sensory support and training.
Bespoke provision to support reducing anxiety.

VS EPS delivering training and bespoke support to schools, care placements and carers around EBSA.
Using part time timetables to support reintegration back into school.

PEP meeting challenging questions to unpick where we are now and how to accelerate progress supporting SEN graduated response.

Working with local providers to ensure places for our young people.
Using Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus pilot funding to support emotional health keywork in our largest college and developing innovative work to support children with SEMH.

Focus on SEND graduated response as well as appointing a sensory and OT specialist to work with children, schools and professionals.

Impact

Attendance improvements.
Faster return to full time education for those on alternative pathways.
Percentage of children excluded has fallen again this year.

Increased level of skill for care home staff and schools to support children with EBSA.
Improved attendance and time in school for those children who were not attending due to EBSA.

Developing sensory awareness within all primary schools – delivered by sensory/OT specialist.
VS Speech and Language specialist plans for identified/targeted LAC.

Improvement in Education, Employment and Training (EET) figures.
New provisions offered to children through direct work with local partners.

Robust inclusive transition plans for all phases and supporting school moves.

Challenges

Widening the reach of the work we do to further embed attachment aware and trauma informed practice in schools and education settings. Truly changing culture.

Nursery/school closures and staff absence.

Return to terminal examinations at GCSE, following positive impact of teacher assessment on student outcomes.

Impact of delayed graduated response provided by external agencies especially speech language and communication.

Action

Schools offered access to the level 5 Diploma in Trauma and Mental Health Informed Schools course, to support strategic change and operational understanding in schools.

A percentage of PEP meetings have moved back to in person, providing greater levels of support to schools and allowing Virtual School staff the opportunity to visit and experience schools first hand.

Strategic use of Pupil Premium Plus.

Focus on reading to support better access to examination papers and improve quality of written answers.
Focus on providing tuition through the school led tuition budget focus on core subjects.

Relevant interventions to accelerate progress including a deep dive into reading, pupil voice, speech and language support, tuition, training, effective use of Pupil Premium Plus.

Impact

Higher levels of support have been made available to schools and where there have been challenges these have been identified sooner and support packages and training have been provided.

Implemented 0-2 plan ensuring children access early education funding (EEF) in a timely manner and early identification from birth and support graduated support.

KS4 GCSE English and Maths at Grade 4+ outcomes were in line with the two previous years of teacher assessment and significantly improved on previous terminal assessment.

Children have benefited from high quality reading resources through the reading project as well as skilling up carers to support reading in the home and to promote a love of reading and reflect their experiences.

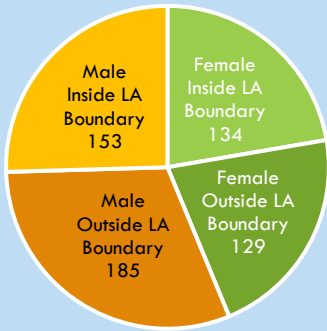
Rotherham Virtual School Demographics

Virtual School serve a wonderfully diverse group of children from 0-18 years of age, with a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Over 75% of our children live in family-based placements. As an authority, it is important to maintain our children's close links with Rotherham, just over 50% live outside of Rotherham and most of these live in the South Yorkshire region. Over a year, the number of children in the Virtual School changes as children enter care and others leave to a permanent home and/or adulthood. It is important for Virtual School to ensure that our children attend the best school in their local area and obtain the best possible outcomes, currently over 4 in 5 children attend a good or outstanding Ofsted rated school. Stability is vital for our children, Virtual School strongly advocate children do not move school. For consistency, some children remain in Requires Improvement schools to maintain positive, supportive relationships and continuity with additional support.

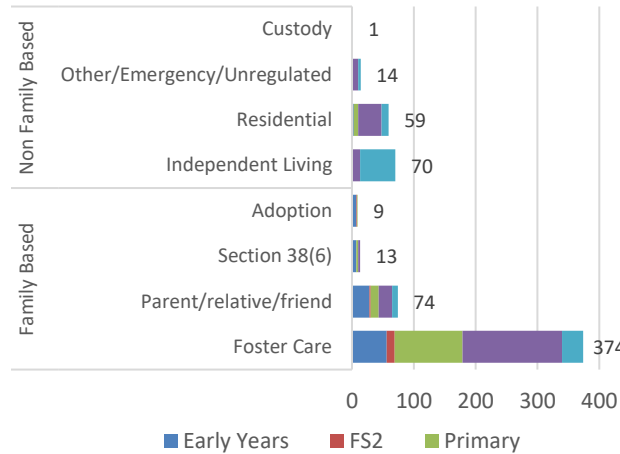
Rotherham LAC (In/OOA)

601 LAC (inc Year 13 care leavers) in Rotherham at the end of the academic year.

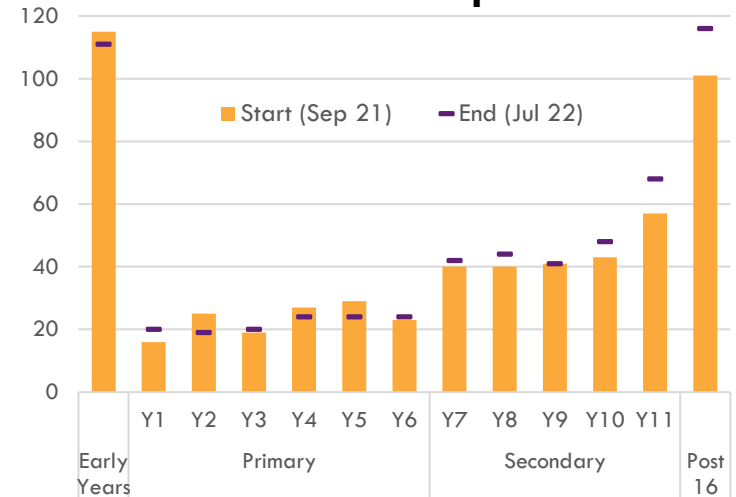
Male 338
Female 263



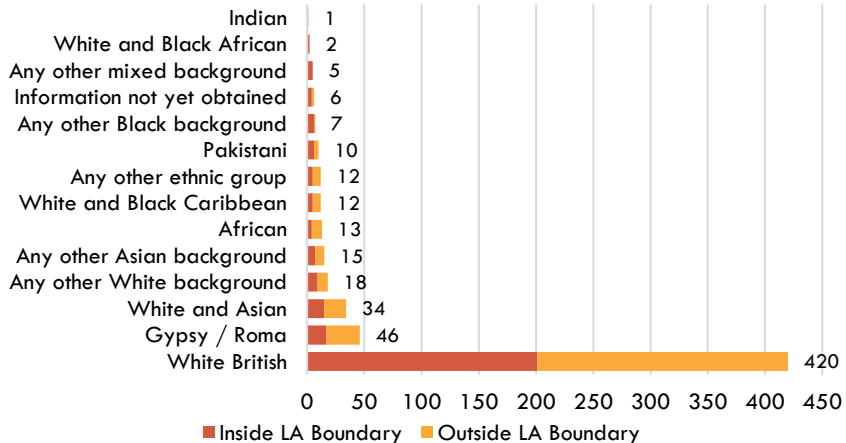
Care placements



Year Groups

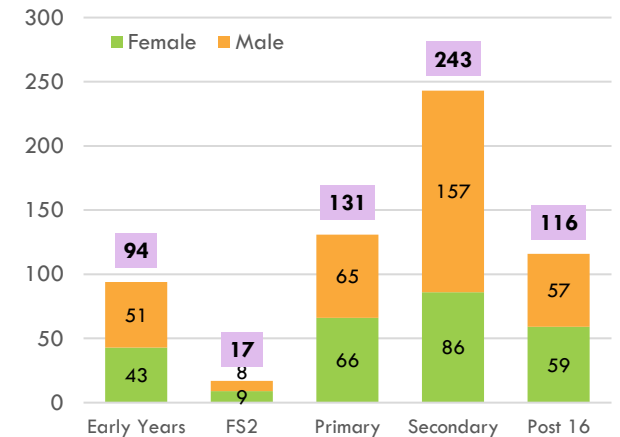


Ethnicity



84.64%
of pupils were in a good or outstanding school (where school has a rating)

Phase & Gender



Demographics continued...

Challenges:

- More of our children have EHCPs than local and national comparators.
- Continued growth in the proportion of our children with primary needs of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and communication, interaction and autism spectrum disorder.
- The majority of children with EHCPs are in the secondary and post 16 cohort.
- We have seen a growth in the number of UASC.

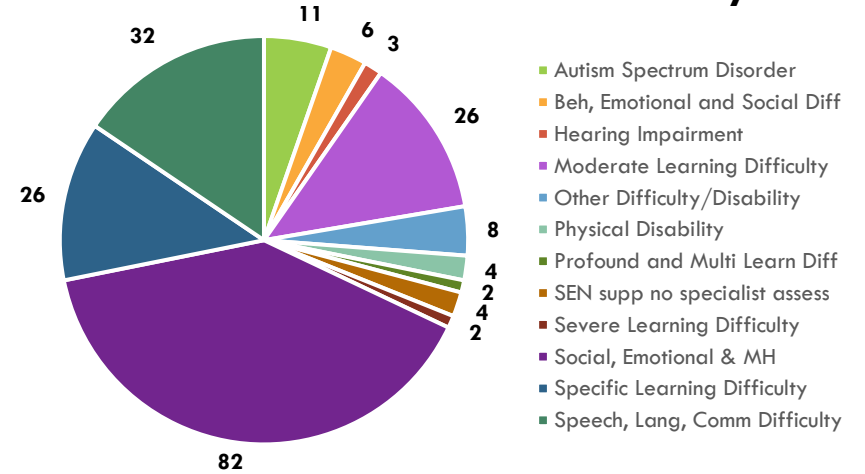
Action:

- Provide wider services, including sensory, to school and carers to increase capacity to meet need in mainstream settings.
- Focus on understanding SEMH needs in terms of communication of need to promote schools understanding and meeting needs.
- Utilise Pupil Premium plus to support schools to meet need without EHCP

Impact:

- Our Children's needs understood and met by those who know them best.
- Reduction in percentage of our children with EHCP
- Increased number of our children maintained in mainstream settings.

SEND Primary Need



35.7% of LAC with SEN but with an EHCP (DFE Cohort)

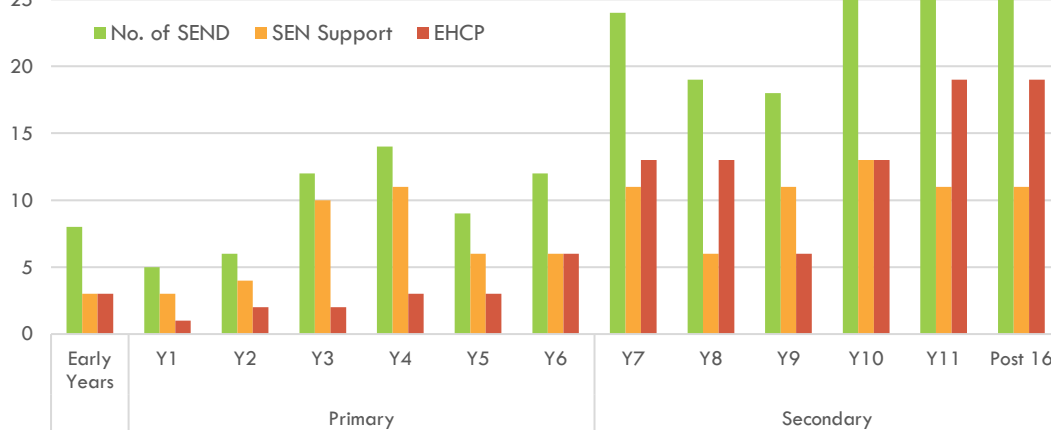
Stat Neighbour Avg - 27.66%
Regional Avg - 28.50%
National Avg - 28.90%
(Latest Benchmarking data is from 2021)

25.2% of LAC with SEN but without an EHCP (DFE Cohort)

Stat Neighbour Avg - 26.81%
Regional Avg - 28.50%
National Avg - 27.40%
(Latest Benchmarking data is from 2021)

SEND breakdown

(as at end July 22)



95.0%
of pupils had an up to date Personal Education Plan

29
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

17
Care Leavers who are former UASC

Early Years

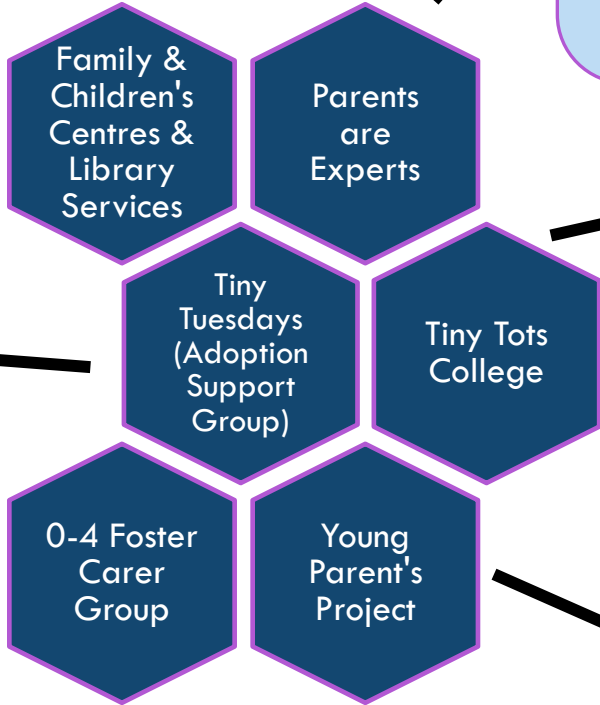
Virtual School strives for all Rotherham Looked After Children to be resilient, successful, and safe to achieve their full potential, as any good parent would want for their children.

From birth, children's early development is rigorously tracked and monitored through regular EDP (Early Developmental Plan) meeting. **Virtual School Early Years Specialist Advisers** work together with all professionals and services (IRO, Social Care, parents/carers) who are involved with the individual child to offer advice, guidance and identify any early gaps and barriers. Parents/carers are provided with bespoke activities and ideas to support the child's individual needs that are age and stage appropriate to close the gaps in development.



This training package shares the most current research into brain development and explains the importance of '1001 days: From Conception to Two'. Training has been delivered to Designated Teachers and to a small group of foster carers. Foster carer's feedback confirmed that the training was "very informative to know how important brain development is for our young people", "the training should be compulsory for all foster carers prior to them receiving a child in their care".

Virtual School support and signpost parents/carers to find local community group/services to attend and access providing further support network and providing opportunities for children to develop their social skills.




A series of workshops providing parents/carers with the knowledge and skills they need to provide high quality learning experiences within their home. A bespoke package has been designed to close the gaps in children's development prior to them starting Early Years provision.

A bespoke package for young parents to develop their understanding of their children's learning and development. The package signposts to multi services available to develop their knowledge of safer sleep, weaning and finding local groups and sourcing appropriate equipment and resources to support learning.

Impact

 All children from birth have a bespoke EDP plan in place to identify and support barriers to learning

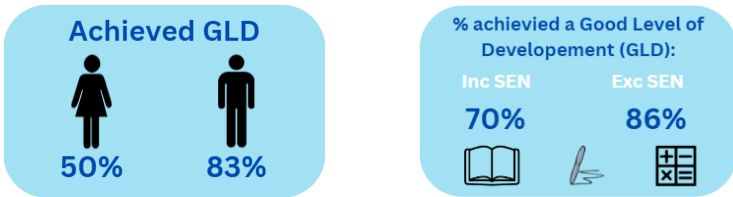
 Number of children accessing 2 year old funding (Early years provision): **100%**

 Number of children accessing 3 and 4 year old funding (Early years provision): **100%**

Early Years (Reception)

A 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) is defined as a child reaching the 'expected' level of development by the end of their reception year. It is an outcome of a summative assessment based on the children achieving the Early Learning Goals outlined within the Early Years Framework.

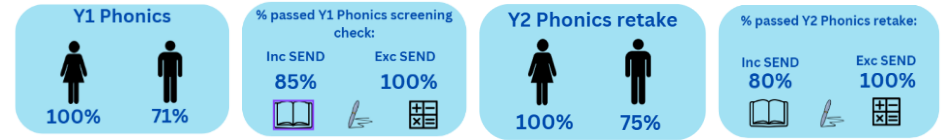
There is a significant improvement in the performance of Rotherham's looked after children in Early Years achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) within the academic year 2021/2022. Within the DfE cohort, 70% of Rotherham LAC achieved a GLD in comparison to 40% of National LAC and 41% of Yorkshire and Humber region's LAC achieving GLD.



70% of Rotherham Looked After Children achieved a Good Level of Development in 2021/2022

Y1 Phonics Screening Check

Across England, all children completed the Y1 Phonics Screening Check in June 2022. The purpose of the phonics screening check is to confirm that children have learned phonic decoding to an age-appropriate standard. Virtual School Rotherham provide additional pupil premium to all children sitting the phonics screen to provide tuition within school.



The DfE Looked After Children cohort for Y1 pupils is based on 13 children, showing that 85% achieved working at the standard level needed for Phonics. This is an increase of 11% from the previous academic year's results (2020/2021) and is above national and regional comparators.

There were 5 Y2 children who completed the Phonics Screening Check in Y2. 80% of these children achieved a pass score of 32 or above.



In RMBC's most recent Local Authority Ofsted inspection the inspector commented **"Rotherham Virtual School have a sharp focus on literacy in personal education plans, this is supporting more children in care to achieve well in primary school"**.

July 2022

Bespoke training was delivered to carers to enable them to support and develop children's phonics skills within the home environment.

"It helped to know and understand what the taught specific phonics vocabulary is, until this training I wasn't sure what a 'diagraph' was when my child was talking about this when reading, it gave me a deeper understanding"



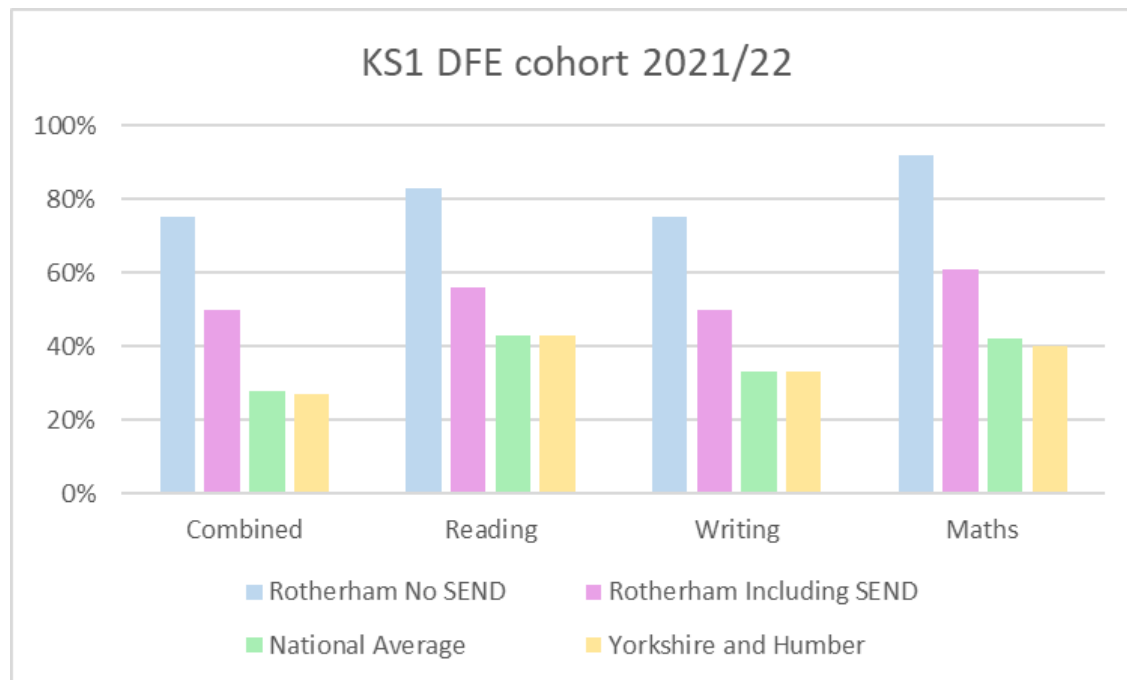
Key Stage 1

There are two elements to the statutory assessment process in Key Stage 1: tests and teacher assessment. The tests are used to support teacher's judgement; it is the teacher assessment recorded as the statutory outcome. Statutory assessment takes place in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, from these assessments children are recorded as working towards standards (WTS), working at expected standards (EXS) or working at greater depth within the standard (GDS).



As of 31st March 2022, 18 Y2 children who had been Looked After Children for at least 12 months (DfE cohort) completed the Key Stage 1 assessments. Of these, 50% achieved the combined expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. 1 child attended a specialist provision and was disapplied from completing SAT's assessments.



Our KS1 DfE cohort has successfully exceeded National and Regional outcomes






KS1 Combined

67%  43% 

Pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan
2 - 16.6%

% achieved expected standard in reading, writing and maths:

Inc SEN **50%**   

Exc SEN **75%**

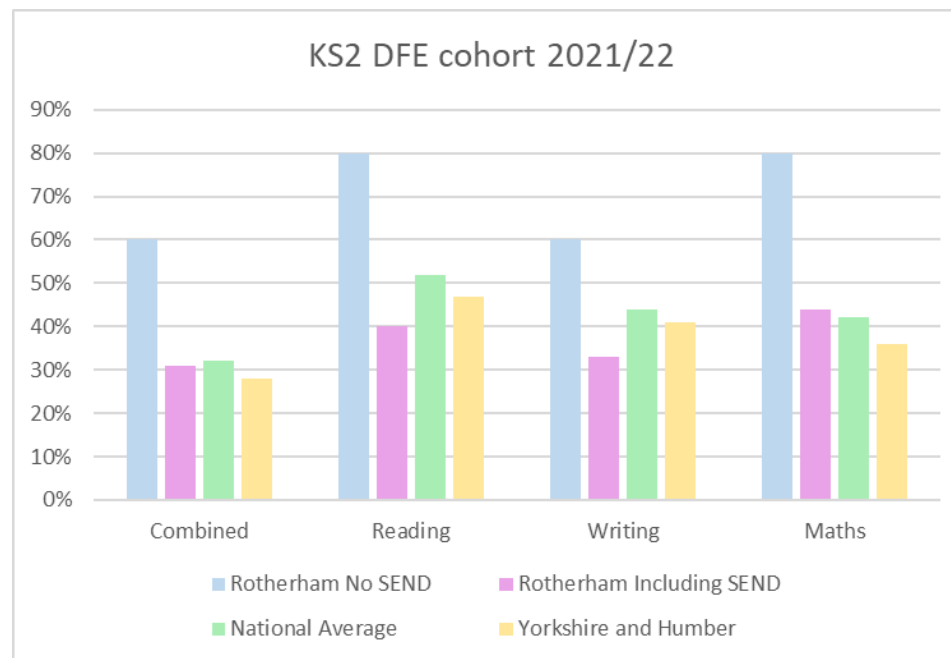
Key Stage 2

Key Stage 2 statutory assessment consist of a variety of formal assessments in Reading, Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) and Mathematics. Writing judgements are based on teacher assessment. From these assessments children are recorded as working towards standards (WTS), working at expected standards (EXS) or working at greater depth within the standard (GDS).

As of 31st March 2022, 21 Y6 children who had been Looked After Children for at least 12 months (DfE cohort) completed the Key Stage 2 assessments. 5 of these children were disapplied from Reading, Writing and Mathematics KS2 statutory assessments. In addition, another child was disapplied from reading and writing.

16 (76%) children within the cohort had some form of Special Educational Need. If SEND pupils are removed from the cohort, the proportion achieving the expected standard increases to 60% achieving Reading Writing and Mathematics combined. 6/16 held an EHCP and one of these achieved combined R, W, M (17%). The 5 children identified as having no SEN achieved 80% EXP/GDS in Reading, 60% EXP/GDS in Writing and 80% EXP/GDS in Mathematics.

The CLA KS2 national average is currently at 32% and CLA Yorkshire and Humber region is 28%. We are 3% above CLA regional average for KS2.



KS2 Combined

30% **33%**

Pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan

6 - 37.5%

% achieved expected standard reading, writing and maths:

Inc SEN **Exc SEN**

31% **60%**

I really enjoyed it. It was really interesting and there were some great new ideas to try.
Foster carer

The training was really helpful, everything has changed so much since I was at school, so it was helpful to broaden my knowledge. **Foster carer**

It was really good, really relevant and I'd definitely recommend the training. The trainer was so knowledgeable and helpful.
Foster carer

Early Years and Primary - Promoting Reading Projects

To improve reading outcomes in Early Years and Primary by raising awareness, interest, and enjoyment through provision of the 'books for a brighter future' initiative.

The Letterbox project has supported and driven the reading agenda for our KS1 and KS2 children since 2015. We completed a deep dive into reading and found that early years and primary children were significantly below their peers in reading attainment when entering care. It was identified these children had limited access to a range of high-quality reading materials within their home environment. In order to ensure children had opportunities to enhance their reading experiences Virtual Schools now provide a wide range of reading projects including a new into care package that was launched in 2021/2022. As part of the launch, a reading conference was held for LAC early years and primary aged children to promote reading within their home environment with a view to closing the gaps within reading and literacy.



Impact

- ✓ 100% of new into care children are enjoying regularly reading books at home.
- ✓ Carers have a deeper knowledge of the importance of reading
- ✓ The number of children achieving the expected standard in reading has increased.
- ✓ Children enjoy receiving their personal book packages.

New into Care Reading Package

When an Early Years/Primary aged child enters care, Virtual School Rotherham provide a resource package containing books and stationery posted directly to the children's placement address. The packages contain the following:



Two books

1 fiction and 1 non-fiction selected to support the transition process i.e., themes around coping with change



Communications

1. Welcome letter Rotherham Virtual School to each child
2. Introduction postcard from BookTrust explaining the contents of the pack
3. Feedback postcard from BookTrust to help inform future development



Additional age-appropriate resources

To spark interaction between carer and child, helping to support building of new relationship:

1. Game (e.g. Duplo set, card game)
2. Stationery set
3. Exercise / sketch book



Backpack

For storing books and resources and strengthening the feeling of ownership for a child receiving the pack

Parent/Carer feedback...

The child was very excited to receive a large box full of treats just for him. it made him feel very special.

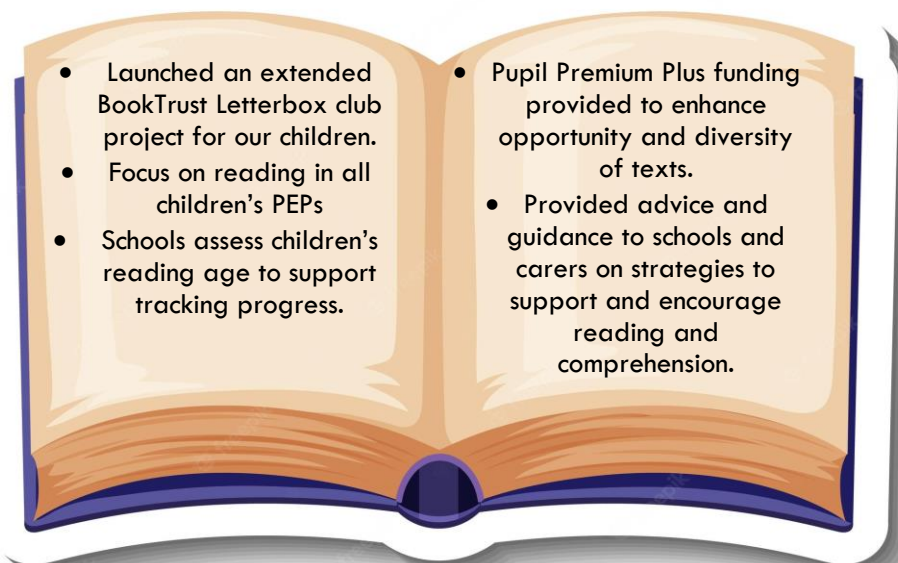
I was surprised as I wasn't expecting this, it was so lovely and well thought out. When I thought we had gotten everything out there was more underneath!

The pack was well put together, right down to the packaging which made it look like a gift for my foster child. The contents were great and as such, I have since gone on to purchase further items.

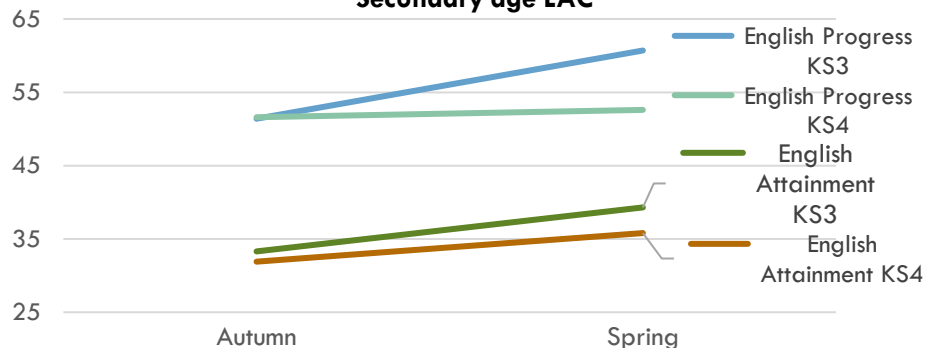
Secondary - Promoting Reading Projects

To improve Looked After Children's reading ages by supporting our children to access reading for pleasure, to develop academic reading skills and to make accelerated progress across all subjects.

Virtual School Key Stage 3 actions 2021-22:



English teacher assessment of attainment and progress or Secondary age LAC



Analysis of PEP data illustrates the positive impact of focus on KS3 reading on KS3 attainment and progress in English. This was accelerated compared to KS4 and when compared with progress and attainment in Math's.

He has made accelerated progress with his reading age – it has increased by 3 years in just 1 academic year! This has been achieved with 1:1 tuition, lots of reading at home and lots of hard work

Impact:

- Regular reading assessments being completed by schools
- Improved reading ages for all children
- Accelerated progress for some children following high level interventions
- Children are reading more and more regularly
- Increased awareness of the value of reading for pleasure having a positive impact on learning and understanding
- Discussion about reading is in every PEP meeting and recorded in the PEP document.

Loving his new books funded through Pupil Premium and being excited about reading them, couldn't wait to start reading them in the car on the way home

Next steps...

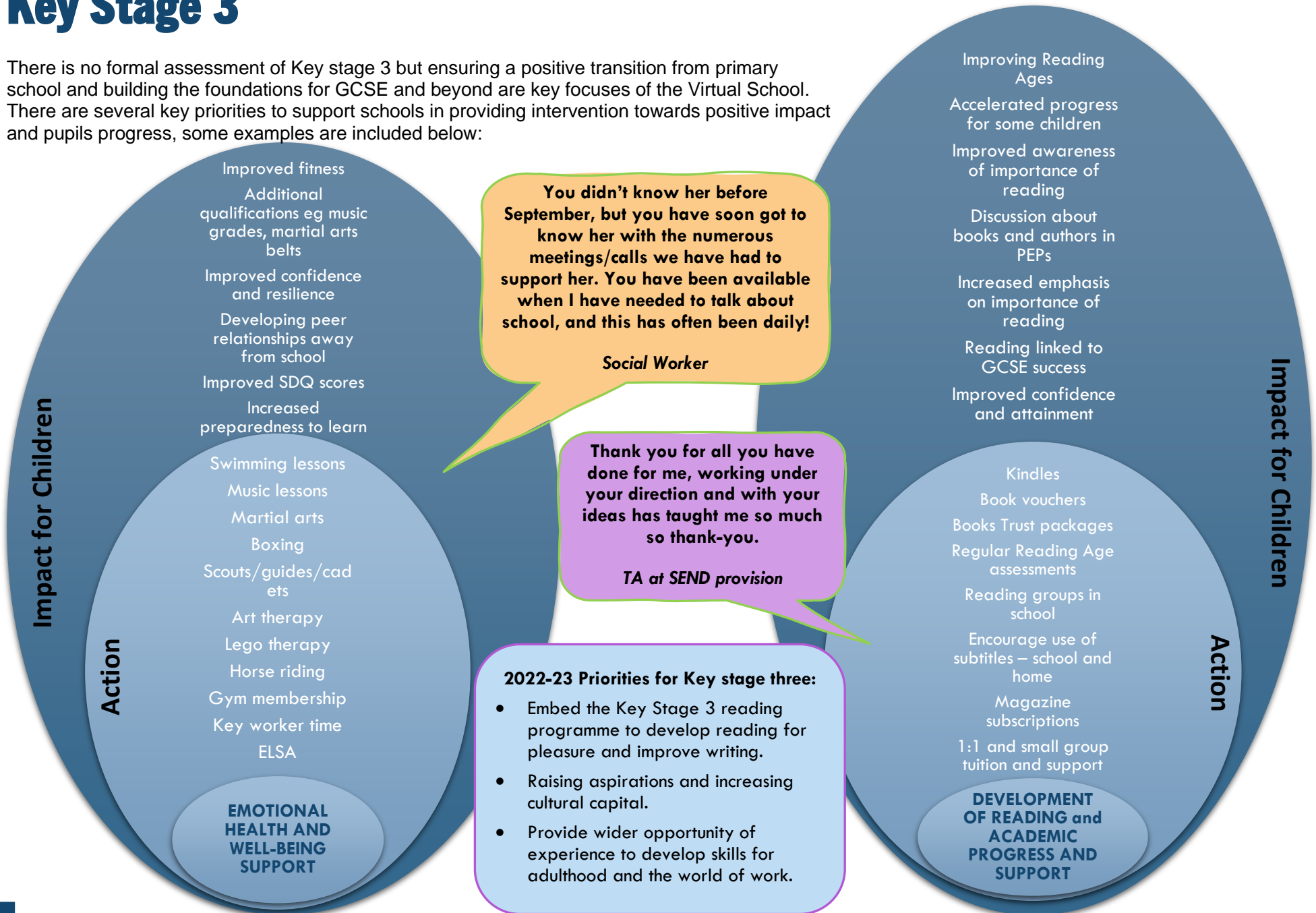
Training for schools and carers by LA literacy adviser focussing on practical support to continue to promote reading

Reading event at local bookshop to continue to promote the importance of reading, including training for carers and opportunities for children to read and be read to.

Continued emphasis on reading in PEP meetings, including regular reading age assessments, smart targets linked to reading, Pupil Premium Plus funding spent on reading and discussion about books with professionals

Key Stage 3

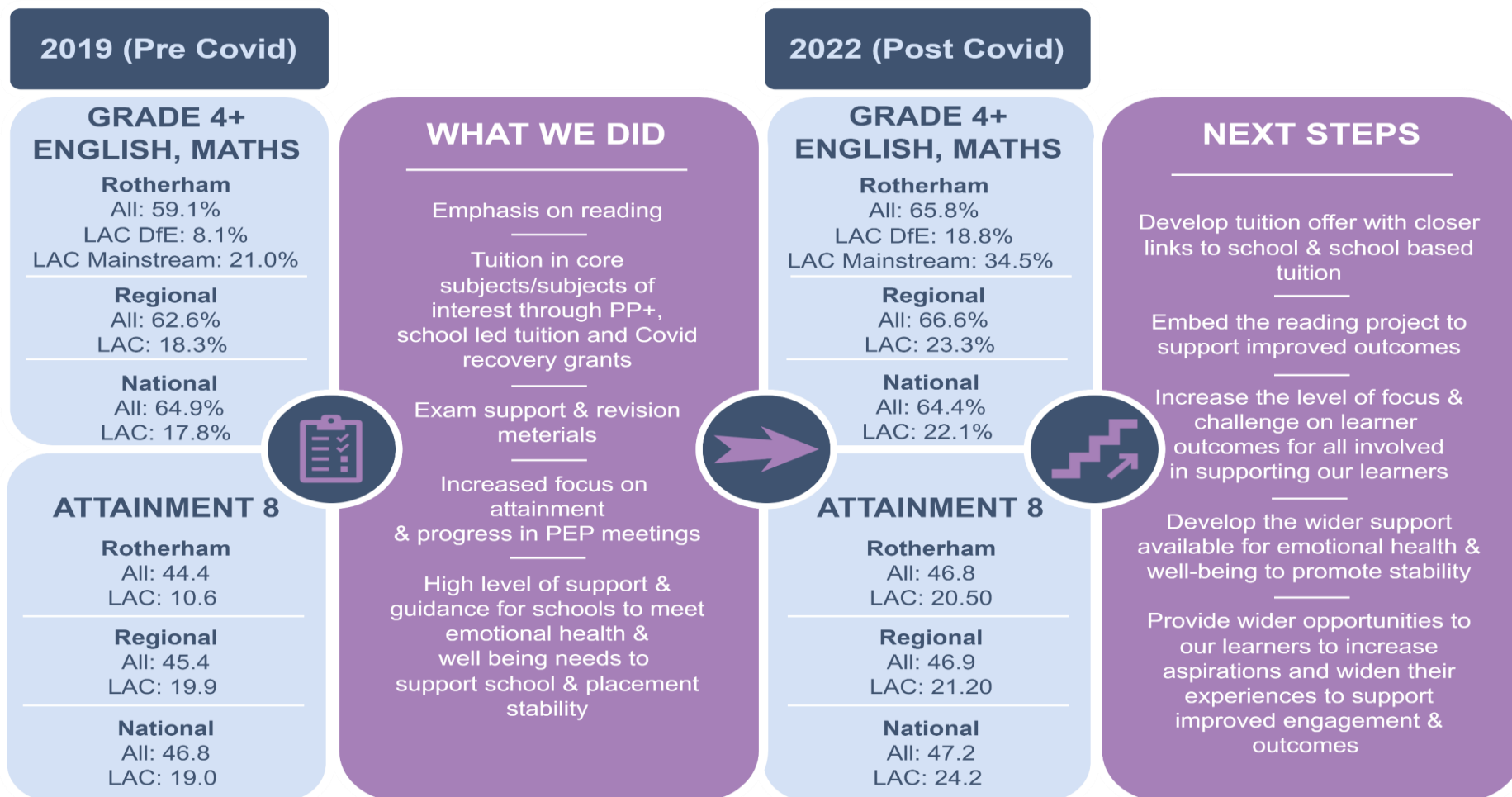
There is no formal assessment of Key stage 3 but ensuring a positive transition from primary school and building the foundations for GCSE and beyond are key focuses of the Virtual School. There are several key priorities to support schools in providing intervention towards positive impact and pupils progress, some examples are included below:



Key Stage 4

The main priority for the secondary team remains helping our learners to achieve positive outcomes for their GCSEs. This year was the first-time formal GCSE examinations were sat since 2019. A GCSE Grade 4 is regarded as a standard pass, and the expectation is that children should pass English and Maths at this level or higher. Other measures, such as attainment and progress 8, are used to measure our childrens' success in their GCSEs, and progress against their start point.

This year's Year 11 achieved results that filled us with pride and were a source of celebration for the whole of Children's services.



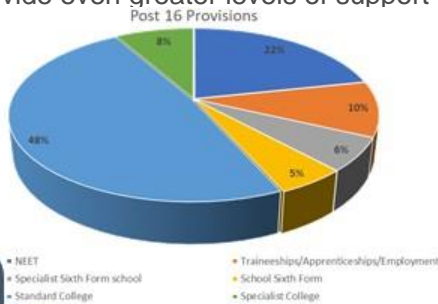
GCSE 2022 outcome data states 9 children achieved Level 4+ in English and Maths. There were two other children in the cohort who achieved the benchmark. These were not included in the DfE calculations. With these included, the percentage for the DfE cohort is 22.9%

Post 16

Virtual school continue to support children throughout their education journey and our post 16 work ensures that all 16-17year old's have termly PEPs, access to appropriate education and are supported towards adulthood. Virtual School is part of the DfE Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus pilot. This has been an exciting opportunity and has allowed Virtual School to provide even greater levels of support to our children.

Virtual School work with our post 16 providers, social workers and those at home to support our children through developing:

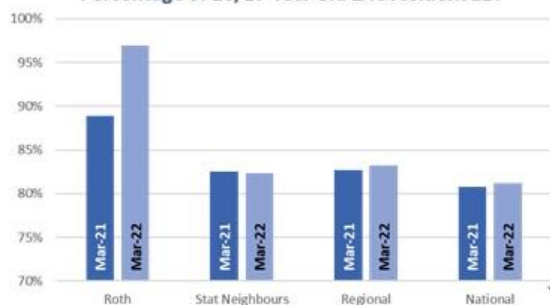
- Independence skills needed for the next steps of their journey in life a and education.
- Support, advice and guidance around Further and Higher education.
 - Discussion and support around planning and managing finances
- Support structures with House project key workers to ensure engagement in EET



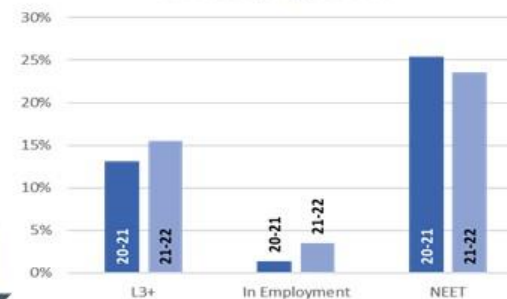
Virtual school will:

- Work with school and our children to ensure we have planned a clear transition pathway to Post 16.
- Consider a wide range of options including: appropriate post 16 setting, appropriate level and type of qualification and the appropriate course.
- Make sure children who are entitled to it, are supported to access Bursary
- Link children in with HEPP to support increased aspirations around Higher education opportunities.

Percentage of 16/17 Year old LAC resident EET



Post 16 progression



Virtual School has worked with local colleges to set up a group to support and develop reading, language and provide peer support. The impact has been:

- Children report increased confidence
- Children have received College awards
- Increased attainment in Speaking, listening and reading assessments
- Course progression – from pre-entry up to entry level 3.

Impact:

- Greater percentage of Children accessing higher level courses and in employment.
- Increase percentage of children accessing EET.
- Increased number of care leavers accessing university and HE

As part of the DfE post 16 Pupil Premium Plus pilot Virtual School has been able to provide higher levels of support to our children. This has included:

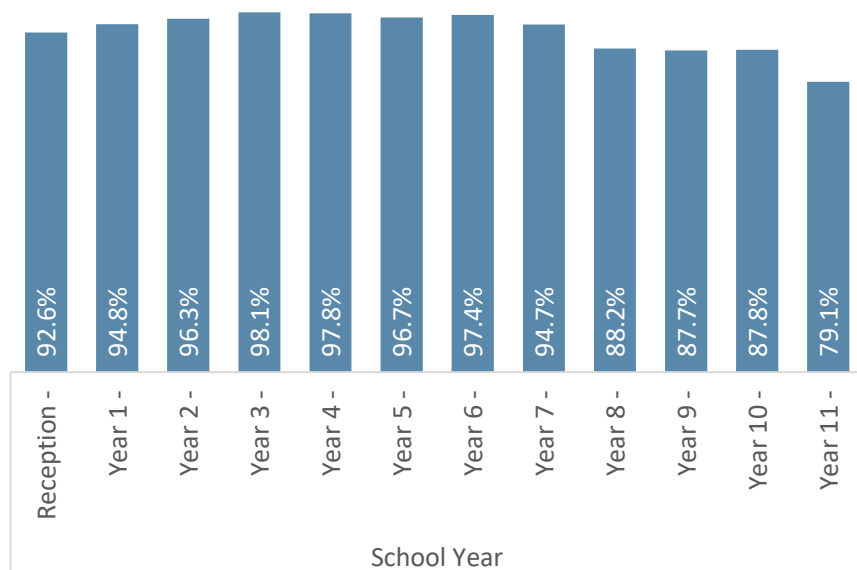
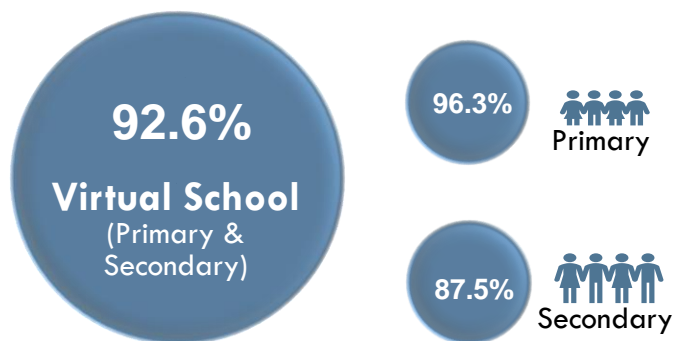
- Emotional health and well-being staff availability for our learners.
 - Increased access to support services
 - Enhanced transition support
 - Emotional health champion in RNN college
- Innovative engagement programmes from Affinity 2020 CiC

Next steps:

Develop Virtual school Careers Information Advice and Guidance offer. Work closely with providers to improve the Post 16 offer. Expand the reading programme to include Post 16 children.

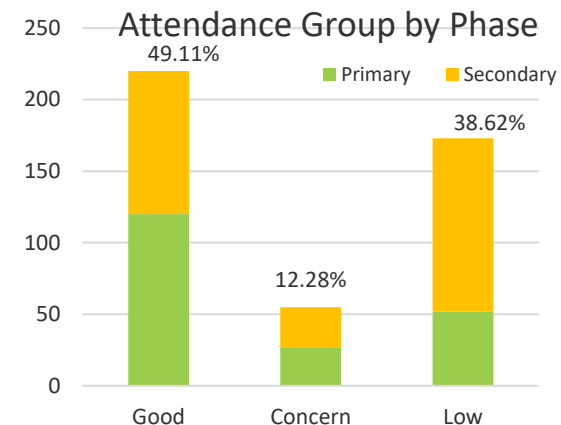
Virtual School Attendance

In Rotherham, the average attendance in the academic year 2021/22 was 92.6% for primary and secondary children. The attendance of Rotherham's LAC pupils has seen a slight increase from 89% in 2020/21, although not back at pre-COVID levels.



Action:

- Develop Emotional Based School Avoidance support package.
- Greater focus on attendance in PEP meetings.
- Continued focus on reducing emotional health barriers to attendance and supporting school to provide outreach to vulnerable children.
- Bespoke timetables to promote engagement and attendance.



63.2%
Of LAC children with good attendance or better (+95%)

Impact:

- Despite all the challenges out children face, attendance has improved since COVID and is almost back at pre-COVID levels.
- More than 3/5 children have good or better attendance.

7.4%
absence from school for LAC pupils

8.10% - Regional
8.12% - Stat Neighbour
9.10% - England
(Latest benchmarking data from 2021)

110 (24.6%)
of LAC pupils were persistently absent from school (-90%)

26.4% - Regional
27.86% - Stat Neighbour
30.40% - England
(Latest benchmarking data from 2021)

- 55% of good attenders are in the primary phase
- 45% of good attenders are in Secondary phase
- Our children's absence and persistent absence rates are both better than local and national comparators.

Challenges:

- Increase in children experiencing Emotional Based School Avoidance.
- Increase in absence across the secondary phase.
- Ongoing impact on emotional health of COVID.

Next steps:

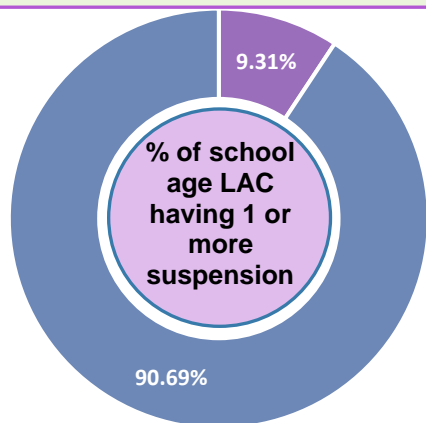
Continue to develop the EBSA and other emotional health support, advice and guidance offer to schools and carers to reduce persistent absence. Particularly in the secondary phase which has a significant impact on overall attendance.

Virtual School Suspensions and Exclusions

Suspensions remained a focus of the virtual school throughout this academic year. Suspensions this year increased slightly from 2020/21 academic year. Data comparison is complex as the previous academic year was significantly different due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Impact:

This year, there were, fewer suspensions and fewer days lost to suspension than in previous years, when schools were fully operational, and figures are broadly in line with regional and national comparators.



9.3%

of school age LAC had 1 or more suspensions



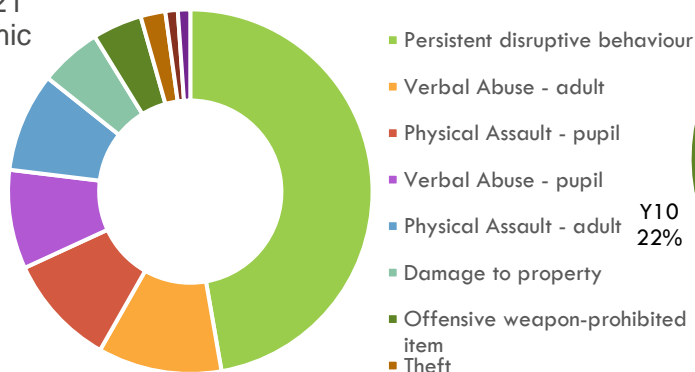
9.27% - Regional
8.47% - Stat Neighbour
9.38% - England

(Latest benchmarking data from 2020)

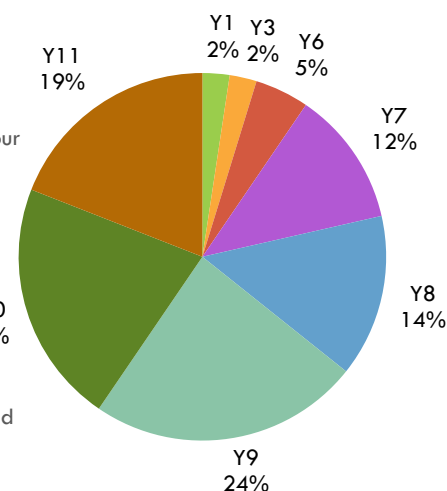
■ % of children - 1+ suspensions



Reason for Suspension



Suspensions by NCY



Challenges:

- This year has seen an increase in suspension for persistent disruption and this and verbal and physical assaults of staff and pupils accounting for more than 3/4 of all suspensions.
- Unmet sensory needs leading to suspension in the primary phase.
- Suspensions continue to be far more likely in secondary school 9 out of ten suspensions were for children in the secondary phase.
- More than 50% of suspended children have an EHCP.

Actions and next steps:

- Offer and embed Trauma Informed Schools UK level 5 diploma training to all secondary and special schools to inform practice and strategic planning and direction.
- Develop and launch sensory pilot in primary to support greater and wider understanding of the needs of children and reducing suspensions. Widen the sensory offer to the secondary phase
- Focus on understanding behaviour as communication, to reduce reactive response to persistent disruption.

Exclusions 2014-19 (DfE Cohort)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Rotherham	10.6%	11.8%	13.1%	15.1%	11.3%	10.5%	
Yorkshire and The Humber Region	10.3%	10.4%	11.4%	11.8%	11.6%	11.3%	
Statistical Neighbours	9.4%	10.4%	11.7%	13.7%	12.9%	11.0%	
England	10.7%	10.5%	12.7%	11.5%	11.3%	11.4%	

Sensory Support

The sensory needs of Looked After Children may often be dismissed as attachment difficulties or behavioural/SEMH needs. However, Virtual School recognise that children who experience early trauma often present as highly vigilant to potential danger. This leads to children becoming quickly 'flooded' by their sensory environment and are more susceptible to sensory difficulties. For these children, participating and engaging with the school environment can cause sensory overload.

Virtual School Sensory key objectives:

- ✓ To develop sensory friendly schools who understand children's sensory needs.
- ✓ To work in partnership with Education, Health, and Social Care.
- ✓ To developing shared sensory language, early intervention and prevention for all of our looked after children in schools.

Six primary schools were selected to run a pilot project to enhance awareness of recognising sensory struggles and strategies to support children within the school environment. The pilot whole school approach has a number of benefits including upskilling and empowering school staff, developing a shared sensory language within the school, early intervention and prevention of escalating school difficulties; which may result in emotional wellbeing difficulties, troubles attaining academic achievement, school avoidance and/or exclusion.



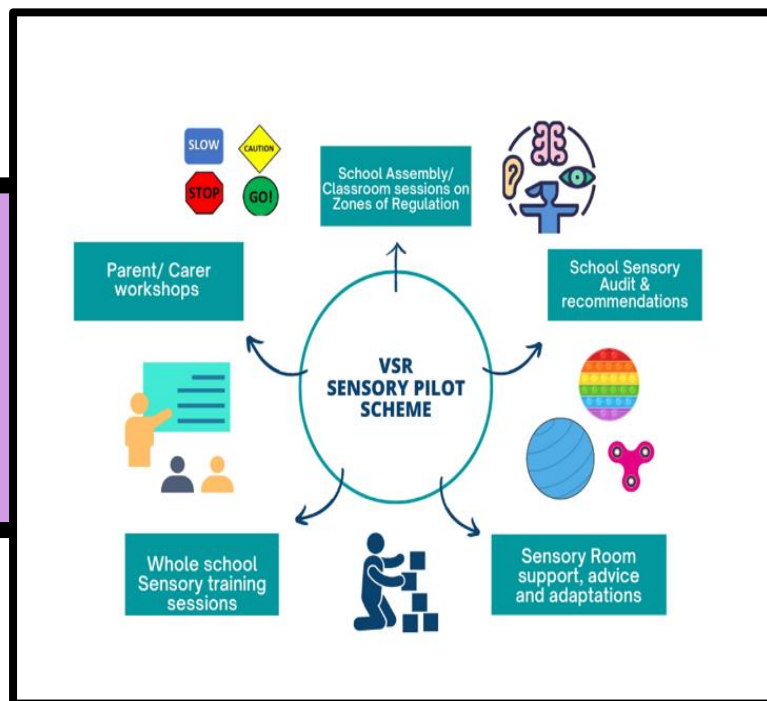
Challenges:

School capacity – changes in staffing, periods of illness, staff retention.

Availability of sensory resources – restrictions with school funding (having to priorities budgets).

Embedding sensory practice needs to take place over a period time to obtain maximum impact.

All staff and senior leaders need to be committed to implement this consistently across school.



Impact:

Sensory Friendly policies

Increased sensory awareness

Sensory audits and support

Reduced suspensions

Reduction in part time timetables

Shift and change in culture of early identification of children's sensory needs and how to meet their needs

This training is so relevant across school for all staff. It is what we have been needing in Rotherham for some time. Sadie's delivery is amazing and so useful.

Primary school feedback

Sensory Training – held virtually and in person within pilot schools

- ✓ Training to parents/carers providing information and strategies to use within the home environment.
- ✓ Training delivered to all professionals working around the child to support through seasonal changes.
- ✓ Training delivered to schools to provide sensory information and strategies to use within the classroom environment.

I loved this training! Very factual and informative. We could relate to the things being said and it was useful to see the different ways to either calm or stimulate a child.

Foster carer feedback

Sensory Newsletter



Good overview of different sensory needs for a beginner to this - absolutely amazing my child doesn't need intervention, this is definitely some of the best parenting support I've had in recent years to try and figure out how she is perceiving the world.

Parent feedback



Sensory Equipment explained
Wobble Cushions

The aim of the wobble cushion is to help the child's attention and focus. They can also help children that are constantly moving, fidgeting and maybe swinging on their chair (- Seeking Vestibular input). The cushion can help a child to keep alert and focus on their learning by providing the movement that they are sensory seeking, whilst limiting distractions for other learners. Wobble cushions should not be used persistently throughout the school day, but more so as a 'boost' for when the child appears restless and requiring some extra sensory input. Careful consideration for the height of the classroom chair, the child's feet should still touch the floor.

For further information on wobble cushions:
<https://www.griffnot.com/ten-tips-wobble-cushions-classroom/>

**THINK SENSORY
THINK MOVE!**

Movement plays a significant role in the classroom. Movement supports the development of gross and fine motor skills, physical fitness, language and communication, self-esteem, confidence and learning (Erwin, et al., 2012; Macviver et al., 2019).

Using regular movement into the classroom can support students to:

- **Maintain concentration and attention** (Hoza et al., 2015).
- **Regulate energy levels** (Mac Cobb, Fitzgerald & O'Keefe, 2014).
- **Expand their toolkit of self-regulation strategies** (Shanker, 2013)

We can use 'Whole class' movement breaks to support the regulation and alertness of ALL children in the class. A typical class of children will present mixed with different movement needs. You may have children who appear lethargic, slumped or tired who would benefit from an ALERTING movement activity. Then you will have children who present lively, fidgety or restless and may benefit from a CALMING movement activity. A whole classroom approach to movement could meet all children's needs if a particular sequence of movements is used: Start with an ALERTING movement activity and follow with a CALMING/ORGANISING Activity.

There are YouTube videos available for those classrooms with smart boards. This website is particularly useful with lots of resources on using movement breaks within classrooms:
https://bodybraintech.com/sensory_reg/ready_for_work.ejs

Thank-you Sadie, I have found your sessions so far really useful and staff across our Trust who have attended your workshops are feeding back how good they are. It is not often I get a SEND training session with such positive feedback so thank-you - they are having an impact on our practice across our schools.

White Woods Academy Trust Feedback

Face to face training events
Staff members attended

73

Parent/Carer workshops

Staff Training

15

In school sessions
Parent/Carer's attended

105

Children attended

School Assemblies

Consultation & Advice sessions

7

For children at risk of exclusion

2 School based observations with recommendations
5 C&A sessions with staff

Education Psychology Support

Rotherham Virtual School commission one Full time equivalent Educational Psychologist (EP) from the Rotherham Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The focus of the work is developing knowledge and understanding within schools to equip staff to understand the complex needs of children in care or those who have experienced the care system.

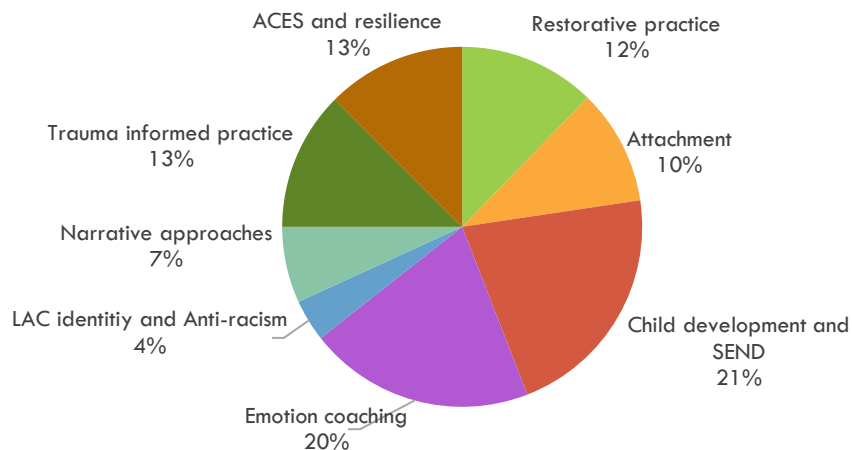
The Virtual School Education Psychology key objectives:

1. *Develop and deliver training modules and practical strategies for educational settings, carers, and social workers to improve their understanding of how best to support learning and emotional wellbeing.*
2. *To provide consultation and assessment around individual children/young people or situations.*
3. *To liaise closely with settings, carers, and colleagues to facilitate joined-up approaches.*

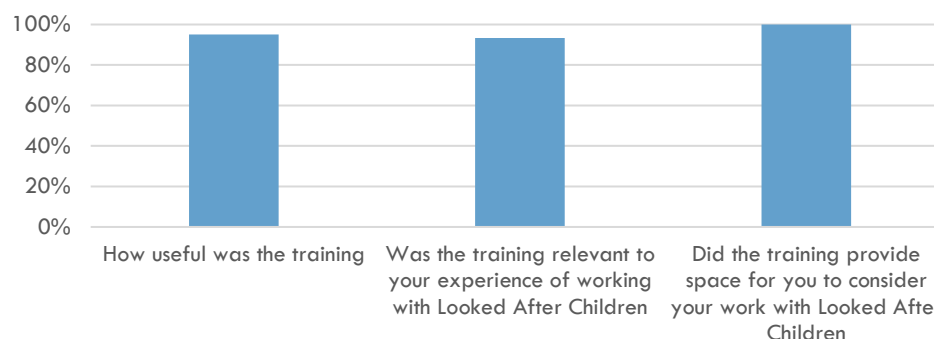
Virtual School Core Training:

The 2021-22 Virtual School Core Training Model of free training, primarily available to Education staff (Early years -Post 16) was online, and this allowed us to open the training modules to a much wider audience drawing in services (i.e., social workers), foster carers/previously LAC parents.

Core training offer 2021-22



Percentage of positive training evaluation responses



- **Solution Focused Staff Meeting (recommended for a transition to a new setting – two hours)** - *Multi-agency intervention - whole staff meeting designed to elicit empathy and understanding for the young person and then complete person-centered planning which will support the school placement*
- **Consultation Groups for Designated Teachers** - *A 'safe space' for discussing complex issues, often involving supporting the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) of children in care. This group is open to all DTs from a range of education and school settings; nurseries to post 16 providers.*
- **Solution Circle (one hour)** - *A quick and effective strategy which uses Solution Focused problem-solving techniques to generate strategies around managing a difficulty or challenge*
- **PATH (two - three hours)** - *Multi-agency and person-centered strategy designed to elicit a plan based on individual wishes, needs and strengths*
- **Multi-Element Plans (three hours – full day)** - *Focuses on understanding and planning for specific behaviors which are causing concern*
- **Consultation (face to face or via telephone)** - *1:1 contact with the VS EP to support problem solving as well as signposting to other services, interventions or support systems*
- **Provide additional literature, resources, and recommended reading** - *Resources can be sent to the school via e-mail which staff can refer to for support*

Schools could access these support services through referral from the Virtual School Education Advisers and discussion with the Virtual School Head Teachers.

Virtual School Rotherham Conference:2021 Enhancing the communication of Looked after Children throughout their journey. A conference which explores the power of communication and strategies which enhance it. The guest speaker, Richard McCann, was a care experienced adult who spoke with passion and vigour about his experiences of the care system and the transformative experience of having significant adults in his life. The workshops covered a wide range of topics including: communication within Trauma Informed Practice; narrative approaches to listening to Young People and their stories; recognising common and unfamiliar communication difficulties and strategies to repair; supporting young people to navigate their future education journey these and emotion coaching.



Richard McCann, 'Wow' - I came away from his presentation with so many thoughts and ideas!! Such an inspiration to all

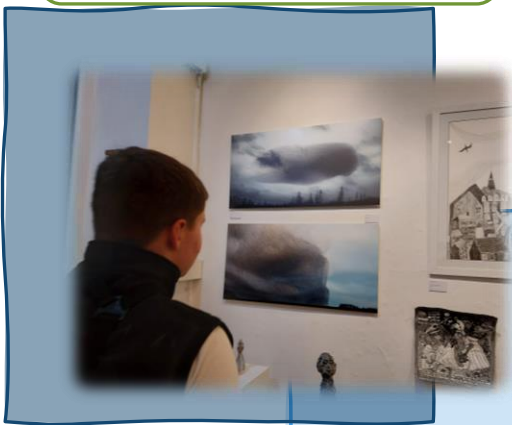
I thought the speakers and workshops were excellent and will definitely influence my practice

Creative Mentoring continues to be an important intervention for the Rotherham Virtual School. Educational Psychologist, on behalf of the Virtual School, liaise with a local Literacy Charity Grimm & Co to deliver programs of support. Creative Mentoring seeks to support LAC (between the ages of 5 – 18 years) by matching them with a Creative Mentor who can provide opportunities to engage in a range of motivating and engaging activities based on areas of interest to the young person. By listening to young people, recognising, and celebrating their areas of interest and providing for their creative needs, it is hoped that this will in turn develop their resilience and wellbeing. Creative Mentoring is not a short-term intervention, Creative Mentors work with young people for 1 year, although in exceptional cases it may be much longer. The Virtual School Educational Psychologists supporting the matching process and provide training and ongoing supervision to the Creative Mentors as well as supporting placements and evaluating the project.

She has improved immensely in confidence and motivation and has enjoyed these sessions thoroughly.

He has come on leaps and bounds... more able to work with others and speak about himself positively

This support has been fantastic for her and I am very hopeful that she is going to have a great final year at school year before moving to college.



EP priorities for next year:

- To evaluate the Trauma Informed School training, exploring how schools have developed or changed practice in response to this training.
- Further develop child-based bespoke support offer with schools and Rotherham Children's homes and carers, to support the return to Rotherham of our children in care.
- Plan and support the delivery of the Virtual School Conference as a space for schools to share good practice.
- Continue to develop and enhance the personalised child-based bespoke support offer to designated teachers, social workers, carers and education advisers.

Speech and Language Support

- Two NHS Speech Therapists have been seconded to work with Virtual School to provide assessment and support for our Looked After Children.
- Referrals received from Virtual School Education Advisers and via initial health assessments when entering care.
- Some Looked After children have missed out on core NHS Speech Therapy support and this new service helps them access specialist support.



Virtual School SALT key objectives:

- Provide early intervention and assessment to remove barriers to learning.
- Work in partnership with foster carers, schools and other professionals.
- Provide schools and settings with direct advice and guidance to support the SALT needs of our children.
- Provide equal opportunities for all our looked children both in and out authority, liaising with NHS core services.
- Provide training for foster carers, social workers and education staff
- Support settings in understanding differences between EAL and SALT needs for our children.

Training:

All feedback from training was extremely positive:

I gained an insight into how to work with a child that has a speech and language barrier and I feel like this course has made me more confident in terms of what to do when I am faced with a barrier that has these barriers.

Foster carer

The trainer was really good and explained really well.

Foster carer



Virtual School SALT Impact:

- 100% of children in or out of authority, who were new to care had access to speech and language support.
- Early identification of children who have a speech and language barrier.
- Over 82 referrals were received this academic year.
- Developed an assessment tool for carers and schools for our children.

Virtual School SALT priorities for next year:

- In terms of Speech and Language consolidate links with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SY ICB) to ensure consistent support across the wider area.
- Continue to work collaboratively with Educational Psychology and Sensory Occupational Therapy to offer a fully holistic approach.

Virtual School Celebrating Success

Our children never cease to amaze us. Every day we hear of the wonderful work they have done; progress they have made and barriers they have overcome. Our children are the reason we exist, and it is only right that we are able to share with you some of the successes they have achieved this year. During the academic year 2021-22, our children have:

Loved attending choir and were excited to perform at Young Voices.

Shared their views about moving school nearer to placement. They said 'Thank you so much for listening, we love our new school and we're learning lots'.

Moved from a special school to a mainstream school: "I like being back in mainstream. I like the routine. I want to catch up on my learning".

Enjoyed some emotional therapy: "I'm 'Drawing and Talking' therapy and now I understand my emotions better".

Settled well into nursery accessing her 15 hours free childcare, despite not accessing play groups due to the pandemic.

Overcome anxiety "I was anxious about going out with baby but Virtual School registered me with local Children's Centre and I am now going to baby massage groups".

52 children achieved a qualification in Year 11.

Had some 1:1 sports coaching for a gifted and talented runner. "I enjoy running. Look at my medal! I won this running 100 meters".

Developed some new baby routines and accessed local group.

Never been on public transport on his own before starting college but is now travelling by bus from Rotherham to



Doncaster. He has just had his first parents evening and has been described as a 'model student'.

Persevered, despite significant barriers to learning, and was able to proudly show his counting skills at his PEP and declare 'Look I can count'.

Overcome numerous adverse experiences during Y6 - 'She has done so well to achieve fabulous KS2 SATs results'.

Enjoyed receiving BookTrust packages "I loved my package, I loved the box with my name on and that it was mine, I loved opening it".

15 of our children achieved 5 or more GCSEs at Grade 4 or Higher.

Experienced new things: a foster carer and child attended a Tiny Tots College workshop. 'He loved to explore and try new things. I was given ideas we can do at home.

Learned to play a musical instrument: "I've been learning to play the guitar for two years and last term I played my guitar in assembly".

Learnt in new ways 'I like that the information Virtual School share is always linked to a YouTube video to watch because I don't like reading'.

Improved their self-confidence and self-belief: "I applied to be a school councillor, I stood up in front of the school and told everyone why I would make a good councillor. I had to apply.

Enrolled with Harrogate Army Foundation College on an apprenticeship and has successfully passed out a junior soldier.

Completed a 12 week Traineeship with The Source and has been successful in securing a level 2 Apprenticeship with Cobra Sports Exhausts.

Attended refugee week activities at her local community centre supported by carers learning about different cultures, meeting new people and hearing stories of different life experiences and being involved in fundraising.

Has secured a place on a HE course with Wakefield University centre studying Performing Arts.

Has studied karate for several years. This year she achieved her black belt and has started helping to tutor other young people at the dojo.

14 of our children achieved a Grade 4 or higher in English and Math's.

Successfully completed his BTEC Level 1 Cooking Skills course in Y9 and is well in the way to completing his Level 2.

Settled well into high school and made good academic progress during Year 7.

Been in the army cadets for a number of years and he took part in the annual Remembrance Day service with his unit and played in the marching band.

Been proactive in searching for work experience - contacted the local aquarium to ask about job opportunities – wrote and delivered a personal letter to them, and got a response from the aquarium manager saying how impressed they were that she had shown the initiative to come in - gave her complimentary tickets and a shark feeding experience.

Gained 9 GCSEs at a grade 5 and above and is now studying 3 A-Levels at 6th Form College.

Started playing the violin last year and has already achieved a distinction at Grade 1

Attended a 4 day programme with Affinity despite nerves and 100% attendance throughout his whole school career!

Struggled with his college course, so found himself an apprenticeship in Leisure Services. When a full-time place opened up, he applied and was successful in gaining full time employment just before he turned 18!

Achieved well attending cadets and this has helped him feel confident enough to independently attend NCS over the summer.

Despite having anxieties around moving back to Rotherham and being unsure what he wanted to do in year 12, studied hard and achieved well at the end of year 11.

220 of our children had 95% attendance or better.

Written and directed her school play. For her incredible hard work on this project, she was nominated for an award at the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Awards.

