

The Virtual School for Children Looked After: NELC

Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report: September 2021

Context

The Virtual School is the key educational advocacy service for all children looked after (CLA) whether living in and attending a school within North East Lincolnshire or for those placed out of area. The focus of our statutory duty is to improve educational outcomes through challenging and supporting schools, academies and specialist settings to ensure that CLA:

- attend school on a full-time basis
- receive the best possible opportunities as learners by accessing mainstream education (or, when appropriate, specialist or alternative provision) through attending schools which are judged to be at least 'Good' in Ofsted Inspections
- maintain at least expected rates of progress relative to their starting points on becoming looked after
- close the achievement gap with their peers

Personal Education Plan (PEP) officers champion the needs of CLA by fulfilling the responsibilities of being a highly ambitious, pro-active and effective 'Corporate Parent'. There is a clear emphasis on the combined need to raise aspirations and improve rates of progress to close the attainment gap between CLA and their peers.

By definition the Virtual School is not a registered educational provider. Given this context, it is clearly recognised that each school/academy is directly responsible for improving the rates of progress and educational outcomes of CLA on roll. Through the effective use of PEPs, the Virtual School holds schools and academies to account in relation to the:

- educational provision offered
- level of aspirations encouraged
- setting and reviewing of SMART targets
- importance of full-time attendance and minimising any exclusion risks

In combination, this range of inter-related protective factors leads to improved self-esteem, positive outcomes and enhanced life chances for children looked after. Through discussions at PEP Reviews, additional 1-1 tuition is arranged particularly for English and Maths. Other forms of enhancement and support are arranged as individual and specific needs are identified.

Virtual School Roll: statutory school age cohort = 362

- Primary = 200
- Secondary = 162
- Males = 52.8%
- Females = 47.2%

- **NEL schools = 63.8%** (*79% in September 2019*)
- **Out of Area schools = 36.2%** (*21% in September 2019*)
- Primary Mainstream Schools = **93%**
- Primary Non-Mainstream Schools = **7%**
- Secondary Mainstream Schools = **72.2%**

- Secondary Non-Mainstream Schools = **27.8%**
- Special Education Schools in NEL = **10.8%**
- Special Education Schools Out of Area = **17.6%**
- Residential Home/Linked Education (*all out of area*) = **9.2%**
- Pupil Referral Units in NEL = **1.7%**
- Orchard Independent School, Grimsby (SEND/SEMH) = **2.6%**
- The Academy Grimsby 14 -16 = **1.3%**
- Learning4Life, Grimsby (3 Year 11 UASC) = **1.3%**

This profile of school types represents a continued improvement since 2012 in terms of CLA sustaining their places in mainstream schools. In 2012, of a cohort of 72, 25% were placed in PRUs or Alternative Provision following behaviour referrals. Whilst CLA numbers continued to increase since that date, we ensured that high proportions have remained in mainstream schools; however, this has been more challenging for young people in Years 10 and 11 as indicated below.

	Mainstream	SEND	Other	Total
	No. & %	No. & %	No. & %	No
Primary CLA: September 2017	98 = 92.5%	7 = 6.6%	1 = 0.9%	106
Primary CLA: September 2018	119 = 93%	8 = 6.2%	1 = 0.8%	128
Primary CLA: September 2019	155 = 95.1%	7 = 4.3 %	1 = 0.6%	163
Primary CLA: September 2020	202 = 96.6%	6 = 2.9%	1 = 0.5%	209
Primary CLA: September 2021	186 = 93%	14 = 7%	0 = 0%	200
Secondary CLA: September 2017	65 = 57.5%	26 = 23%	22 = 19.5%	113
Secondary CLA: September 2018	82 = 67.8 %	19 = 15.7%	20 = 16.5%	121
Secondary CLA: September 2019	99 = 66.5%	26 = 17.4%	24 = 16.1%	149
Secondary CLA: September 2020	117 = 70.9%	38 = 23%	10 = 6.1%	165
Secondary CLA: September 2021	117 = 72.2%	34 = 21%	11 = 6.8%	162

- **SEND** = special schools (named provision in Education, Health & Care Plan)
- **Other** = Pupil Referral Units, registered alternative provision and other provision identified to meet needs.

Priority 1: ensure that higher numbers of CLA complete Key Stage 4 courses in mainstream academies to improve GCSE Best 8 Attainment & Progress Year 11 outcomes.

In **2020** NELC was placed in:

- **Quartile A for KS 4 Average Attainment 8 (national rank = 28)**
- **Quartile B for GCSE grades 4 – 9 for both English & Maths (national rank = 29)**

	CLA	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
KS 4 Average Attainment 8	NELC	12.10	21.20	16.30	17.10	25.00
	National	22.80	19.20	18.60	19.00	21.40
	Regional	21.40	20.10	18.70	19.90	21.20
KS 4 Average Progress Score	NELC	-2.25	-1.55	-1.31	-1.53	<i>n/a</i>
	National	-1.14	-1.18	-1.20	-1.23	<i>n/a</i>
	Regional	-1.16	-0.97	-1.15	- 1.08	<i>n/a</i>

GCSE grades 4–9 in English & Maths	NELC	n/a	33.3%	33%	21.2%	31.4%
	National	n/a	17.5%	17.8%	18%	24.4
	Regional	n/a	18.70%	15.50%	18.3%	21.5

Source: Statistical First Release/LAIT

Prior to 2017, the proportion of CLA cohorts completing Year 11 in mainstream schools was typically only 33% and fell as low as 25% in 2014 which had an adverse impact on GCSE outcomes. The introduction of the GCSE Best 8 Attainment and Progress measures in 2016 further accentuated this challenge; 66% of the cohort were not entered for 8 GCSE subjects as they were on roll at a PRU or Alternative Provision.

There were significant improvements in the 2017, 2020 and 2021 Best 8 Attainment results. As higher proportions of the CLA cohort successfully completed Year 11 in mainstream academies they were entered for a full range of GCSE courses as shown below in 2020 and 2021.

GCSE Results	2020	2021
8 + Higher GCSE grades 4 + including English & Maths	37%	20%
6 + Higher GCSE grades 4 + including English & Maths	42%	30%
5 + Higher GCSE grades 4 + including English & Maths	46%	35%
Grade 5 + in both English & Maths	25%	10%
Grade 4 + in both English & Maths	31.4%	35%
8 + Higher GCSE grades 4 + any subjects	37%	20%
5 + Higher GCSE grades 4 + any subjects	50%	55%
8 + GCSEs: all grades including English & Maths	75%	75%
5 + GCSEs: all grades including English & Maths	100%	100%

Primary Age Attainment & Progress

no national benchmarked performance data available for 2020 or 2021

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: Good level of Development Achieved (GLD)

	2018 %	2019 %
NELC Virtual School - CLA	50	70
NEL: all schools	70.2	71.4
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	48	48
CLA: National	47	48
National: all children	71.6	72

2019: for NELC children in care for at least 12 months, **85 % achieved GLD** which was significantly above all the outcomes in the table above including national CLA (48%) and regional CLA (53%).

Phonics Assessment (Year 1) % and Average Points Score (APS)

	2018 %	APS	2019 %	APS
NELC Virtual School - CLA	57.1	31	72.7	33
NEL: all schools	82.3	33	81.7	33
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	64	30.3	64	30.2

CLA: National	62	29.3	63	29.3
National: all children	82.5	33.9	81.9	33.8

Key Stage 1 CLA Attainment

% Achieving Expected Standards Benchmark 2016 – 2019

		2016	2017	2018	2019
NELC Virtual School	Reading	52.9	63.2	63.6	60
NEL: all schools	Reading	72.5	72.6	71.3	74
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Reading	52	49	49	52
CLA: National	Reading	50	52	52	53
National: all schools	Reading	73.4	75.8	75.6	75.2
NELC Virtual School	Writing	52.9	42.1	54.5	50
NEL: all schools	Writing	68.2	69	68.2	70.1
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Writing	39	39	43	47
CLA: National	Writing	39	41	42	43
National: all schools	Writing	65.7	68.4	70.1	69.5
NELC: Virtual School	Maths	35.3	57.9	59.1	45
NEL: all schools	Maths	72.5	73.7	73.4	75.3
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Maths	46	47	53	53
CLA: National	Maths	46	48	51	51
National: all schools	Maths	72.8	75.3	76.3	75.9
NELC: Virtual School	Science	58.8	73.7	63.6	75
NEL: all schools	Science	78.9	82.2	79.7	82.5
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Science	60	57	58	60
CLA: National	Science	59	61	60	62
National: all schools	Science	82	82.8	83	82.5
NELC: Virtual School	R/W/M Combined	29.4	36.8	54.5	35
NEL: all schools	R/W/M	62.4	62.8	62.8	64.7
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	R/W/M	32	35	38	42
CLA: National	R/W/M	33	36	38	38
National: all schools	R/W/M	60.5	63.9	65.5	65.1
NELC: Virtual School	R/W/M/S Combined	29.4	36.8	54.5	35
NEL: all schools	R/W/M/S	61.9	62.5	62.5	64.6
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	R/W/M/S	32	34	37	42
CLA: National	R/W/M/S	33	36	38	38
National: all schools	R/W/M/S	60	63.6	65.2	64.8

12 Months In Care Measure applied for the data in the above table

- **R/W/M** = Reading/Writing/Maths: Expected Standards Combined Measure
- **R/W/M/S** = Reading/Writing/Maths/Science: Expected Standards Combined Measure

KS 1 Attainment in literacy was significantly above both national and regional CLA; for Writing across all four years from 2016 onwards and for Reading between 2017 and 2019. The 2016 and 2019 cohorts performed below national and regional CLA in Maths which also has an impact on the Combined Measures in both years.

Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 Average Progress Scores for CLA

KS 1 – KS 2 Average Reading Progress: 2019 Quartile A (national rank = 15)

	2016	2017	2018	2019
National	- 0.50	- 0.70	- 0.20	- 0.20
NELC	- 0.30	+ 4.10 1 st in region	+ 3.40 2 nd in region	+ 2.30 2 nd in region
Regional	- 0.80	- 0.80	- 0.70	- 0.30

KS 1 – KS 2 Average Writing Progress: 2019 Quartile B (national rank = 41)

	2016	2017	2018	2019
National	- 1.0	- 0.90	- 0.80	- 0.80
NELC	+ 1.30 2 nd in region	+ 4.70 1 st in region	+ 2.60 2 nd in region	+ 0.30 2 nd in region
Regional	- 0.50	- 0.80	- 0.90	- 0.50

KS 1 – KS 2 Average Maths Progress: 2019 Quartile A (national rank = 18)

	2016	2017	2018	2019
National	- 1.30	- 1.10	- 0.80	- 1.00
NELC	- 0.90	+ 1.20 1 st in region	+ 3.50 1 st in region	+ 1.00 3 rd in region
Regional	- 1.40	- 1.30	0.60	- 0.70

The progress data above indicates the positive value added scores across all three core subjects for the most recent four years for which benchmarked performance data is available. The progress rates are significantly higher than both national and regional CLA between 2017 – 2019.

Key Stage 2 CLA Attainment**% Achieving Expected Standards Benchmark 2016 – 2019**

		2016	2017	2018	2019
NELC Virtual School	Reading	52.6	52.2	45	45.2
NEL: all schools	Reading	59	66.9	73.5	72.4

CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Reading	38	42	46	47
CLA: National	Reading	41	45	52	50
National: all schools	Reading	65.9	71.6	75.3	73.2
NELC Virtual School	Writing	73.7	52.2	45	45.2
NEL: all schools	Writing	79.6	78.9	80.5	80.5
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Writing	47	45	46	49
CLA: National	Writing	46	47	50	51
National: all schools	Writing	74	76.3	78.3	78.4
NELC Virtual School	Maths	57.9	34.8	45	51.6
NEL: all schools	Maths	69.3	73.1	77.4	80.9
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	Maths	39	43	44	51
CLA: National	Maths	42	46	48	52
National: all schools	Maths	69.8	74.9	75.5	78.7
NELC Virtual School	GPS	52.6	34.8	55	54.8
NEL: all schools	GPS	71.3	74.1	76	77.8
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	GPS	42	47	47	50
CLA: National	GPS	44	50	51	53
National: all schools	GPS	72.5	76.9	77.6	78
NELC Virtual School	R/W/M combined	47.4	30.4	25	32.3
NEL: all schools	R/W/M	50.6	59.1	65.5	65.4
CLA: Yorkshire & Humber	R/W/M	24	28	33	36
CLA: National	R/W/M	26	32	36	37
National: all schools	R/W/M	53.4	61.1	64.4	64.9

12 Months In Care Measure applied for the data in the above table

- **SATs** for Reading; Maths; Grammar/Punctuation & Spelling: 2019 Quartile B (national rank = 39)
- **Teacher Assessment** for Writing
- **R/W/M** = Reading/Writing/Maths: Expected Standards Combined Measure: 2019 Quartile D (national rank = 71)

KS 2 Attainment has been broadly in line with national and/or regional CLA for individual core subjects between the years 2016 – 2019. Some variability across subject performance – particularly in 2018 and 2019 – resulted in Combined Measure outcomes which were lower than national and regional CLA.

CLA with Special Educational Needs: EHCPs or SEN Support

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
EHCP % NEL	39.3	41.5	23.2	18.5	25.2	21.4	21.8	23.4	23.2	24.4
National	28.2	29.4	28.5	29	27.6	27	26.7	26.5	27.2	27.7
Regional	23.2	24.8	24.1	25.4	24.1	24	24.6	25.3	25.6	26.8
SEN Support % NEL	44.6	43.4	50.7	39.5	27.8	27.0	29.5	32.6	31.4	27.7
National	41.7	42.1	39.3	37.6	32.9	30.4	29.6	29.0	28.7	28.1
Regional	45	44.4	42.4	39.5	34.7	30.5	30.4	29.6	30.4	30.3

Source: LAIT April 2020

In May 2012 the proportion of CLA placed on SEN registers = 80% (of a cohort of 72). This was significantly higher than the national average of 58% typically identified at SEN Support by the end of Key Stage 2. As our CLA cohort has increased significantly since then – and particularly in response to the implementation of the revised SEND Code of Practice from September, 2014 - the percentage with SEND has reduced. We have encouraged schools to place CLA on SEND registers to reflect those children with specific needs in relation to learning and cognition and/or social emotional and mental health needs. SEMH accounts for 38% of SEN primary need for CLA.

The Virtual School Head works closely with schools, social care and health professionals to support the Statutory SEND Assessment process when appropriate for individual CLA.

CLA with an EHCP has increased to 24.4% in 2021 compared to 20.3% in September 2020:

- primary age with an EHCP = 14%
- secondary age with an EHCP = 34.3%

However, this figure is still below national CLA with EHCPs (27.7%) which indicates an under-diagnosis – particularly for younger CLA - primarily in terms of their social and emotional mental health needs.

There is a discussion at each PEP Review – particularly for CLA on school registers at SEN Support - as to whether a Statutory Assessment leading to an Education, Health and Care Plan would be appropriate for individuals to more precisely identify and support both their SEMH and learning needs.

Key Objectives for the Virtual School

Access and Admissions: to ensure that all CLA have a school place and that there is no drift or delay in children and young people accessing their education, both within NEL and for those placed out of area (**129 = 34.9%**). The Virtual School advises social workers, carers and the Admissions Service to ensure that all CLA are placed in schools appropriate to their needs. The highest priority is given to secure places in schools which are at least ‘Good’ in terms of their Ofsted Inspection judgements.

Percentage of CLA on roll at Good/Outstanding Schools:

- September 2017 = 71.8 % of cohort
- September 2018 = 80.24 %
- September 2019 = 78.2 %
- September 2020 = 82.55 %
- **September 2021 = 84.6%**

SCHOOL OFSTED RATINGS: September 2020 (September 2020 % in brackets)	% Outstanding		% Good		% Requires Improvement		% Inadequate	
CLA in all schools	22	(20.1)	62.4	(62.4)	15.6	(17.1)	0	(0.4)
Primary age CLA	15.3	(9.2)	69.4	(72.5)	15.3	(17.6)	0	(0.6)
Secondary age CLA	32	(34)	54	(50)	14	(16)	0	(0)

Admissions: The Virtual School holds schools and academies to account in their implementation of the DfE’s School Admissions Guidance. All CLA are placed on roll at a mainstream or specialist setting appropriate to their SEND and/or social, emotional and behaviour needs.

There are effective working relationships across the Virtual School Head network. Colleagues liaise closely ranging from routinely signposting specific services and contacts in their respective LAs through to problem solving support for more complex cases.

Attendance: to ensure regular attendance we monitor all CLA working closely with schools, social workers and foster/residential/relative carers.

As illustrated in the table on the next page, between 2013 and 2019 CLA cohorts maintained an attendance rate of **at least 96%** which is above the rate for all children nationally and in NELC. Absence for all children nationally was 4.7% in 2019 which is the most recent year for benchmarked data.

Ensuring regular attendance is one of our key strengths but we are not complacent about the need to maintain the high profile of this priority. When persistent absence issues occur, we commission support for individual CLA from Educational Welfare Officers who are also part of the LA Inclusion Service.

Persistent Absence is defined as missing 10% of school time. The national CLA rate increased from 8.9% in 2014 to 10.9% in 2019 whereas it was 6.7% in NELC for 2019. 32% of children on CIN plans nationally fall into the category of persistent absence and - from the perspective of ensuring regular school attendance - looked after status is clearly a protective factor.

CLA Absence Rates 2011 - 2019 (source: LAIT April 2020)

- 2019 Absence = Quartile A (national rank = 31)
- 2019 Unauthorised Absence = Quartile B (national rank = 73)
- 2019 Persistent Absence = Quartile B (national rank = 34)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	16	2017	2018	2019
% Absence NELC	6.0	4.9	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.8	4.3	4.3	4.1
National	5.5	4.7	4.4	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.7	5	5.1
Regional	5.8	4.5	4.0	3.6	3.7	3.5	4.3	4.9	5.1
% Unauthorised Absence NELC	1.2	2.4	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.9	1.5	1.9	1.6
National	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.7
Regional	1.9	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.7	1.9
% Persistent Absence NEL	x	x	x	x	x	x	11.5	9.9	10
National	-	6.0	10.1	8.9	9.0	9.1	11.1	11.7	12
Regional	-	-	9.3	8.1	8.3	8.4	10.1	11.5	11.9

Exclusions:

Children looked after are five times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion compared to all children nationally. Fixed period exclusions for all children have increased nationally but the LA experienced a spike in 2017 and 2018 for secondary age children.

The Virtual School works closely with designated teachers, school/academy senior leaders, social workers and carers to reduce the number of CLA who are at risk of being excluded. In NEL the

overwhelming majority of exclusions are for young people in mainstream secondary academies. As detailed below, the Behaviour & Attendance Collaboratives are the key mechanism to avoid the use of permanent exclusions and to ensure that senior leaders understand the importance of reducing fixed period exclusions for CLA. Locally generated data since 2010 indicated that – in a typical academic year - up to 30 CLA were subject to one or more fixed term exclusions although we had a sharp increase during 2016-17 when 43 CLA (38 secondary and 5 primary) received one or more fixed term exclusions. This equated to 16.4% of CLA receiving at least one fixed term exclusion which was higher than national (11.8%) and regional (12.6%). This was a key line of enquiry during the 2017 Ofsted Inspection for all vulnerable young people across the LA. Fixed period exclusions reduced slightly during the academic year 2017-18 to 15.4% but this was still higher than both national and regional.

Fixed Period Exclusions: the latest nationally benchmarked data is taken from LAIT April 2020.

2019 = Quartile C (national rank = 73)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
NELC %	13.11	7.79	8.0	10.38	16.4	15.4	11.22
National %	10.27	10.25	10.42	11.44	11.83	11.67	11.38
Regional %	8.59	9.36	10.35	11.72	12.06	12.21	11.26
All Children %	1.92	1.86	1.98	2.11	2.29	2.33	<i>tbc</i>
CIN %	6.58	6.54	7.18	7.65	8.25	8.47	<i>tbc</i>

Our Virtual School data (matched against the figures provided by the LA lead officer for exclusions) indicates a significant reduction in the numbers of CLA receiving at least one fixed period exclusions during last two academic years:

- 2019 - 20: 15 CLA = 4.8 %
- 2020 - 21: 17 CLA = 4.5 %

Behaviour and Attendance Collaboratives (BACs)

The BAC Panels consider all behaviour referrals across primary and secondary schools in NEL. They were established from September 2012 to address the increasing number of secondary age permanent exclusions. The BAC process considers referrals for all students at risk of permanent exclusion. It enables managed moves to take place to other mainstream schools or PRUs.

The VSH has effectively used the BAC process to increase the understanding of senior leaders that CLA face acute social, emotional and mental health challenges which can manifest as challenging behaviours at school. The VSH highlights that CLA are particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of exclusion upon their self-esteem, care placement stability, progress and life chances. The BAC has been the vehicle through which the principle of no permanent exclusions has been agreed. Whilst this position statement in practice has not been unconditionally guaranteed by every secondary academy, the concept of permanent exclusion as '*a last resort*' (*DfE Guidance September, 2012*) – is applied by all principals. The VSH undertakes significant levels of direct casework with senior leaders to ensure that they provide additional support for CLA in their schools or consider alternative placements (managed through the BAC process and Virtual School) rather than issue repeat fixed period or permanent exclusions.

Behavioural issues leading to fixed period exclusions are more acute in local secondary academies. High levels of multi-agency case work are undertaken to support CLA to remain in mainstream academies until the end of Year 11. Historically, the proportion completing Year 11 in mainstream academies was low: 25% in 2014; 33% between 2015 - 2018; 38% in 2019. The VSH has consistently highlighted to senior leaders from all ten academies at the Secondary BAC Panel the need for a collective improvement across North East Lincolnshire. In 2020, 48% of our largest ever Year 11 cohort of 50 students completed their education in a mainstream secondary. The significant impact of this improvement was that 31 students successfully achieved GCSE grades. *21 of the cohort had EHCPs, only 5 of whom attended mainstream schools.*

Other potential permanent exclusions have been prevented either through the direct involvement of the VSH and/or a managed move through the BAC. The challenge of the BAC process for the Virtual School is that, historically, the majority of referrals for CLA resulted in placements in PRUs or Alternative Provision. Across NEL it has been challenging to convince secondary academies to successfully support the integration of CLA who were deemed to have '*failed*' in another mainstream school. *For example, only two students have successfully transferred from a PRU to a mainstream academy during Year 10.*

During the last three years the numbers of CLA being referred to the respective BACs due to being at risk of exclusion has significantly reduced compared to previous years. ***There have been no permanent exclusions from schools and academies in the last four years.***

Officers from the Virtual School devote a significant amount of time to direct case work to reduce fixed period exclusions. The VSH frequently meets with headteachers and other senior leaders to plan school-based interventions to avoid the use of repeat exclusions and to provide support for CLA at risk of permanent exclusions. The differentiated use of Pupil Premium Plus funding has resulted in increased allocations to individual schools which demonstrate effective and inclusive practice.

Personal Education Plans:

The Virtual School challenges schools, academies and other providers to ensure that CLA receive and benefit from the best possible educational provision including the need to make at least expected rates of progress. The Virtual School arranges additional learning support where appropriate, working in close partnership with carers, designated teachers and the Inclusion Service to ensure full attendance and maintain good rates of progress. In addition, the Virtual School supports social workers and carers to develop their understanding of school systems, the barriers CLA can and do face in their learning and solution focused strategies to overcome these challenges.

Through leading the PEP process, the Virtual School works directly with young people, carers, designated teachers, social workers and IROs to ensure that PEP and LAC Reviews are consultative and responsive to the young person's needs as well as recording their educational journey from the point they become looked after. The Virtual School ensures that the PEP Review process is timely, inclusive of all parties and recognises a wide range of achievements. SMART targets provide a pathway to achieve successful outcomes. The Virtual School is directly responsible for:

- arranging and reviewing the PEPs in schools
- completing and quality assuring the documents
- holding to account those with responsibility for ensuring that the agreed objectives, actions and support are delivered.

Ofsted Inspection Report (September 2017). Having scrutinised the PEPs of over 40 CLA, **Ofsted judged our PEP Reviews as Good.**

Priority 2: to ensure that all CLA have a current high quality PEP which is reviewed regularly within statutory timescales. The PEP – as both a document and process – is pivotal in terms of identifying and recording support needs for each child and young person. **A monthly scorecard was introduced in March 2020.** All PEPs are uploaded to the LCS social care database.

The Virtual School believes that the direct management, delivery and quality assurance of the PEP Review process enables officers to develop an individual knowledge and understanding of the children and young people in terms of their strengths and difficulties. Setting and reviewing progress targets with carers and professionals enables all agencies to have a clear understanding of each young person's educational journey. Virtual School officers identify specific needs as well as supporting and challenging schools/academies in a more focused and informed way. Leading the PEP Review process through this direct partnership with schools is also the most effective way of providing continuous support and professional development for Designated Teachers.

CLA Pupil Premium Plus Funding:

For the financial year 2021-22, the standard allocation is £2,345 per CLA. Through the PEP Review process, the Virtual School monitors how Pupil Premium Plus is used to ensure that CLA benefit from this additional resource in relation to making good progress in schools. The Virtual Head is responsible for managing the allocation of the funding to schools and academies each term. Prior to receiving the payments in their budgets, all Head Teachers are required to sign and return an agreement that this additional funding will be allocated to meet the targets specified in each Personal Education Plan and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the DfE grant.

Since 2012 all NELC Personal Education Plan (PEP) Reviews have been the key forum and reporting mechanism through which the carers and professionals working with the child/young person can make recommendations on how these funds should be most effectively allocated. At the PEP Review, professionals also provide feedback on the impact of the personalised intervention and support strategies which have been in place for the previous six months. This is in line with the DfE Conditions of Grant letter to local authorities (paragraph 16):

'The local authority should ensure that they discuss, via their Virtual School Head working in partnership with designated teachers, how the amount for looked after children is to be used by the school to the benefit of the looked after child's educational needs as described in their PEP.'

Designated Teachers are also strongly encouraged to make referrals for enhanced Pupil Premium Plus allocations to support additional and personalised intervention strategies which promote inclusive practice and 'closing the gap' interventions.

The Virtual School does not *automatically* allocate LAC Pupil Premium Plus in the following cases:

- To schools/academies where there are quality concerns about the PEP or review process
- To schools/academies where children and young people are at serious risk of repeat or permanent exclusions
- To specialist educational and/or residential settings commissioned through SENAG and/or Social Care funding agreements

However, specific requests to access Pupil Premium Plus funding are considered at every PEP Review.

Enhancement Activities.

The Virtual School encourages additional requests for care placement based learning and enhancement activities in addition to the offer from schools. For example, the Virtual School promotes access to IT equipment by ensuring that each foster and residential placement has, as a minimum, one PC or laptop to support homework and independent access to school's virtual learning environments or platforms. Through a referral system, carers will be re-funded to the value of £250 to pay for - or partially cover the total costs of - IT purchases. There is financial support to provide music lessons; 1-1 tuition particularly, but not exclusively, for GCSE English and maths; sporting activities; extra-curricular trips and residential visits.

The Virtual School has organised, supported or commissioned enhancement activities including:

- Participation in the bespoke programmes delivered by staff at Best Futures Nurture Provision for primary and lower secondary aged CLA including support for Year 6 - 7 Transition
- LAC Health Day
- Art Day and art lessons
- Letter Box Club reading programme for primary aged children
- Performing arts, music horse riding lessons and sports activities

Key Partnership Working

CLA Designated Teachers: direct support and professional development is primarily provided through the Virtual School leading and quality assuring all PEP Reviews. Designated Teachers are invited to all LAC Reviews and the majority take place in schools to facilitate this. These reviewing processes are supplemented by additional meetings in schools to address individual concerns particularly in response to under-achievement or the risk of exclusion. A range of training courses have been provided including: attachment awareness; the promotion of trauma informed practice for schools and across LA services; the development of sensory processing skills with a specialist CAMHS trainer.

Carers: foster, residential and relative carers. The VSH contributes to the training programme for carers covering areas such as: Personal Education Plans; the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding; the role of the VSH and Virtual School.

CLA Strategic Board & Operational Delivery Group for Education & Skills: monthly meetings.

PEP & NEETS Operational Delivery Group: fortnightly meetings

Corporate Parenting Board: quarterly meetings.

Placement Panel: weekly

Independent Reviewing Officers; Social & Fostering Link Workers: PEPs are accessed by IROs and social workers to inform LAC Reviews and Care Plans. In addition, colleagues from these services regularly contact the VSH and PEP Officers between reviews to monitor the progress of agreed educational actions and outcomes for children and young people. The VSH has attended IRO and CLA Service meetings to discuss the statutory responsibilities work of the Virtual School.

Fostering & Adoption Team: two colleagues are accredited Train the Trainers and they deliver whole staff sessions in schools on attachment awareness and the impact of trauma on children's

learning. Following attachment training for Designated Teachers and at the SENCO Forum, whole staff training has been requested and delivered at a range of schools and academies in NEL.

The Virtual School provides transitional support – discussed and planned at PEP Reviews – through which CLA are permanently placed through adoption, child arrangement and special guardianship orders. This includes signposting services and providing advice in relation to Admissions, Exclusions, Pupil Premium Plus funding and the SEND Code of Practice. The VSH has attended the local network for Adoptive Parents to provide training on the priority status and statutory entitlements of children previously looked after. In terms of meeting the legislative changes from September 2018, the Virtual School, supported by officers across the wider Inclusion Service, provides information, advice and guidance to the parents/carers of permanently placed children as well as to social workers from Fostering & Adoption Service who continue to work with them.

LAC Health: The Virtual School Head attends the monthly meeting to discuss the results of initial and subsequent 12 month LAC Health Assessments including SDQ scores. This leads to follow-up case work including discussions with schools about the need to provide additional support for children and young people with high SDQ scores.

NELC Education Services Meetings including SENAG and BAC panels

Regional Virtual School Heads for Yorkshire & Humberside: VSH attends all termly meetings.

National Association of VSH (NAVSH): VSH has attended all Annual Conferences since 2011.

Virtual School Development Objectives for 2021 – 2022

1. Ensure that all PEP Reviews continue to take place virtually through Microsoft Teams and that all partners are consulted and supported to fully participate in the continued development of PEPs.
2. Monitoring and supporting the Covid -19 Recovery Curriculum for CLA: this is vitally important both in terms of 'catch-up' learning programmes – to address gaps in literacy and numeracy skills – as well as identifying children who require additional social, emotional and mental health support in school.
3. Increase the number of Year 11 taking a full range of GCSE courses and achieving the national standard of 8+ higher grades (4 – 9) including English & Maths to improve the Best 8 Attainment and Best 8 Progress outcomes.
4. For Year 6 CLA, ensure that the gap with all NELC pupils is reduced in terms of meeting targets for age related expectations for the combined Reading, Writing, SPAG and Maths measure.
5. Increase the proportion of Year 2 achieving the expected age related combined standards for Reading, Writing, Maths and Science in the Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessments.

6. Ensure that the implementation of the Inclusion Service enables the Virtual School to fulfil its statutory role to improve educational outcomes and the extended duties: that is, the provision of information, advice and guidance to previously looked after children (*those permanently placed through adoption, child arrangement or special guardianship orders*).
7. Ensure that all PEPs are of a high quality including the use of SMART targets. All completed PEPs are to be quality assured by the Virtual School and uploaded onto Liquid Logic. There needs to be clear and consistent evidence of the use of challenge during reviews through the focus on rates of progress towards improved outcomes. Explore the potential of the online Portal within Liquid Logic so that designated teachers and social workers can add information and data to the PEPs.
8. Continue to evaluate the ways in which the Pupil Premium Plus Grant Funding is used by schools to support improved rates of progress and outcomes. The emphasis needs to be on the impact of specific interventions and personalised learning strategies on the rates of progress made by individual CLA. Detailed discussions about the allocation and effectiveness of Pupil Premium Plus is an integral part of the Personal Education Plan.

A graduate has been appointed to the Virtual School from September 2021 to undertake qualitative and quantitative research in schools on the use and impact of this funding. This additional post will be funded through the council's 2 Year Graduate Placement Scheme.

9. Develop and extend the Virtual School to include strategic support across social care, schools and all LA agencies for children and young people on CIN and CP plans (September 2021 – March 2022).

Support

(i) Designated Teachers:

- Further develop the advocacy role of the Virtual School with schools and academies through supporting Designated Teachers.
- The most immediate, consistent and effective form of support is through the PEP Review process in schools which fully involves the designated teacher in reviewing, planning and setting revised targets for individual children and young people. This should be routinely used to support and challenge as well as recognise good practice.
- Ensure that all designated teachers have the skills and knowledge to contribute to and review high quality PEPs which clearly identify the needs of the child, plan the use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and specify the resources to improve outcomes for each individual.
- Ensure the educational journey and achievements of every child looked after are recognised through and accurately recorded in Personal Education Plans as well as by organising celebration events such as the Annual LACE Awards Presentation Evening.
- Ensure the Virtual School delivers a focus on the importance of high levels of CLA attendance through PEP meetings and LAC Reviews, as well through effective partnership working with Educational Welfare Officers to address persistent absence.
- Arrange additional reviews – as appropriate - for individual CLA which have a single focus on prevention and early intervention strategies: for those at risk of under-achievement or

exclusion; to attend re-integration meetings and behaviour reviews; to support transitions to new schools.

- Make intelligent use and analysis of data to influence practice and inform the setting of appropriate targets and strategies. Colleagues from the NELC Informatics Team are providing additional capacity (equivalent to 2 days per week) for the Virtual School. This includes the use and application of the nationally generated NCER/Nexus and FFT Aspire data aligning contextualised care placement data with attainment and progress measures.

(ii) Multi-Agency Professionals:

- Ensure that all colleagues demonstrate the skills and knowledge to challenge schools on the educational attainment and progress of CLA; to signpost them to appropriate forms of support and to ensure that the Headteacher of the Virtual School is informed of any concerns.
- In partnership with the CLA/New Futures Services and YPSS, develop and extend the role of the Virtual School to support the progression to post-16 education and training provision for CLA through clear links with Pathway Plans.
- Strengthen the processes and opportunities for CLA to raise concerns about their educational provision through the PEP Reviews, their foster/residential carers and social workers. Such concerns and issues must be recorded in the PEP and addressed by the Virtual School.