

Corporate Parenting Board

21 July 2016

Report title	Schools' Engagement with Looked after Children
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, Children and Young People
Originating service	Looked after Children
Accountable employee(s)	Darren Martindale Virtual School Head for LAC Tel 01902 551039 Email darren.martindale@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Children in care Council meeting 29.6.16

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the enclosed report outlining school engagement with Looked after Children and the Virtual School for Looked after Children (LAC).

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To report on engagement and working arrangements between Virtual School for Looked after Children (LAC) over the 2015/16 academic year and to highlight successes, areas for development and future plans.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Virtual School Head (VSH) for LAC is responsible for ensuring that the local authority effectively discharges its statutory duty to promote the education of Looked after Children. Statutory guidance states that “to implement effectively their duty to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after local authorities should work closely with schools”.¹ This report outlines recent developments in strengthening the working partnerships between schools, the Corporate Parenting & Education (COPE) team and other local authority teams and stakeholders.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

- 3.1 The Virtual Head has a statutory duty related to the training of all key partners and the development of strong working partnerships to promote the education of Looked after Children.
- 3.2 The COPE (Corporate Parenting & Education) Team have an Education Support Worker attached to each Wolverhampton school (covering two localities each). The worker contacts every school on a termly basis and in most cases meets with the Designated Teacher for LAC face-to-face, to discuss the progress of looked-after pupils in their school. Any issues or actions are followed up by that worker without delay, following the termly meeting.
- 3.3 COPE audit Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for quality on a monthly basis - at least one PEP for every looked-after child every year. The results of these audits are communicated to Designated Teachers as well as social workers. The Virtual Head produces a termly report, summarising the outcomes of these audits. The outcome of audits contributes to the Quality Assurance framework within the Children and Young People Service. In addition to this, COPE frequently attend PEP meetings to provide support and challenge to schools; particularly PEP meetings for LAC who are in assessment years (2, 6, 11) or where there are issues with attendance or progress. COPE also attend school-based meetings concerning admissions, exclusions, primary-secondary transition etc on a regular basis.

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- 3.4 A training conference on Attachment & Trauma for Designated teachers was held in February 2016. This was a precursor to a series of Emotion Coaching workshops for schools in the spring and summer term 2016. Feedback from the conference was very positive.
- 3.5 In addition to the above, COPE and the Virtual Head deliver:
- A termly Designated Teachers' Forum
 - Contribution to Head teachers' briefings at least twice a year- the next one is in July 2016
 - Education training sessions for foster carers at least once every term
 - Two yearly training sessions for Chairs of Governors in schools
 - An e-learning module on improving the quality of PEPs is ready to go live in the summer 2016. This is primarily for social workers however the VSH is exploring ways of making this available to schools
 - Various education briefings to social care teams and IROs
- 3.6 The Designated Teachers' Forum attracts between 30 and 40 attendees on average. This highlights the increasingly strong partnership between COPE and schools.
- 3.7 Policies and procedures have continued to be updated and strengthened to support the educational progress of LAC. The Virtual School Head is promoting a new Model School Policy with Wolverhampton schools (attached) with the expectation that all Wolverhampton schools will sign up to the policy in autumn 2016. The Virtual Head is presenting this to head teachers at the Head Teacher's briefing in July 2016.
- 3.8 The VSH is also promoting Post-16 Learner Support Agreement for LAC / Care Leavers, a regional initiative developed by the West Midlands Virtual School Heads Network (attached). Wolverhampton College have already signed up to this agreement, the VSH expects that all local Further Education (FE) / training providers will sign up to it and positive indications have been given to that effect. The VSH's intention is to widen this to include young people in the youth justice also, in 2016/17.
- 3.9 The Virtual School Head has continued his on-going work with Ofsted in 2015/16, alongside other members of the regional and national Virtual School Heads Network. Termly meetings have been held with leading inspectors to increase their knowledge and understanding of the LAC cohort. Partly as a result of this, the West Midlands Ofsted team identified LAC as one of their key priority areas for 2015/16, which is leading to an increased focus on LAC in school inspections. Ofsted are now starting to focus on the commitment of schools to supporting their looked-after and pupils, including attendance at relevant training such as that delivered by virtual school teams. There is clear evidence that these factors are influencing their judgements on schools related to safeguarding. Schools are therefore seeking the advice of virtual heads around Ofsted / safeguarding requirements.

3.10 Improved partnership working with Standards and the School Improvement team in particular is enabling the VSH to provide closer scrutiny and stronger support for schools in Wolverhampton. Strong links with other management teams across services for children and young people are enabling COPE and the VSH to function effectively as a 'bridge' between education and social care and to provide good quality training and advice where it is most needed.

3.11 The VSH distributes the Pupil Premium Grant for LAC aged three & four in early years settings (£300 per child) and has introduced an Early Years PEP. To further strengthen support for LAC in early years settings a new framework has been agreed between the VSH / COPE, Early Years Team and School Improvement. The framework, which is in draft form at the moment, will be discussed at the Designated Teachers Forum on 6 July 2016. The framework and accompanying action plan outlines how COPE, Early Years and School Improvement will work in partnership to:

- Offer advice, guidance and support in all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Work closely with the virtual school head (VSH) ensuring our most disadvantaged children's learning needs are met
- Offer support in tracking a child's progress and development in all aspects of learning
- Address issues with maintained nursery classes around narrowing the gap in educational attainment and offering further educational opportunities to disadvantaged children
- Contribute to personal education plans (PEP) ensuring the correct approach is in place which is tailored to the child's individual needs
- Offer quality assurance around the PEP by supporting settings where LAC children are in attendance

3.12 In April 2016 the VSH conducted a survey with all of the schools that have Wolverhampton LAC on roll (both in and out of city) on their use and impact of the pupil premium plus. The VSH allocated a total of £1,800 per child to each school in the 2015/16 academic year. 70 schools responded to this survey, which was intended to complement the knowledge that the VSH and COPE have gained through PEP audits and on-going work with schools on the use of the pupil premium. Some of the results of the survey are summarised below:

1. Question: How much impact has Pupil Premium had on the attainment of LAC pupils?

Large impact –	23.53%
Noticeable impact –	50%
Slight impact –	25%
No impact –	0%
Negative impact -	1.47%

2. Which have been the most effective interventions that have been funded through pupil premium plus, in rank order?

1. 1:1 tuition
2. Small Group tuition
3. Teaching Assistant
4. Learning Mentor
5. ICT equipment
6. None-ICT equipment
7. Out-of-school learning
8. Staff Training
9. Therapeutic
10. Off-site / alternative provision
11. Literacy and/ numeracy intervention
12. Specialist assessments
13. Other

3. What impact has pupil premium plus had in the attainment of Looked-after Pupils?

Before intervention; pupil's attainment compared to age-related expectations

- Above expected level – 13%
- Below expected level – 72%

After intervention; pupil's attainment compared to age-related expectations

- Above expected level – 27%
- Below expected level – 41%

3.12 The results in the above survey (which will be discussed at the Designated Teachers' Forum on 6 July 2016) are broadly in line with the Virtual Head's expectations and indicate that most schools are using the pupil premium effectively and that it is having a positive impact on the attainment of LAC. The percentage of pupils who were performing at above the expected level more than doubled following pupil premium intervention, while the percentage of pupils performing below level was reduced by 31% following intervention.

3.13 To conclude, the majority of schools work well with COPE and with other local authority teams as appropriate, to support the achievement of our looked-after and vulnerable pupils. There are a small minority of schools which do not work in partnership as effectively. However it is intended that these partnerships will be improved through developments in 2016/17 such as:

- on-going work to improve Personal Education Plans (including the introduction of the e-PEP which will give schools greater input and ownership)
- the introduction of new staff to the COPE team (funded by pupil premium) to focus on strategic priorities such as KS4 attainment, PEP improvement and PNIFTED (pupils not in full-time education)

- an improved approach to training for schools which focusses on continued coaching and support of the school staff in schools, rather than the provision of one-off training courses for the Designated Teacher only. The Educational Psychology Service is committed to this approach and are working together with COPE to achieve a greater consistency of approach across our schools.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 Any costs associated with the implementation of the Strategy will be funded from existing budgets within the Looked after Children's Service
[NM/12072016/K]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications.
[TS/06072016/H]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 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

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 There are no human resources

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- Model School Policy on LAC / YOT
- Post-16 Learner Support Agreement