

Report title	Virtual School Head Annual Report 2019
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People
Wards affected	All wards
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services
Originating service	Inclusion Support
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Report to be/has been considered by	Children and Young People/Education Joint Leadership Team 9 January 2020

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2019.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Corporate Parenting Board of the educational progress and achievements of our Children and Young People in Care, and previously in care, and the steps that the local authority has taken to support those achievements.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to promote the education of Children and Young People in Care and previously in care. This is a key part of its corporate parenting responsibility.
- 2.2 The Virtual School Head (VSH) is responsible for ensuring that the council effectively discharges the above duty. The VSH manages the Virtual School Team, which is dedicated to supporting that duty and ensures that the educational outcomes of children and young people in care are maximised.
- 2.3 This report summarises the educational outcomes of Wolverhampton City Council's Children and Young People in Care for the 2019/18 academic year. It also outlines the ways in which the Virtual School Team have worked to raise the achievement of children and young people in care in 2018-2019 and outlines plans for further development.
- 2.4 This report also seeks to inform knowledge and understanding pertaining to this area.

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4.0 Cohort Information

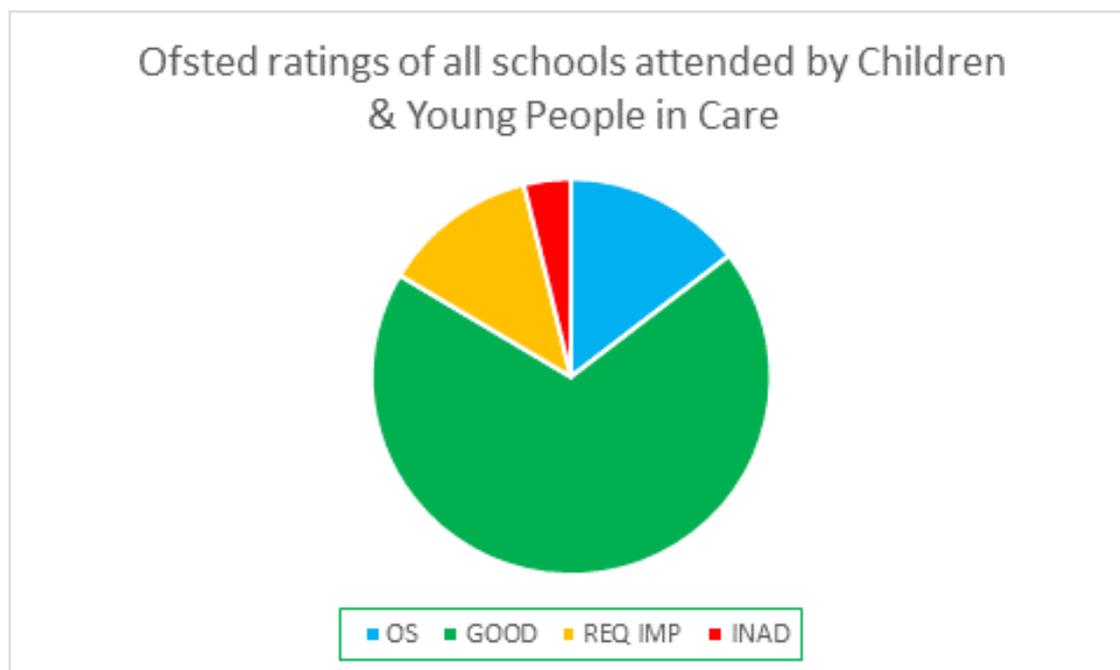
4.1 At September 2019, the following cohort characteristics apply to Wolverhampton's Virtual School. The arrows next to Total pupils and Total ethnic groups indicate that those numbers have reduced since 2018 (total ethnic groups reduced by 1). The arrows following the other characteristics indicate whether they have increased or decreased since 2018, as a percentage of the cohort:

Total pupils (Reception – Year 11)	429 ↓
Placed in Wolverhampton	209 – 49% ↓
Placed out of City	220 - 51% ↑
Attending primary schools	182 – 42% ↓
Attending secondary schools	247 – 58% ↑
Attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)	16 – 4% ↑
Attending Special Schools	59 – 14% ↑
Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) for Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)	95 – 22% ↓
Total ethnic groups	15 ↓
None White British	34% ↓

5.0 School Ofsted Ratings

- 5.1 Statutory guidance states that Children and Young People in Care should attend schools that are rated as either or Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.¹
- 5.2 At September 2019, 83% of children and young people in care attend a school which is rated as good or better by Ofsted. The ratings are summarised in the chart over the page:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>



5.3 We aim to place Children and Young People in Care in the best schools available to them. However, it is sometimes appropriate for a pupil to remain in a school rated as less than good or outstanding by Ofsted, for reasons such as placement stability. These factors can be particularly valuable to a vulnerable child's wellbeing and success in school. In such cases, an informed assessment is carefully made, in the best interests of the pupil.

6.0 Supporting Academic Progress and Achievement

6.1 Wolverhampton's Virtual School team are committed to improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care through a combination of direct, advisory and strategic work with children, schools, social workers, carers and other stakeholders.

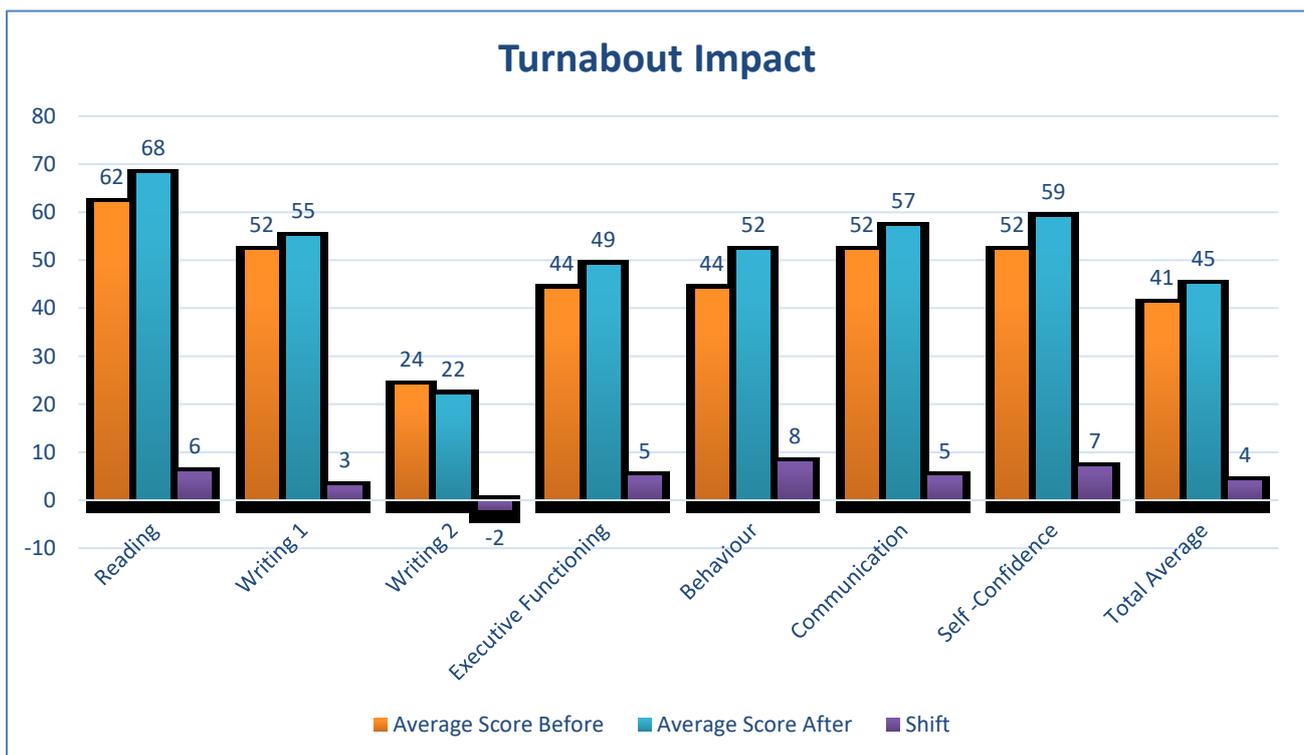
6.2 The team consists of one full-time equivalent (FTE) Senior Education Advisor, 3.5 FTE Education Support Officers (ESO), one 0.5 FTE Data Officer and one full-time Administrator together with the VSH. We also benefit from the support of three Educational Psychologists (.9 FTE) and a 0.3 FTE Assistant Educational Psychologist, as well as strong links with other key agencies.

6.3 The Senior Education Advisor (SEA) provides support and challenge to schools, social care and other key partners to promote the inclusion and raise the achievement of children and young people in care. She also line-manages the ESOs and acts as a deputy to the Virtual School Head, providing operational direction and management. The SEA has been instrumental in ensuring that permanent exclusions remain at zero in 2018-2019, ensuring that appropriate school placements are secured in a timely manner and that children's support plans are strong and appropriately joined-up.

- 6.4 One ESO (.5 FTE) is dedicated to children in early years, while the other ESOs support the year 1-11 cohort, one of which is focussed on children who are educated outside Wolverhampton. A full-time Education, Employment and Training (EET) Co-ordinator in the Children and Young People in Care Transitions team acts as an extended member of the team in her support for Children and Young People in Care post-16.
- 6.5 Education Support Officers contact the Designated Teachers in Wolverhampton schools on a termly basis to discuss the progress of Children and Young People in Care in their school. Personal Educational Planning (PEP) meetings, care reviews etc are regularly attended and any educational issues are addressed without delay. The Virtual School track the school attendance and attainment of all Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care and support the PEP process, including auditing PEPs for quality. They also deliver 1:1 learning interventions to remove pupils' barriers to learning and support their educational progress. One of the ESOs also delivers training to foster carers and acts an operational lead on the Aspire2Uni project (section 7.0).
- 6.6 One of the key interventions delivered by the team is the **Turnabout** Programme, an intensive programme of two to three weekly sessions for eight weeks, which helps pupils - usually at primary school age - to overcome barriers to learning and develop *executive functioning*, or problem-solving strategies. Pupils are assessed by teachers at the start and end of the Turnabout programme in key areas – reading, writing, executive functioning, behaviour, communication and self-confidence.
- 6.7 Of the 13 pupils completing the Turnabout programme in 2018:
- 63% improved in their reading, 36% improving by 2 levels or more (no pupils decreased)
 - 40% improved in their writing, 20% improving by 2 levels or more (no pupils decreased)
 - Interestingly, 67% improved in maths, with 33% improving by 2 levels or more. Maths improvement is not a direct aim of the programme but it is likely that resulting increases in confidence etc will also improve pupils' performance in that area.

6.8 The chart below illustrates the average levels of improvement made, in each of the identified areas, by pupils receiving the Turnabout intervention programme in 2018 - 2019:

Skill Area	Average Score Before	Average Score After	Shift
Reading	62	68	6
Writing 1	52	55	3
Writing 2	24	22	-2
Executive Functioning	44	49	5
Behaviour	44	52	8
Communication	52	57	5
Confidence	52	59	7
Total Average	41	45	4
Total	330	362	32



6.9 Teachers and carers have made many very positive comments about the impact of Turnabout and other interventions by the Virtual School Team. For example: “A has made nearly a year’s progress in one term. I think that shows how Turnabout has impacted on learning”.

Another compliment which reflected the wider work of the team was:

“This year Jasmin has worked very closely with myself and the children at Brownhills

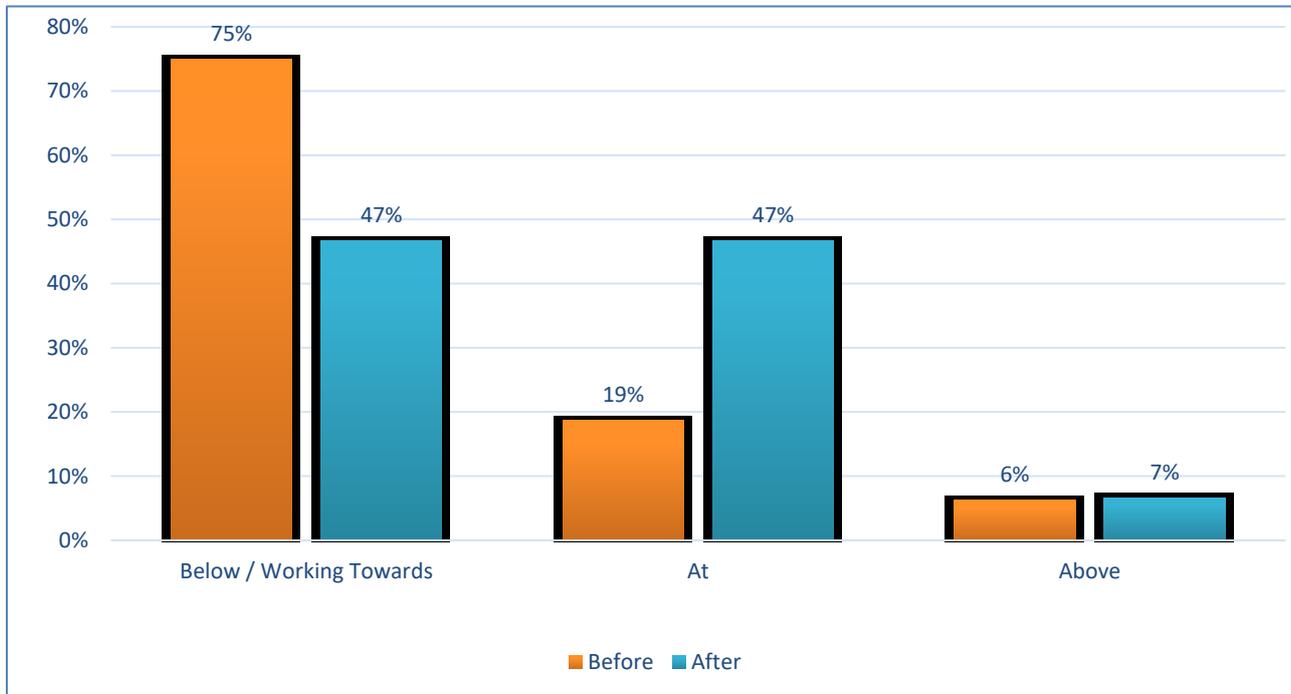
School. Jasmin has always been extremely supportive and has been an excellent ambassador for the Virtual School. The children have benefitted from the resources and contacts that the Virtual School has been able to provide. I wish every authority had a Virtual School and a 'Jasmin' as committed and as dedicated to improving the life chances of the children".

6.10 The activities of the **Educational Psychologists (EPs)** working within the Virtual School included:

- **217 Consultations** with Social Workers, teachers, support staff from a range of agencies and with children
- **87 Assessments** of children and young people in care, placed both within City and out of City
- **25 Interventions** either directly or indirectly that relate to learning, social emotional and mental health needs
- **Seven Training sessions** for professionals and carers
- Attendance at **79 multi-agency meetings** where specialist psychologically based input is required, along with **reflective practice and solution focused case(s) meetings implementing restorative practice principles**

6.11 Another intervention that the Virtual School funds with Pupil Premium Plus (see section 9) is **Coram Beanstalk Volunteer Reader Help**. In 2018 - 2019, this project supported 78 children in school years one to six with their reading progress, across 21 schools in Wolverhampton, through the assistance of 30 reading helpers. Reading Helpers provide 1:1 reading help to children in school, twice-weekly. "Beanstalk" aims to achieve three main aims: to accelerate children's reading progress, to improve their attitudes to reading and learning generally, and to improve their reading and speaking confidence.

6.12 Schools are asked to assess the children's reading levels in relation to age-related expectations when they start with the reading helper and again at the end of the intervention. The chart below illustrates the significant improvements made by pupils receiving this support:



6.13 Reading helpers also collect data on changes in the children's subjective attitudes towards reading and learning. The percentage of children expressing positive feelings about reading, following Beanstalk intervention, had increased from 73% to 86%.

6.14 Various other improvements were observed following Beanstalk intervention. For example:

- Key Stage 1 children exhibited a marked growth in their abilities to independently ask and answer questions pertaining to the text (58% to 78%) and to interpret the character's feelings (50% to 67%).
- The percentage of children able to modulate their voice when reading out loud nearly doubled (36% to 67%), and those able to discuss what they had read increased by 41%.
- There were also notable improvements in the children's confidence in choosing books to read on their own, which went up from 64% to 89%
- 77% said that they were more likely to put their hands up in class to answer a question

6.15 The Virtual School has received several positive comments on the Coram Beanstalk intervention, including the following comment from the class teacher of a year two pupil:

“D has benefitted so much from Beanstalk this year. His face lights up when he sees his Beanstalk Reading Helper! His confidence has grown, as has his reading ability. This specialist programme has been just what he needed!”

7.0 Raising Aspirations – Aspire2Uni

- 7.1 The **Aspire2Uni (A2U) Programme** is now in its fifth year and continues to raise aspirations, as well as supporting improved attainment and creating exciting bespoke opportunities for children and young people in care. A partnership project with the University of Wolverhampton and four Local Authority Virtual schools - Sandwell, Stafford, Walsall and Wolverhampton - A2U is targeted at pupils who are reaching expected standards at the end of KS2 and offers them additional support through their secondary school years. Four cohorts were following the programme in the 2018-2019 academic year, from years 7 to 10, totalling 29 pupils. A2U has been recognised in various national forums as an example of good practice.
- 7.2 The VSH provides strategic oversight of the project from Wolverhampton’s perspective, while one of the Virtual School Support Officers acts as an operational lead and all members of the team provide staffing, organisational and administrative support as required.
- 7.3 There are three main elements to the programme:
- **Outreach** - a series of university visits and other events, designed to raise aspirations, break down barriers and inform progression to higher education.
 - **Mentoring** - a dedicated mentor is allocated to the young person and works with them in their home either once per week or once per fortnight. In 2018-2019, group and online mentoring sessions have also been organised for some older students who have been accessing A2U mentoring for a long time and are ready to move on to a different form of support.
 - **Work Experience and Enrichment** - Working with local businesses, accesses high quality, bespoke work placements and group visits to local employers such as Jaguar Land Rover. In addition, the project offers enrichment experiences, such as visits to the theatre or outward-bound experiences, to broaden students’ horizons and build their confidence.
- 7.4 Of the 29 children and young people in care from Wolverhampton who were participating in A2U in the summer of 2019, 75% are at the age-related expected standard in English and 72% in maths. This is an excellent outcome which reflects the positive impact of A2U support on the confidence, progress and achievement of these vulnerable children. The project is helping to raise aspirations for children and young people in care, which is contributing to the high numbers of care leavers in higher education (HE) and other positive post-16 outcomes.
- 7.5 When asked specifically about the impact of mentoring on A2U, pupil feedback from the whole cohort of 110 pupils (including the other 3 virtual schools), 75% of pupils felt their attitude to learning had improved. 50% of pupils felt their ability in Maths had improved and 67% of pupils felt their English ability has improved. 75% of pupils felt they had

improved abilities in other subjects and 67% said their confidence and self-belief has improved, as a result of the mentoring support.

- 7.6 Feedback from students on A2U also included positive comments such as “it helps me with homework, revision or tests... Nerves, frustration and how to deal with it” (year nine pupil) and “I think having these sessions has helped me a lot. It has help me build confidence and not be afraid to try new things even if I get it wrong” (year eight pupil).

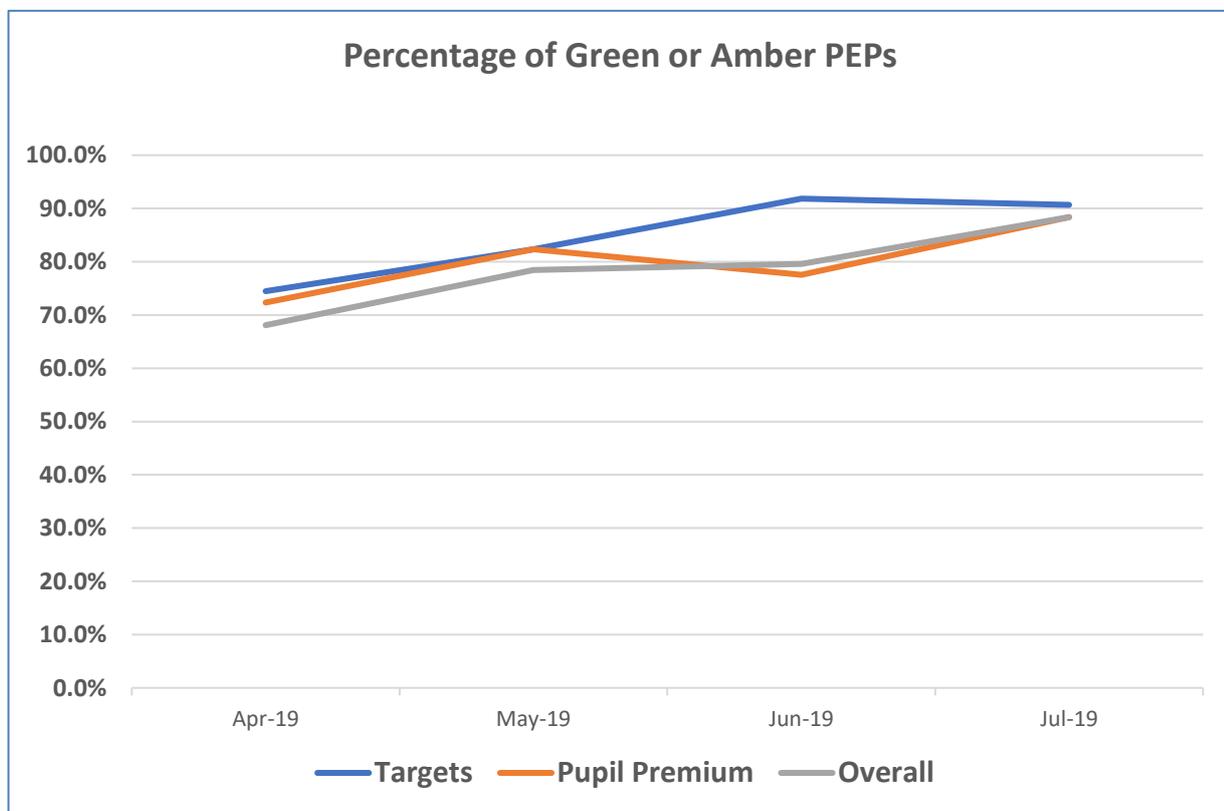
8.0 Personal Education Plans

- 8.1 It is a statutory requirement of local authorities to ensure that all children and young people in care have a quality, up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP). At July 2019, the Insight and Performance Team reported 96% of school-age PEPs, 63% of early years PEPs (this percentage was partly affected by a recording issue which has since been addressed, and the completion rate thus improved) and 54% of post-16 PEPs (this has since improved with an increased focus by the management team, virtual school and EET Co-ordinator) having been completed within statutory timescales. The overall completion rate for all PEPs was therefore reported as 88.4%.
- 8.2 At the beginning of 2018, the VSH introduced a new, fully electronic PEP form, using the Eclipse data management system, from pupil in school years 1 to 11. There are separate, dedicated PEP forms for children in early years and post-16, and those versions are still paper documents in WORD format. Fully electronic versions will be developed, however, as Eclipse replaces Carefirst as the social care information management tool.
- 8.3 Despite implementation challenges and ‘teething problems’ - such as the large number of schools needing to securely access the system, changes of staff or the availability of internet access in schools - the Eclipse PEP has been successfully implemented and has contributed to a steady improvement in quality. Wolverhampton is the only virtual school, to the best of our knowledge, that has created its own electronic PEP ‘in-house’ – other local authorities have purchased e-PEP systems from commercial suppliers. While it was labour-intensive in its implementation, having developed our own bespoke system gives Wolverhampton Virtual School far greater flexibility and control over the PEP system.
- 8.4 Training in the use of the Eclipse PEP is delivered for groups social workers and Designated Teachers on a half-termly basis and 1:1 support is regularly provided for individual workers. An online course on Effective Personal Educational Planning, written by the Virtual School Head, is also available on the council’s Learning Hub and face-to-face training on this is delivered to newly-qualified social workers as part of their induction.
- 8.5 In the past, however, the quality of PEPs has been frequently uneven and sometimes poor. This is a reality for many virtual schools, and often highlighted by Ofsted. To support the continual drive to ensure quality PEPs, the Virtual School Team audit individual PEPs for quality. Approximately 50 PEPs are audited each month. Different children are audited each time, so that all will have had at least one PEP audited by the end of the year (ESOs are expected to be sighted on all of the PEPs for children in their

cohorts, but formally audit at least one per pupil). Individual audit results are sent to social workers and Designated Teachers for their information and guidance.

8.6 The team changed the way that PEPs were audited in 2019. Instead of scrutinising all sections of the PEP equally, attention was focussed primarily on two key areas: (1) whether the PEP targets are appropriate and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related) and (2) whether Pupil Premium Plus funding has been properly and effectively utilised by the school, as recorded in the PEP. PEPs are rated Red, Amber or Green according to their quality in these areas (Amber is considered to be of an acceptable standard, while Green is very good or outstanding. If the standard is not good enough they are rated Red). A sample of the results of these audits – from April to July 2019 - is illustrated in the table and chart below:

	Are targets SMART? PEPs rated Green or Amber		Is Pupil Premium Plus effectively used? PEPs rated Green or Amber		Overall PEP Quality PEPs rated Green or Amber	
Apr-19	35	74.5%	34	72.3%	32	68.1%
May-19	42	82.4%	42	82.4%	40	78.4%
Jun-19	45	91.8%	38	77.6%	39	79.6%
Jul-19	39	90.7%	38	88.4%	38	88.4%



8.7 The data in the graph at 8.6 shows a clear general improvement in quality throughout the summer term. A true comparison with previous years is not possible in all areas because audits were completed and recorded differently. However, the data does indicate that a greater proportion of PEPs have SMART targets than previously (79% overall for the above sample, compared to 63% in 2018 and 50% in 2017). The Virtual School team, teachers and social workers have also reported, anecdotally, that PEP quality is improving and that the introduction of the electronic PEP format is supporting this.

9.0 Pupil Premium Plus

9.1 The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is the funding allocated to local authorities, and managed by the VSH, to support improvements in the educational attainment of children and young people in care. Like many local authorities, Wolverhampton Virtual School allocates most of the grant to schools (£1,700 per pupil, per annum in termly instalments) and also retains a portion of the grant. The retained funding is utilised to fund most of the posts in the Virtual School Team and also for specific projects and resources to raise engagement and achievement, such as:

- Aspire2Uni (e.g. a stipend for student mentors, venue and delivery costs, “Brightside” online mentoring platform, training, administration and management)
- Beanstalk Volunteer Reading Help (reading support for pupils at KS1-2)
- Training of Designated Teachers – venue, refreshments etc
- Britannica School - an interactive, online version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica which we provide to facilitate safe, effective study support at home. Carers receive training in the use of the resource and it is also provided to our adoptive parents
- Assistant EP support to raise attainment at KS4
- Additional support for pupils with higher levels of need.

9.2 Any unspent grant must be returned to the DfE at the end of each financial year. As a result, several local authorities have had to return unspent grant to the DfE in the past. However, this has never happened in Wolverhampton Virtual School, as the funding is efficiently and successfully managed throughout the year.

10.0 School Attendance

10.1 The average school attendance of Wolverhampton children and young people in care in years 1-11 in 2018-2019 is outlined below:

<u>In-City pupils</u>	<u>94.73%</u>
<u>Out-of-City pupils</u>	<u>94.44%</u>
<u>All pupils</u>	<u>94.59%</u>

10.2 School attendance improved in 2018-2019 for pupils educated in Wolverhampton, and for the cohort overall, though is slightly lower for out-of-City pupils specifically. The average attendance for 2017-2018 was 93.23%, 95.07% and 94.15% respectively.

10.3 The following percentages of pupils were classed as persistently absent, or had attendance of less than 90% in 2018-2019:

<u>In-City pupils</u>	<u>8.88%</u>
<u>Out-of-City pupils</u>	<u>6.07%</u>
<u>All pupils</u>	<u>7.55%</u>

10.4 Rates of persistent absence are consistently lower than in the previous year – the % of pupils with less than 90% attendance in 2017-2018 were 11.53%, 9.46% and 10.49% respectively). They are also well below the national average for children and young people in care who were classified as persistently absent in 2018 (10.6%).

10.5 This improvement reflects the increased, proactive monitoring of attendance by the Virtual School Team, which ensures that any emerging attendance issues are addressed without delay. Attendance monitoring is also supported by daily telephone calls to all out-of-City schools by 'Welfare Call', a service funded by Pupil Premium Plus, which ensures that Children and Young People in Care who are educated outside Wolverhampton (and therefore potentially more vulnerable) benefit from even closer monitoring than those in Wolverhampton schools.

10.6 The Virtual School Team also work closely with School Admissions, and with schools, alternative education providers and admissions teams in other local authorities where children are placed outside Wolverhampton, to ensure that appropriate education is secured as quickly as possible whenever a change of school is necessary.

11.0 Inclusion

11.1 There were no permanent exclusions of Wolverhampton children and young people in care in 2018-2019. Permanent exclusions are very rare for Wolverhampton children and young people in care – 1 in 2017-2018, 2 in 2016-2017 and 1 in 2015-2016. This is a notable outcome (statistically, children in care are far more likely to be excluded than their peers) which reflects the concentrated, proactive work by the Virtual School, supported by social care and other key partners, in challenging exclusions, promoting inclusive practice and ensuring that the right support is in place for children and young people in care.

11.2 64 children and young people in care received one or more fixed-term exclusion during 2018-2019. This is in line with 2017-2018, when 61 pupils were excluded. 163 fixed term exclusions were issued to the cohort in total, which is also comparable to the 168 fixed-term exclusions issued in 2017-2018.

11.3 As illustrated the table below, physical assault was the most common reason for fixed term exclusion in 2018-2019, followed by persistent disruptive behaviour. Very few exclusions were for drug / alcohol-related, in contrast to a general increase in this type of exclusion for pupils generally.

11.4 This is likely to reflect both the high levels of social, emotional and mental health difficulties within the cohort, and the additional protective factors which help to safeguard children and young people in care:

REASON FOR EXCLUSION	Total number	In-City	OOO
Excluded for DB Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	28	16	12
Excluded for Disruptive Behaviour	6	0	6
Excluded for DM Damage	8	7	1
Excluded for Non - Cooperation with staff	7	0	7
Excluded for OT Other	20	14	6
Excluded for Physical aggression towards staff and pupils	2	0	2
Excluded for Physical Assault - Adult	32	27	5
Excluded for PP Physical Assault Against a Pupil	23	16	7
Excluded for RA Racist Abuse	2	0	2
Excluded for Unacceptable Behaviour	4	0	4
Excluded for VA Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour Against an adult	23	13	10
Excluded for VP Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour Against pupil	4	3	1
Bullying	1	1	0
Drug and Alcohol Related	1	1	0
Sexual Misconduct	1	1	0
Theft	1	0	1

11.5 A greater number of exclusions were issued to pupils educated in Wolverhampton (99 in total) than those educated out-of-City (64 in total). However, 46 of the exclusions of Wolverhampton-based pupils were issued by Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). For the out-of-City cohort, a smaller % were excluded from PRUs – 6 of the 64.

12.0 School Transition and Stability

12.1 Research shows that children and young people in care who changed school in Years 10 or 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not.² The Virtual School works closely with social workers, schools and carers to maintain existing school placements, wherever possible and appropriate. If a change of school is the best option, then we help to ensure a successful transition and support good, joined-up working with all key partners.

12.2 Social workers are expected to consult the Virtual School Head prior to any change of school for a child in care, so that advice can be given as to the suitability of any potential school placement. This requirement is highlighted in PEP training, as well as in the new education policy for Children and Young People in Care and our Model School Policy. We provide support for children and young people in care if they do have to move

² http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenKeyMessages_Nov2015.pdf

schools, ensuring a successful transition through 1:1 support, in-class support and close partnership working with all key agencies.

- 12.3 The transition from primary to secondary school can be particularly difficult for many children and young people in care. The Virtual School ensure that all are supported with a successful transition through 1:1 meetings with year 6 pupils and their teachers, and follow-up meetings in their new secondary school before and after secondary induction sessions. We also help to ensure that children are given their preferred choice of secondary school. Out-of-City pupils are given additional information and support by a dedicated Education Support Officer.

13.0 Attainment and Progress

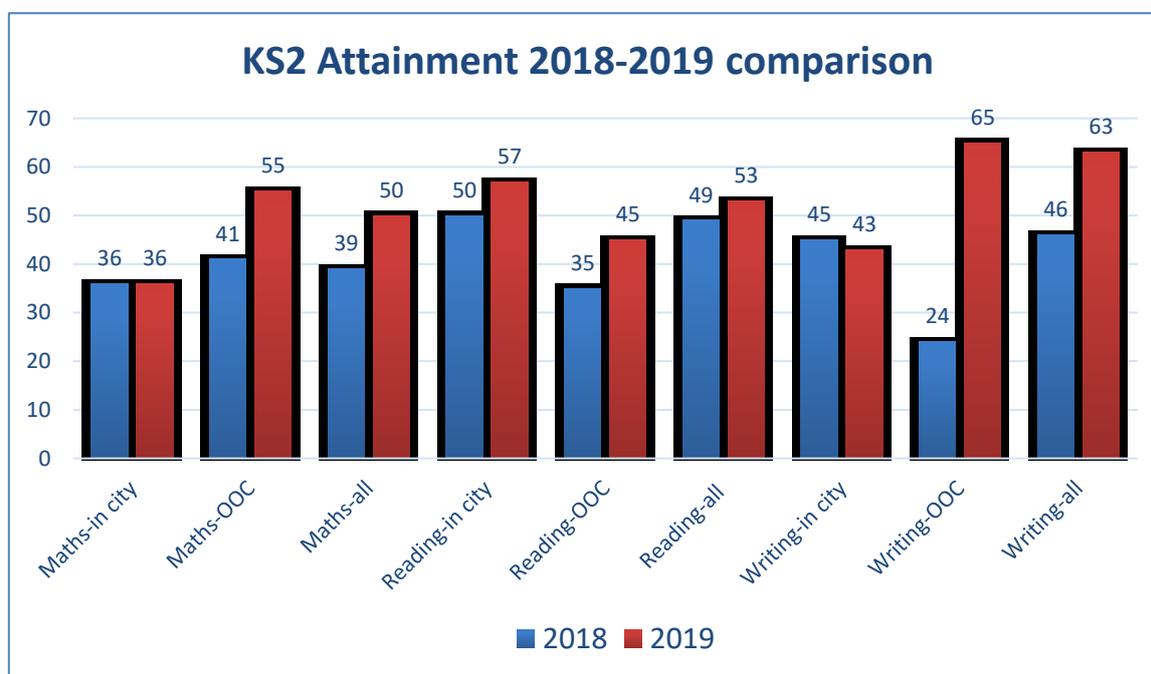
- 13.1 The data below outlines the academic performance of children and young people in care in 2018, both those educated in Wolverhampton schools and out-of-City in standard assessments. Only children who have been in care for more than 12 months at 1 April 2019 (or 'eligible' children) are included. All 2018 outcomes are currently provisional.
- 13.2 At **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, 50% of pupils educated in Wolverhampton achieved a good level of development. 100% achieved an early learning goal in reading, 75% in writing and 50% in number. 20% of pupils educated outside Wolverhampton achieved a good level of development in all of the above areas; 29% if we remove one pupil who is living overseas. However, this is a very small cohort – 12 children in total – so small changes to the cohort can have a significant impact on outcomes.
- 13.3 57% of children and young people in care educated in Wolverhampton schools achieved the standard of check in the **year 1 phonics check**, while 83% of pupils educated outside Wolverhampton achieved this benchmark. 69% of the whole cohort achieved age-related expectation. If we remove one pupil who was disapplied from the assessment due to attending a special school, the overall figure is 75% achieving ARE – 5% higher than 2018.

Key Stage 2 (KS2)

- 13.4 The table over the page illustrates attainment of all children and young people care at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2). The figures in brackets show the attainment of the cohort of pupils who attended schools where standard assessments were applied, i.e. a number of pupils attended special schools where they do not sit standard assessments; they are discounted for the bracketed figure. The rows highlighted in purple show attainment data for Wolverhampton children and young people in care in 2018, enabling comparisons to be made. The following graph then illustrates the same data, but in a way that allows a direct comparison between KS2 attainment at 2018 and 2019. Of the nine outcomes shown, seven have improved since 2018.

2019 Attainment of Children and Young People in Care at Key Stage 2

Cohort	Maths	Reading	Writing	math/read/writ
In-City 2019 - 14 pupils)	36% (42%)	57% (66%)	43% (50%)	36% (42%)
In-City 2018	36% (38%)	50% (58%)	45% (63%)	21% (33%)
OOC 2019- 22 pupils)	50% (55%)	41% (45%)	64% (65%)	36% (45%)
OOC 2018 (removing schools that do not sit assessments)	(41%)	(35%)	(24%)	(6%)
All 36 pupils 2019	44% (50%)	47% (53%)	56% (63%)	39% (44%)
All pupils 2018	(39%)	(49%)	(46%)	(22%)



- 13.5 The above data shows that Wolverhampton's overall attainment in writing was 14% higher than the national average for children and young people in care in 2018, and 11% higher in reading/writing and maths. Overall attainment was 4% lower than the 2018 national average in reading and 3% lower in maths.

- 13.6 The **percentage of children and young people in care making average or better progress at KS2**, followed by their average progress score, is illustrated in the table below (0 represents average progress for all children at the key stage – a figure above 0 is better than average and negative figures are below average):

Subject	In City	OOC	Combined
Maths	38.46% (average score = -2.2)	47.36% (average score = -1.84)	43.75% (average score = -2.02)
Reading	61.53% (average score = 2.32)	47.36% (average score = -1.6)	53% (average score = 0.35)
Writing	46.15% (average score = -2.61)	78.94% (average score = 0.96)	65.62% (average score = -0.83)

- 13.7 The average progress score for children and young people in care attending Wolverhampton schools in 2019 has improved in reading by 0.19, when compared with the 2018 progress measure, and is 2.1 higher in maths than in 2018, though it is 2.16 lower in writing (progress scores were only collated for the in-City cohort in 2018).

Key Stage 4 (KS4)

- 13.8 The table below illustrates the % of children and young people in care at Key Stage 4 (KS4) achieving GCSEs at grade 4 or above in maths and English in 2019. 2018 outcomes - Wolverhampton and national - are included to enable comparison:

Cohort	Maths	English	Maths and English
In-City Children and Young People in Care (18 pupils)	22%	28%	6%
OOC Children and Young People in Care (27 pupils)	30%	30%	22%
All Children and Young People in Care (45 pupils)	27%	29%	16%
All Children and Young People in Care, removing pupils attending special schools that do not sit GCSE examinations	30%	32%	19% (the 2018 outcome was 18%)
All Children and Young People in Care 2018			12%

Cohort	Maths	English	Maths and English
National Children and Young People in Care average 2018			17.5%

13.9 The average **Attainment 8 (A8)** and **Progress 8 (P8)** scores for children and young people in care at KS4 is illustrated in the table below. 2018 Wolverhampton and national figures are included to enable comparison:

Cohort	Attainment 8	Progress 8
In-City Children and Young People in Care (18 pupils)	20.56	-1.32
OOO Children and Young People in Care (27 pupils)	21.3	0.75
All Children and Young People in Care (45 pupils)	20.93	-1.035
All Children and Young People in Care, removing pupils attending special schools that do not sit GCSE examinations		
All Children and Young People in Care 2018	17.48	-1.15 (in-City only)
National Children and Young People in Care average 2018	19	-1.2

13.10 GCSE outcomes have improved in 2019, compared to 2018, with an overall 4% increase in pupils achieving GCSEs at level 4 and above in both maths and English. Attainment 8 and Progress also show clear improvement, and average A8 and P8 scores for Wolverhampton children and young people in care are above national averages in 2018 (2019 national data is not yet available).

13.11 At the same time, however, there is still a wide attainment gap between children and young people in care and their peers, and the % of pupils achieving GCSEs at level 4 or above is slightly below the national 2018 average.

13.12 An analysis of children and young people in care who did not achieve GCSEs at level 4 or above in 2019, however, reveals that this was a very complex cohort with high levels of need. It also highlights a clear correlation between, for example, stability of care placement and higher attainment. For example:

- 56% had SEND and/or an EHCP
- 59% had received counselling and/or other therapeutic input
- 48% were living, or had previously lived, in a residential setting

- Only 44% attended a mainstream school
- The average number of previous changes in care placement was 5.5
- The average number of previous changes of social worker was 5.9
- The average number of previous changes of school was 1.68

13.13 Despite such challenges, most of these young people did achieve GCSEs or other accredited qualifications, and many made good progress in relation to their starting points when they entered care. Several pupils, for example, achieved a level 4 or 5 in either maths or English, but not both. With this in mind, the Virtual School Team will place an even stronger focus on 1:1 tuition and exam preparation at KS4 in 2019/20, ensuring that Pupil Premium funding is prioritised and utilised in the most effective way to raise attainment.

14.0 Post-16 Achievement

14.1 In **Further Education (FE)**, of the 26 young people in year 13 (aged 18) who were studying for recognised qualifications during 2018-2019, 77% either achieved a qualification or progressed to the next year of their course. Several other young people achieved FE qualifications. In total:

- 13 students achieved Level 3 (A-level or equivalent) qualifications
- 8 students achieved Level 2 qualifications
- 9 students achieved Level 1 qualifications
- 3 students passed GCSE resits
- 9 students achieved Level 1 qualifications
- 2 students achieved entry level qualifications

14.2 In **Higher Education (HE)**, five care leavers achieved degree level qualifications:

- A graduated from her SKITT, PGCE primary school teaching programme with a 2.1 in English Literature, she is now completing her NQT year as a primary teacher.
- B graduated from Loughborough, having studied psychology. She passed her degree with a 2.1 and is now working as an assistant EP.
- C graduated from Loughborough with a sport and PE degree and graduated with a 2.2. She is currently working with a charity-based company in Bristol.
- D graduated from Wolverhampton with a 2.1 in psychology and sociology. She is currently working part time and considering a Masters' degree in the future.
- E studied criminology and social policy at Wolverhampton university. She graduated with a 2.2 and is currently seeking employment.

- 14.3 Wolverhampton currently have **31 care leavers in higher education (HE)** - 18% of the whole cohort. This % is three times that of the generally-recognised national average, which is 6% of care leavers progressing to HE. Retention on university courses is also high for Wolverhampton care leavers (nationally, care leavers are nearly twice as likely to drop out of university than their peers).
- 14.4 10 care leavers entered HE in 2019. Their choices of university courses are summarised in the table below:

Institution	Start	End	Subjects(s)	Duration
Sheffield University	Sep-19	2022	Criminology, social policy	3 years
Worcester University	Sep-19	2023	Forensic Studies	4 years
Wolverhampton University	Sep-19	2022	Primary education	3 Years
Wolverhampton Uni	Sep-19	2022	Psychology and Counselling	3 years
Swansea	Sep-19	2023	Chemical Engineering	4 years
Coventry	Sep-19	2023	Engineering	4 years
Liverpool John Moors	Sep-19	2023	Criminology, Policing	4 years
UOB	Sep-19	2023	Physics	4 years
Falmouth	Sep-19	2022	Fashion Design	3 years

- 14.5 At November 2019, 90% of Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers in year 12 and 13 (aged 16-18) were in Education, Employment and Training (EET). This is a notable outcome, particularly considering the complex needs of many young people in the 2019 year 11 cohort, as outlined in 13.12.
- 14.6 A high number of children and young people in care and care leavers are in Education, Employment and Training. At November 2019, 76% of the cohort aged 17-21 were in EET, excluding those not available to the labour market (NALM – e.g. due to illness or disability). 67% were in EET, inclusive of NALM. The national % for this measure is 61%
- 14.7 The Children and Young People in Care Service and key partners ensure that all children and young people in care and care leavers have access to impartial Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) at the appropriate stage, and are consistently supported with a pathway through education, enabling them to positively engage in the labour market. The VSH attends a monthly EET panel and chairs a strategic EET group and action plan which ensures that all key partners are working together to create opportunities, enhance support and break down the barriers to EET. Numerous other initiatives are underway which are consolidating this support, including:
- A weekly **EET Drop In** session, involving Housing, Health and Education
 - A designated **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) Impact Worker**, alongside a named Connexions officer, supporting NEET young people into positive EET destinations. Additional funding for specialised support such as counselling, mentoring or arts therapy to increase confidence and engagement.

- **DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) Protocol** has been reviewed and signed off, providing post-18 Care Leavers who are accessing worklessness benefits with Work Coaches and other bespoke support from day one (other recipients of these benefits have to wait six months to access this support).
- A full-time **EET Co-ordinator** is a well-established post and an EET Apprentice is being recruited currently. The EET Co-ordinator also leads on support for HE students, conducting visits to students and completing personal education plans.
- Three **ringfenced apprenticeships** are available within the Children and Young People in Care Service. Additional support, and pre-apprenticeship support, is available.
- **Guaranteed interviews** for Care Leavers and Children and Young People in Care are offered for apprenticeship roles in the local authority.
- The **Workbox** website is being developed to highlight pathways and support into EET for Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers.

15.0 Participation

- 15.1 Wolverhampton has a very strong and well-established Children in Care Council (CiCC) which benefits from close links with the Youth Council, and with elected members via the Corporate Parenting Board. The CiCC is actively involved in Participation at a regional and national level, enabling our children and young people in care to act as a real force for change and the improvement of services.
- 15.2 The 2019 attainment data outlined above was shared with the Children in Care Council in the autumn term 2019 and educational issues, such as the PEP process, are regularly discussed. Work is ongoing, for example, to strengthen young people's contribution their PEPs - to ensure the plan is properly informed by their views and that the PEP process feels meaningful to them. The VSH has discussed this issue with the CiCC and led a workshop on supporting the young person's contribution to the PEP at a Designated Teachers Forum in the summer term. Indeed, the Virtual School Senior Teacher Advisor completed a dissertation on the subject as part of a post-graduate diploma in the Education of Care Experienced Children in 2019, and regularly advises teachers and social workers on ways to promote meaningful participation. The issue is also addressed as a priority action in the 2019 Attainment Improvement Plan for Children and Young People in Care.
- 15.3 The Virtual School Team are heavily involved in organising and running Wolverhampton's annual Awards Ceremony for children and young people in care, the *I-Awards*, which saw a large number of young people receive recognition for their successes throughout 2018-2019.

16.0 Strategic Development

- 16.1 The Virtual School Head's role includes strengthening the awareness of key professionals around the needs of children and young people in care, building strong working partnerships and developing policy and procedure in this area. This involves a combination of advisory and strategic work with a range of agencies.

- 16.2 In 2018-2019, the following training sessions were delivered by the Virtual School Team:
- Half-termly 'PEP clinics' for social workers and Designated Teachers for Children and Young People in Care
 - A termly twilight Forum for Designated Teachers
 - Two half-day training sessions on the role of the Designated Teacher
 - Half-termly sessions for foster carers on supporting education
 - Two sessions for school governors on supporting Children and Young People in Care in school
 - Three sessions for school governors on understanding challenging behaviour and preventing school exclusion
 - A range of online courses made available to Designated Teachers and other school staff in key areas, such as attachment aware and trauma-informed practice.
- 16.3 Positive feedback from the above training included the following comments on the Designated Teachers' Forum, which is consistently well-received with approximately 30 attendees on average:
- "I thought it was excellent"
- "I found it very useful and informative. I was especially interested in the video you shared regarding brain development... I'm keen to share it with staff"
- 16.4 In 2019 the VSH has updated all the council's policies which relate specifically to the education of children and young people in care, and consolidated them into one policy to enable easy access and clarity for social workers and other council staff. This policy covers all key components of the council's statutory duty to promote the education of children and young people in care, such as school admissions and attendance, promoting school stability, PEPs, Pupil Premium Plus and the role of carers, along with advice on good practice in these areas.
- 16.5 The above policy also includes the council's duty to ensure that **children and young people who have left care via an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order** receive additional support with their education, as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This duty, which came into force in 2018, is now covered in Designated Teachers training and the Designated Teachers Forum. The Virtual School team regularly respond to requests for advice and information regarding the education of children previously in care, in accordance with the duty.
- 16.6 Virtual School Heads have continued ongoing work with Ofsted in 2018-2019, to strengthen inspectors' understanding of the needs of children and young people in care. Termly meetings have been held and the West Midlands Ofsted team have a lead HMI for children and young people in care. Schools are now increasingly aware of their responsibilities and inspectors understand that it may be advisable to consult with the VSH as part of a school inspection, e.g. if there are a large number of pupils in care on the school roll.

- 16.7 The VSH helped to organise the fourth annual conference of the West Midlands Virtual Schools Network in the summer term 2019, leading a workshop on effective personal educational planning and a discussion on promoting EET at post-16, and delivered workshops on effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus at two national conferences in 2018-2019. All members of the Virtual School Team attended the regional conference and participated in workshops and discussions, sharing effective strategies and good practice. Quality continued professional development is a high priority for the team and members have completed training in a range of approaches in 2018-2019, such as attachment/trauma awareness and restorative conversations, and the Senior Education Advisor completed a post-graduate diploma in the Education of Care-Experienced Children.
- 16.8 In Autumn 2018, the Virtual School Team was moved from the Children and Young People in Care Service to the new Inclusion Support Service, as part of a wider service restructure. The VSH now reports to the Head of Service for Inclusion Support, and Principal Educational Psychologist. The VSH also now has a wider role, as Service Manager for Vulnerable Learners, and also manages the Inclusion and Attendance Team which discharges the council's statutory duties regarding school attendance, exclusion, children missing education (CME) and elective home education (EHE). Additional capaCity has been added to the Inclusion and Attendance team, to enable more proactive work to reduce school exclusions, and the newly-expanded team will become fully operational in January 2020.
- 16.9 The VSH has continued to work closely with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) to improve the educational engagement of young people in the criminal justice system in Wolverhampton. This work started in 2016, prior to which the school attendance of young offenders in Wolverhampton was low, with around 50% attending education full-time. By the summer 2018, that figure had improved to 73% and at summer 2019 it had risen by a further 3%. The council's Model School Policy for Children and Young People in Care and Young People in the Youth Justice System was updated in 2019 to reflect changes to statutory guidance and local policy.
- 16.10 The establishment changes outlined in 16.8 are promoting better joined-up planning and working between different services that support the education of vulnerable children. This is helping us to share knowledge and expertise and support the development of more inclusive practice in schools, to the benefit of children and young people in care as well as other disadvantaged young people.

17.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

- 17.1 Once again, there is much to celebrate regarding the educational achievement of the children in our care in 2018-2019. A very small percentage of Children and Young People in Care are attending schools which are rated as requiring improvement or inadequate by Ofsted. Attendance rates are generally high and improving, while persistent absence rates are low and falling. No children or young people in care were permanently excluded. Attainment has generally improved since 2018, with excellent progression to FE and HE. The attainment gap between in-City and out-of-City pupils has significantly narrowed and, in many cases, disappeared or reversed. Personal

educational planning is improving and children and young people in care benefit from a high level of awareness, among schools and other partners, of our corporate parenting responsibilities. The positive impact of the Virtual School Team's interventions on so-called 'soft outcomes', such as children's confidence, self-esteem and attitude to learning is also clearly demonstrated in this report.

- 17.2 There have been continued improvements in the educational engagement of young people in the youth justice system (including several who are/were in care) and the Virtual School continues to make a significant contribution to the education of children and young people in care, and of vulnerable pupils more widely, on a local, regional and national level.
- 17.3 As always, there are areas for improvement and further development. Achievement at Early Years Foundation Stage is lower than in 2018 (though it was very high in 2018 with 70% achieving a good level of development, and 2019 was higher than other previous years). Maths is the weakest subject for attainment at KS2 and progress in writing is a priority for improvement, while the attainment gap at KS4 is still far too wide (though in line with national outcomes). PEP quality is still an area for prioritisation, particularly in terms of the young people's engagement with the process, while the completion rate of post-16 PEPs is an area for improvement.
- 17.4 It should also be understood, however, that there will always be fluctuations in the achievements of relatively small and volatile cohorts. A realistic aim is to see a general upward trajectory from year to year, with the ultimate objective of improving the life chances of young people as they transition into adulthood. This report demonstrates that these goals are being achieved by the City of Wolverhampton Council and its partners. At the same time, however, we continue to learn, refine our approach, and work hard to address any areas for improvement, as outlined in the Children and Young People in Care Attainment Improvement Plan 2019-2020.

18.0 Financial implications

- 18.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 18.2 Any costs associated with the educational outcomes of children and young people are funded from within the net budget for 2019-2020 held within the Inclusion Service of £1.2 million.
[NM/15012020/M]

19.0 Legal implications

- 19.1 The Local Authority's statutory responsibilities are set out in the body of the report. There are no direct legal implications arising.
[TC/15012020/B]

20.0 Equalities implications

20.1 An equalities analysis will be undertaken if required, in partnership with the Equalities and Diversities Team. As the work that underpins this strategy is to overcome any inequality, the analysis is aspirational and will need to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken.

21.0 Climate change and environmental implications

21.1 There are no immediate climate change and equalities implications.

22.0 Human resources implications

22.1 There are no immediate human resources implications.

23.0 Corporate Landlord implications

23.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications.

24.0 Schedule of background papers

24.1 There are no background papers.