



Corporate Parenting Board

21 January 2015

Report title	Virtual School Headteacher Report 2013/14
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, Community
Originating service	Looked after Children's Service
Accountable employee(s)	Darren Martindale: COPE Team manager / Virtual School Head 01902 551039
Report to be/has been considered by	Emma Bennet & Cllr Gibson

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the enclosed report outlining outcomes for the Virtual School for LAC in 2013/14

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To report on the work of the Virtual School for Looked after Children (LAC) over the 2013/14 academic year and to highlight successes, learning points and areas for further development

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) for LAC is to be the lead officer responsible for improving educational outcomes for this vulnerable group, ensuring that the local authority effectively discharges its statutory duty to close the attainment gap between

LAC and their peers.¹ The VSH role itself became statutory in 2014. The Annual Report of the VSH is now a document required by Ofsted during their inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. As such this report summarises the Local Authority's progress in its key responsibility to promote improved outcomes for the children in its care, and its care leavers.²

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

Virtual School Headteacher Report 2013/14

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the educational outcomes of children in the care of Wolverhampton for the 2013/14 academic year.
- 1.2 The report outlines the various ways in which the COPE (Corporate Parenting & Education) Team and VSH have worked to raise the achievement of LAC in 2014, and gives an indication of the plans for further development by focussing on incremental improvements in the following key areas, as outlined in the attached LAC attainment Improvement Plan:
- Virtual School Data Management
 - Quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
 - School Admissions
 - School Attendance
 - Inclusion
 - Transition & Further / Higher Education
 - Participation & Consultation
 - Training & Partnerships with Key Partners
- 1.3 This report also seeks to inform knowledge and understanding in a number of key areas pertinent to the achievement of LAC.

2.0 The Virtual School Team

- 2.1 Following service restructure in 2013 the multi-disciplinary COPE Team was formed, combining the former Looked after Children's Education (LACE) Team with lead officers

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

² Children Act 1989, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Every Child Matters 2003 & Children Act 2004, Care Matters 2007, Children & Families Act 2014

for Corporate Parenting, Participation and the Volunteer Service for LAC. Virtual School Head Darren Martindale has managed the COPE Team since 1 January 2014. The Education team consist of one full-time Teacher Advisor, 2.5 full time equivalent (FTE) Education Support Officers, one 0.5 FTE Data Officer and a full-time clerical officer together with the VSH. COPE also benefit from one FTE senior Education Psychology support and one 0.6 FTE Counselling Psychologist, as well as strong links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other key partners.

- 2.2 COPE are committed to improving educational outcomes for Wolverhampton's LAC through a combination of direct, advisory and strategic work with Looked after Children, schools, social workers, carers and other partners.
- 2.3 In 2014 the Wolverhampton School Improvement Partnership (WSIP) withdrew its funding for the 2 FTE Education Support posts that it had been funding within the old LACE team. The funding for these posts has now been mainstreamed within the COPE budget.
- 2.4 As result it was no longer necessary to retain LACE's existing "Core Offer" to schools in precisely the same form, as it was created to support the bid for WSIP funding. COPE now have a new framework in place, outlining how COPE works with LAC, schools and other key stakeholders (attached). This new working model is broader in its approach to partnership working and sharply focussed on narrowing the attainment gap between LAC and their peers.
- 2.5 Strong partnerships with schools are paramount and the emphasis throughout the new framework is on *challenge* as well as support. To this end a 'record of visit' form is now completed each time a COPE member has one of their termly meetings with Designated Teachers in Wolverhampton. This provides a snapshot of progress and levels of support for LAC in each school, and identifies actions for improvement or intervention. A new referral / consultation form has also been introduced to help COPE team members to plan and record the outcomes of all learning interventions.
- 2.6 While there are undoubtedly still areas for development, COPE have made a considerable amount of progress in the Virtual School's identified priorities in 2013/14, as outlined in the sections below.

3.0 Cohort Information

3.1 As at December 2014, there are:

- 507 pupils in the Virtual School; reception to year 11
- 274 (54.04%) are placed in Wolverhampton & 233 (45.96%) out-of-city
- 287 (56.61%) attend primary schools and 220 (43.39%) attend secondary
- 55 (10.85%) attend Special Schools
- 14 (2.76%) attend Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

- There are 16 different ethnic groups – 3.16% are of other than white British origin
- 390 (76.93%) are recorded as having English as their first language, although there are 90 with no language recorded (17.75%)
- 151 (29.78%) are eligible for free school meals
- 64 (12.62%) have Statements of Special Educational Need

4.0 School Ofsted ratings

- 4.1 Statutory guidance states that LAC should attend schools that are rated as either or good or outstanding by Ofsted.³
- 4.2 At the same time, placement stability is a key factor for LAC, arguably even more so than for their peers. Also, a school’s support for LAC and vulnerable learners (plus other important factors such as the strength of its partnership with the local authority) is not always entirely reflected by an Ofsted rating. For these reasons a Looked after Child may continue to attend or be placed in a school which is rated as requiring improvement by Ofsted if the Corporate Parent feels that this is the best option for the child.
- 4.3 We would not normally expect LAC to attend a school rated as inadequate. However there are a minority of cases where this can be justified for reasons such as those outlined above.
- 4.3 Our intention is, however, to place our LAC in the best schools that are available and appropriate for them. The table below summarises the ratings of all schools that have LAC on roll, both in and out of city:⁴

	Number	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	No rating
Incity Primary	145	6	82	41	15	1
In City Sec	75	3	35	22	4	11
InCity Special	30	1	22	0	7	
Out of City Prim	116	13	77	12	2	12
Out of City Sec	88	4	49	24	4	7
Out of City Special	26	4	20	2	0	0

- 4.4 The proportion of schools rated as Inadequate or Requiring Improvement by Ofsted is noticeably higher for Wolverhampton schools than for out-of-city. However this is likely to change in the near future due to major recent improvements in the performance of

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

⁴ The ‘no rating’ column is because some schools have recently converted to academies and therefore do not have a current Ofsted rating

Wolverhampton's primary schools. COPE also provide considerable support to primary-aged LAC in Wolverhampton. Therefore outcomes at Key Stages 1 & 2 are very good, despite these ratings.

- 4.5 It is positive that only 19% of LAC are placed in schools outside Wolverhampton that are rated as Inadequate or Requiring Improvement, as it can be more difficult to maintain close working relationships with schools in other areas and so the initial choice of school is perhaps even more vitally important in those cases.

5.0 Academic Outcomes

5.1 This report considers the academic outcomes for pupils at Key Stage 1, 2 and 4 who had been in care continuously for 12 months at the time they were tested / assessed. The report focusses on this cohort because these are the performance measures recorded in the Department for Education's Statistical First Release (SFR), a range of outcome measures at national and Local Authority level for LAC in England. As such these outcomes constitute the official data set on outcomes for Looked after Children.

5.2 Key Stage 1 (KS1) - % of LAC achieving at least the expected level (National Curriculum Level 2):

Assessment Year	Number eligible to sit Key Stage 1 tasks and tests	Maths	Reading	Writing
2014	25	73	73	62

- There is no historical data for LAC at KS1 available in the SFR. However the 2014 outcomes are recorded here to provide a benchmark for performance in subsequent years.

5.3 Key Stage 2 (KS2) - % of LAC achieving at least the expected level (National Curriculum Level 4):

Assessment Year	Number eligible to sit Key Stage 2 tasks and tests	Maths	Reading	Writing	Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling
2011	15	73	67	x	N/A
2012	20	56	50	39	N/A
2013	20	67	44	50	44 ⁵
2014	25	74	78	81	63

- These figures highlight an overall improvement in outcomes in all core subjects in 2014, despite rising numbers of LAC. Although English / literacy has historically been a weaker area than mathematics, this trend has been reversed in 2014.

⁵ The Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling assessment was introduced in 2013

- These improvements would seem to reflect both improvements in teaching & learning in primary schools and the local authority’s continuing focus on support for LAC and improving partnerships with schools. It is possible that the increase in Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding for LAC has contributed to this improvement, but a proper analysis of this will only become possible in subsequent years due to this being a relatively recent development.

- 5.4 For the first time, Key Stage 4 (KS4) outcomes for 2014 have been differentiated between LAC placed in Wolverhampton (19 pupils) and those placed outside of the city (17 pupils), to enable a comparison between the outcomes for these two groups.
- 5.5 Percentage of LAC achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C including English & mathematics⁶

Assessment Year	LAC placed in-city	LAC placed out-of-city	All LAC combined
2011			12
2012			13
2013			24
2014	21	12	17

- Although there has been a drop in performance since 2013, GCSE performance dropped nationally in 2014 due to changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements. Also, there will always be fluctuations in performance due to the relatively small size of cohorts
 - GCSE performance shows a general upward trajectory over the last 4 years and has been above national average for the last two years. At the same time there is clearly much more work to be done to improve the attainment of LAC at KS4.
 - 2014 results are noticeably better for in-city LAC than for those placed outside Wolverhampton, however. While this is also not necessarily a consistent trend, it does highlight an apparent need to strengthen the support around academic progress for LAC placed externally, as well as the importance of careful placement planning.
 - The attainment of LAC placed externally will be addressed through a sharper focus on PEPs and Pupil Premium, supported by better scrutiny of attainment and progress data. The increased focus on KS4 will be supported by additional Educational Psychology input in 2015-16, funded by Pupil Premium and focussed on increasing attainment at secondary school level.
- 5.6 **Additional Analysis – LAC in Wolverhampton schools:** the VSH has worked closely with School Improvement in 2014 to increase scrutiny of the progress of LAC in Wolverhampton schools, particularly at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stages 1 and 2. This has enabled us to make revealing comparisons between the performance of LAC and their peers in Wolverhampton.

⁶ For KS4 the SFE data has not been used, due to there being several gaps in the data and slight discrepancies with the data that we have collected here in the local authority (these issues are being addressed with Business Intelligence and Data teams). This KS4 data was compiled by the COPE Team.

5.7 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (Pre-school & reception)

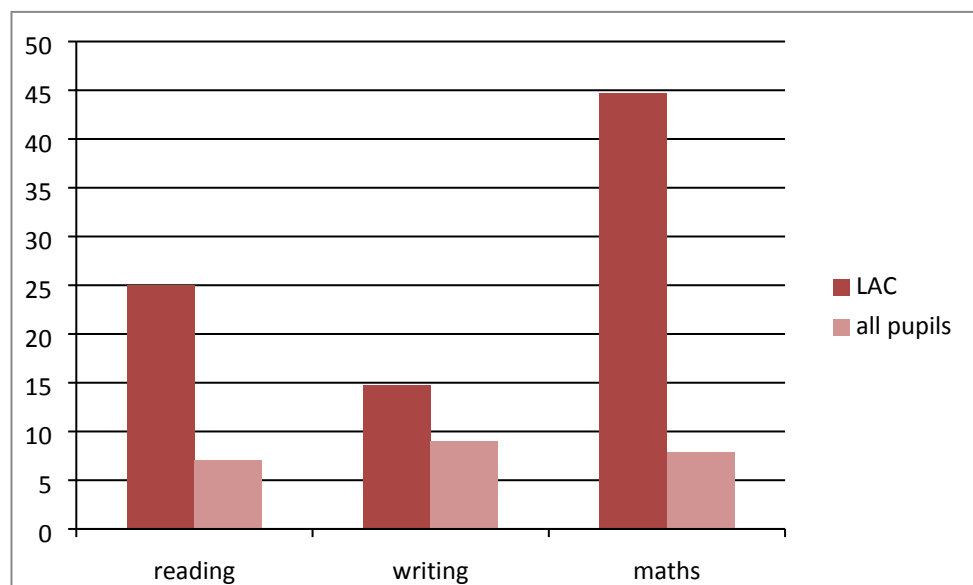
EYFSP - LAC		% of LAC assessed at a "good level of development" in reading, writing and numbers	
11 Pupils		2013	13
26 Pupils		2014	42
EYFSP – all pupils		% of all pupils assessed at a "good level of development" in reading, writing and numbers	
3165 Pupils		2013	52
3169 Pupils		2014	60

- The 2013 performance of LAC in Wolverhampton schools, at Early Years Foundation Stage, was 39% lower than for all pupils in Wolverhampton schools. In 2014 the difference was 18%, highlighting the considerable improvement in the performance of LAC and a substantial narrowing of the achievement gap.

5.8 Progress of Pupils across Key Stage 2: there is an increasing focus on pupil's *progress* in schools, for example the difference between their attainment at the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2. This, one of the key progress measures, is outlined below for LAC in Wolverhampton schools:

Key Stage 1 to Key stage 2 – LAC pupils making 2 or more levels of progress Reading		
	2011	75.0
	2012	81.3
	2013	63.2
	2014	100.0
Key Stage 1 to Key stage 2 LAC pupils making 2 or more levels of progress Writing		
	2011	80.0
	2012	87.5
	2013	63.2
	2014	94.7
Key Stage 1 to Key stage 2 LAC pupils making 2 or more levels of progress in maths		
	2011	50.0
	2012	62.5
	2013	68.4
	2014	94.7

5.9 Percentage Improvement in core subjects at Key Stage 2: comparison between LAC and all pupils in Wolverhampton schools



5.10 For LAC in Wolverhampton schools, the numbers progressing by 2 or more levels (the expected amount) across KS2 improved by 25% in reading, 14.7% in writing and 44.7% in maths since 2011.

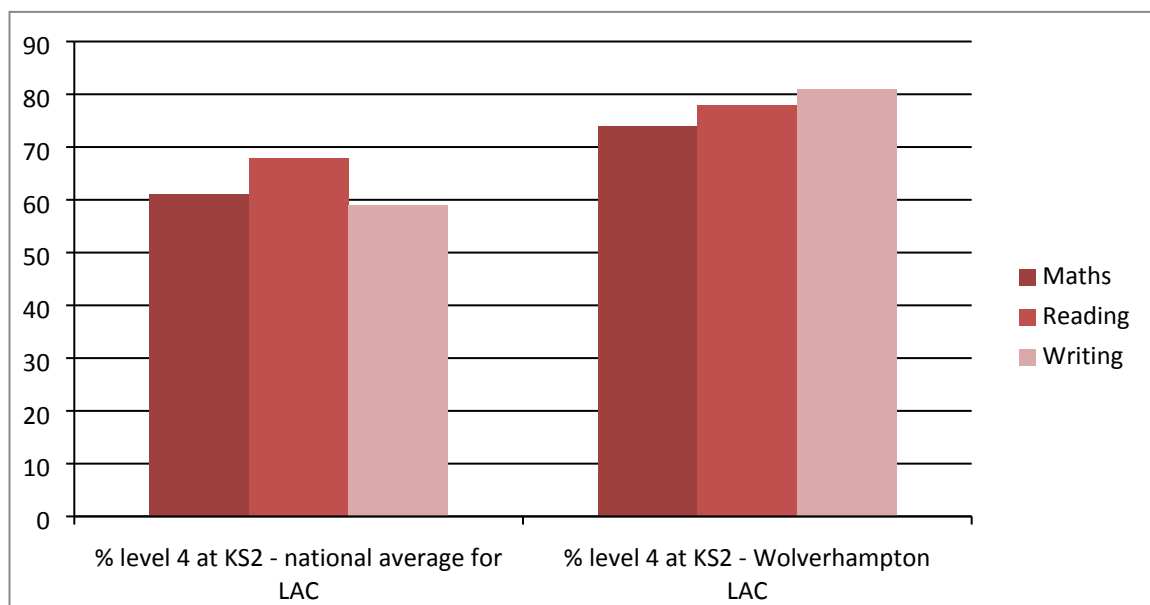
5.11 The progress measures for all Wolverhampton pupils improved by 7% (84%-91%) in reading, 9% (84%-93%) in writing and 7.8% (82.2%-90%) in maths in the same period. Therefore LAC have progressed at a significantly faster rate than their peers in all core subjects in Wolverhampton schools, including a very substantial improvement in maths.

5.12 This is particularly pleasing given the recent news that Wolverhampton primary schools are among the most improved in the country in 2014.

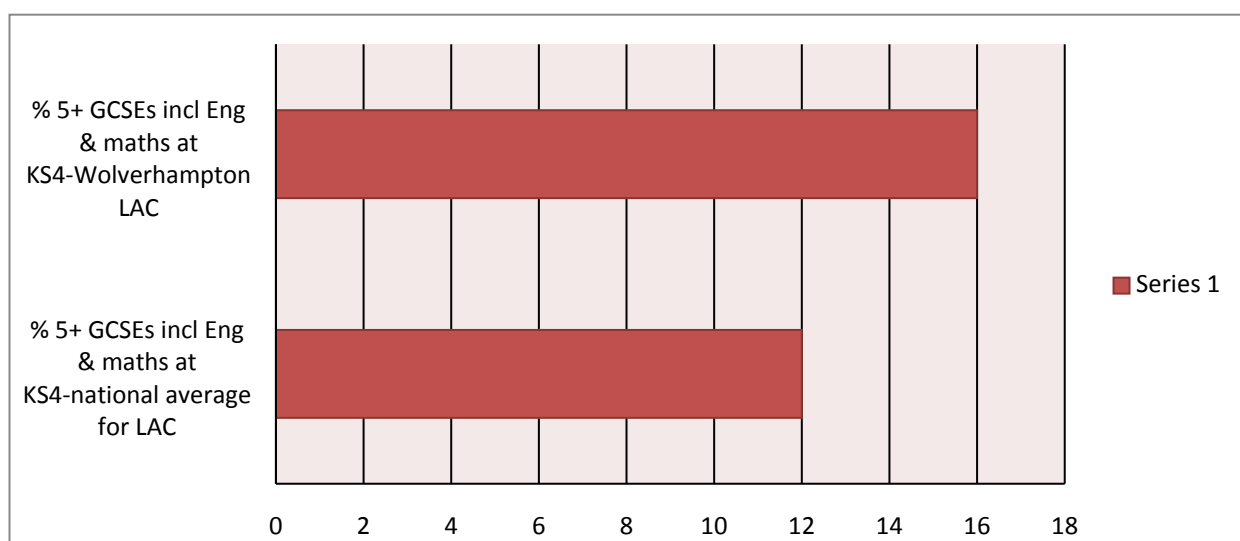
5.13 Comparisons with national statistics

Key Stage 1	LAC National average	Wolverhampton LAC
Maths	72	73
Reading	71	73
Writing	61	62
Key Stage 2		
Maths	61	74
Reading	68	78
Writing	59	81
Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation	49	63
Key Stage 4		
5+ GCSEs including maths & English	12	16

5.14 Attainment for LAC at Key Stage 2 – comparison between national averages and outcomes for Wolverhampton in 2014



5.15 Attainment at Key Stage 4 – comparison between national averages and outcomes for Wolverhampton in 2014



5.16 The performance of Wolverhampton’s Looked after Children is above the national average for LAC in all core subjects and in all assessment years. The progress levels outlined above are also above national averages for LAC in 2014.

5.17 However KS1 is less strong than the other key stages, in terms of comparisons with national averages. Clearly this is an area of priority for 2014/15, particularly with regard to writing.

5.18 Currently 18 LAC in Wolverhampton primary schools receive 1:1 reading help from a volunteer via the “Beanstalk” Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) programme, which is organised by COPE and funded via Pupil Premium. Additional work will be done in 2014/15 to build on the success of this project and to extend the pupils’ increased confidence in reading into improvements in writing.

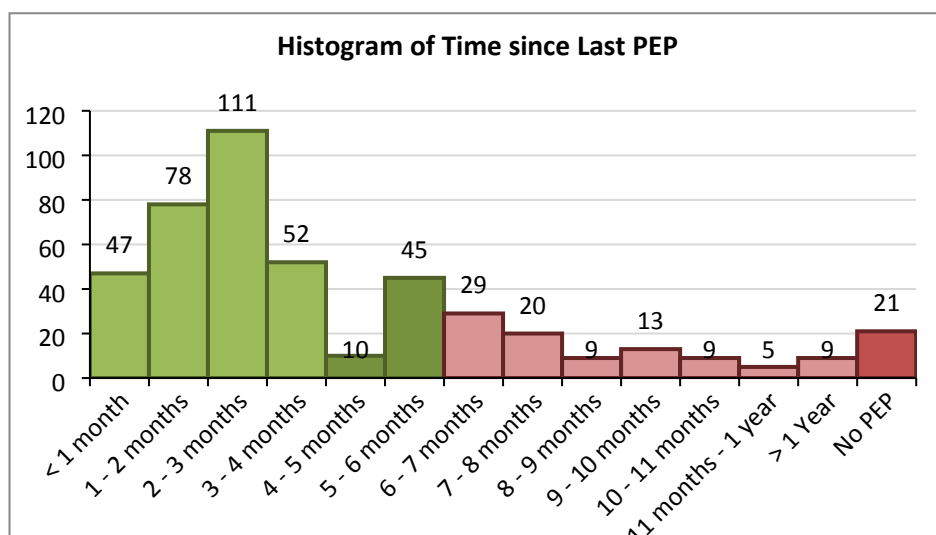
6.0 Improvements in Virtual School Data Management

6.1 We now have a much more comprehensive set of attainment and attendance data for all Virtual School Pupils, particularly for those placed out-of-city. The COPE Team collect this data on a termly basis from all schools, and record previous end of year and key stage levels so that we can track pupils’ progress accurately. This data is being used to plan and prioritise learning interventions - targeting all pupils at risk of not achieving the expected attainment levels for extra tuition or other study support.

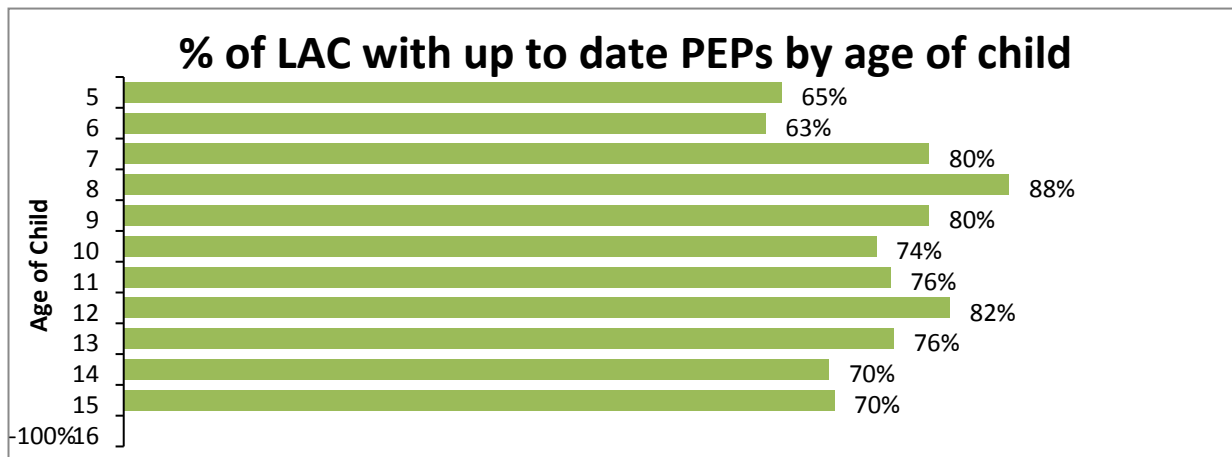
7.0 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

7.1 As at 29 December 2014 75% of LAC in school years 1 – 11 had a PEP completed within statutory timescales (6 months).

7.2 The % of up-to-date PEPs does tend to fluctuate, particularly around school holiday times. It can also be seen in the table below that most out-of-date PEPs are only out of date by a relatively short period of time (those with no PEP at all tend to be new into care):



7.3 However performance in this area clearly needs to improve and will be addressed regularly with schools and social care teams in the spring term 2015. It is evident from the table below that problems lie particularly at transitional stages – in the first and last year of school, and at the primary-secondary transition age. COPE have started to focus on this area already in 2014 and the VSH will address this with social care managers and IROs as a matter of urgency



- 7.4 The PEP policy and form have been revised and updated to reflect recent changes to the curriculum and pupil premium, to ensure a sharper focus on outcomes and accountability and to facilitate improvements in PEP quality.
- 7.5 In support of this, it is now recommended that the Designated teacher for LAC chairs the PEP meeting, rather than the social worker.
- 7.6 The new PEP also reflects higher aspirations for LAC, which is why the attendance benchmark has been raised from 85% to 95%, bringing expectations in line with other pupils
- 7.7 COPE are routinely invited to all PEP meetings at important and transitional stages to support educational planning.
- 7.8 An Early Years PEP and new 16+ PEP form will be introduced in early 2015. Improvement in the use of the 16+ PEP is a priority for 2015.
- 7.9 The overall quality of PEPs still requires improvement. A new PEP auditing system will begin in January 2015, involving COPE, social workers and senior managers. This will ensure that at least 1 PEP for every LAC is audited for quality in the calendar year, and a termly report will be provided for senior managers and elected members with actions for improvement.
- 7.10 Training and regular advice are provided to all key partners in improving PEP quality, as outlined in the attached Attainment Improvement Action Plan.
- 8.0 **School Admissions**
- 8.1 Social workers are now expected to consult the Virtual Head prior to any change of school for a Looked after Child (now a statutory requirement). This requirement is now embedded in the placement request process on Carefirst, helping to ensure that education is given a suitably high priority in all placement decisions.

- 8.2 COPE are helping to ensure that appropriate education is provided for all LAC without drift or delay. We have challenged and avoided several school exclusions, working with schools to create packages of support and finding suitable alternatives to exclusion. We have also successfully represented LAC at admissions appeals panels, resulting in the school's decision to refuse a place to a Looked after Child being overturned.
- 8.3 The COPE Educational Psychology Service (EPS) provides priority access to consultations and assessments for LAC being placed out outside Wolverhampton and in particularly urgent circumstances. EPS also sit on External Placements Panel (EPP), ensuring that external placements meet the educational needs of LAC. This prioritisation of resources avoids, as far as possible, any drift or delay in the provision of suitable education provision for LAC with high levels of need.
- 8.4 Wolverhampton City Council have not had to direct any schools to admit a LAC in 2013/14, appropriate packages of support for hard-to-place LAC being arranged so that schools are able to meet the needs of complex students, without having recourse to our powers of direction.

9.0 School Attendance

- 9.1 COPE monitor the school attendance of LAC though-out the school year. Attendance is generally good – the total attendance for LAC in Wolverhampton schools in 2013/14 was as follows:

Autumn Term 2013	94.25%
Spring Term 2014	92.11%
Summer Term 2014	93.99%
Total for 2013/2014	93.28%

- 9.2 The total attendance figures for all LAC placed outside the city are currently being collected. It has proven difficult to get complete data from all out-of-city schools, but this is steadily improving.
- 9.3 Persistent low attendance (below 85%) is monitored and carefully analysed for all LAC on a termly basis, as outlined in the table below. This points to an issue with persistent low attendance, in a minority of cases (without which the overall attendance % is likely to be over 95%). This is clearly an area for urgent action in 2014/15.
- 9.4 Persistent low attendance: LAC with less than 85% attendance (total figures for each school year):

	No with < 85% attendance	Total no of students	percentage with < 85% attendance	No with < 85% attendance	Total no of students	percentage with < 85% attendance	No with < 85% attendance	Total no of students	percentage with < 85% attendance
2010-11	21	200	8.54%	4	90	3.94%	25	290	6.94%
2011-12	35	231	12.31%	4	139	4.03%	39	370	9.16%
2012-13	27	252	10.76%	3	165	2.45%	30	417	7.38%
2013-14	35	309	11.34%	5	205	2.48%	40	514	7.59%
	In City			Out of City			Combined		

9.5 The table above highlights some interesting learning points:

- The overall number of LAC with less than 85% attendance is unacceptably high, particularly for LAC placed inside Wolverhampton. Clearly there needs to be a significantly increased focus on persistent none-attendees in Wolverhampton schools in 2015.
- The % for LAC placed outside Wolverhampton is significantly better than for in-city, and is generally improving, despite the fact that the number of LAC in out-of-city placements has risen more sharply than in-city since 2010/11. This is another reflection of improved planning and support for placements outside the city.
- There does not, therefore, appear to be a direct correlation between the increase in LAC numbers and persistently low school attendance

9.6 The figures above reflect a disturbing national trend around school attendance however: 85% of absences come from 15% of children. Of those 15%, 35% of them are on care

orders.⁷ Clearly there is much work to be done to tackle persistent none-attendance, but also need for earlier intervention to prevent problems from growing and becoming ingrained – for children before they come into care as well for LAC.

9.7 **Placement stability** is also crucial to consistent school attendance, and the increased focus on prior educational planning is supporting significant improvements in this area. There is now less movement between schools and social workers are required to consult the VSH prior to any school change for a LAC. The number of children who have experienced an education placement change as a result of a fostering placement move has improved from 21.2% in 12/13 to just 7% in 13/14. It is expected that this increased stability will also contribute to improved attendance from 2015 onward.

10.0 Inclusion

10.1 There were 68 accurately recorded school exclusions for LAC in the 2013/14 school year. While this is an unacceptably high number, there are two clear trends:

- The vast majority were from Wolverhampton Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and special schools. Very few exclusions were from mainstream school
- Most exclusions were for threatening or abusive behaviour toward adults (staff), followed by persistent disruption

10.2 The Virtual Head and Teacher Advisor have been working closely with the PRU and residential managers to significantly reduce the number of 'grey' or unofficial exclusions that had been occurring for persistently disruptive LAC pupils at PRUs and alternative provision. It is possible that more exclusions from these establishments are being properly recorded as a result, meaning that these figures can be seen somewhat perversely as an initial sign of *success*; a case of things getting 'worse' before they can get better.

10.3 There are 12 LAC recorded as not accessing full-time education or on modified timetables, in Wolverhampton schools, as a 10 December 2014. All LAC in this position are carefully monitored by COPE and the VSH with the aim of achieving appropriate, full-time education for all LAC

10.4 The COPE Team's Counselling Psychologist provides counselling, mentoring and supervision to LAC, and the staff responsible for their care, in Wolverhampton's residential homes. This has helped to enable some of the most vulnerable and disengaged learners to re-engage with education.

⁷ <http://welfarecall.com/lac>

10.5 COPE are working with establishments to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of the issues facing these very vulnerable learners, and helping staff to develop appropriate strategies. This is the basis of the 'Attachment Aware Schools' project outlined in section 9.

11.0 School Transition

- 11.1 The transition from primary to secondary school can be extremely difficult for many Looked after Children. COPE ensure that all LAC are supported with a successful transition through 1:1 meetings with year 6 LAC and their teachers, before & after secondary induction sessions. This is followed up with additional meetings in the new Secondary school. Out-of city LAC are given additional information and support where required.
- 11.2 COPE now aim to attend (and, where necessary, arrange) PEP meetings for all LAC at transitional stages to ensure careful planning and firm support.
- 11.4. COPE have supported numerous LAC who have moved schools due to a change of care placement or other reasons, ensuring a successful transition through in-class support, mentoring and close partnership working with all key agencies.
- 11.5 The Virtual Head works with VSHs in other local authorities to ensure that quality transition arrangements are in place, both for Wolverhampton LAC placed out-of-city and LAC placed in Wolverhampton by other authorities (see 15.7).
- 11.6 COPE Educational Psychologists provide priority access to consultations and advice for LAC moving placement, particularly those out-of-city or moving out. This helps to ensure that LAC are afforded the most timely support possible at particularly vulnerable stages.

12.0 Pupil Premium

- 12.1 In April 2014 the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for LAC was subject to 3 key changes:
- An increase to approximately £1,900 per year
 - It is payable from the first day of care, rather than after 6 months as previously
 - It is now under the management of the VSH. There is an expectation that it will be used in partnership with schools, but the LAC PPG is now the part of the *Virtual School budget*, rather than going directly to schools as before
- 12.2 The 2014 Conditions of Grant for PPG⁸ state that its use should be clearly linked to each child's individual learning targets as contained in their PEP.
- 12.3 The new PEP form therefore now contains a detailed breakdown of pupil premium spend, and the COPE 'record of visit' (see 2.4) provides further scrutiny.

⁸ See Pupil Grant 2014 to 2015: conditions of grant, DfE 2014

- 12.4 The VSH has provided an automatic allocation of £300 per term to schools (though this is still expected to be used to directly support the child's learning) while schools are invited to apply for further funding via an application form that is now part of the new PEP. The VSH and Teacher Advisor review applications and agree or reject them accordingly.
- 12.5 The VSH has strongly encouraged applications for 1:1 and small group tuition, as research has shown that tuition, as well being among the most effective learning interventions, has an even greater impact on attainment for LAC than for their peers⁹
- 12.6 There has been a slow but steady increase in applications for additional funding throughout the year. The successful applications have been for, in order of frequency, 1:1 tuition & learning support, ICT equipment / software, educational trips and therapeutic activities to support engagement with learning
- 12.7 PPG has also been top-sliced to fund the "Beanstalk" volunteer reading help project, additional Education Psychology support and the planned training programme for Designated Teachers.
- 12.8 From January 2015 PPG will also fund additional support from the Education Psychology Service (EPS) - 0.8 FTE. This will be used to focus specifically and proactively on raising attainment, rather than to provide advice related to SEN as is more common for EPS. Two new Assistant EPs have already been identified to provide this support – both are qualified teachers.
- 12.9 It is too early to properly analyse the impact of the above changes to PPG. However the early signs are that PPG is now being much better used, in line with the new Conditions of Grant and Wolverhampton's Pupil Premium Policy. As a result it is anticipated that more of the funding can be allocated directly to schools in 2015/16, and the effectiveness of its use monitored and supported through the PEP with the overview of COPE and the VSH.

13.0 Further / Higher Education

- 13.1 Monthly meetings between COPE, LAC Transitions and Connexions were maintained through much of 2014 to identify those at risk of becoming 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) and identify actions to address any gaps or issues.
- 13.2 It has not been possible to continue with these meetings in the same way due to the restructuring of council services. Therefore the VSH, Transitions Team Manager and EET Co-ordinator have worked together to review partnership & transition arrangements
- 13.3 A strategic education meeting has been established on a quarterly basis to share information and drive forward the EET action plan. Membership includes representatives from the education and business partnership (EBP), Wolverhampton College, Fostering

⁹ See attached chart: *2010 KS2 attainment of pupils who were below L2 at KS1 (Looked after Children)*, also the EFF Teaching & Learning Toolkit, available online at www.educatioendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit

Team, Local Provider Services, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Connexions, as well as the VSH

- 13.4 At 1 December 2014 the local authority were supporting 220 LAC and Care Leavers over the age of 16. Of these:
- 128 were in education, employment or training (EET)
 - 49 were not in education, employment or training (NEET)
 - 43 were exempted due to illness, disability, pregnancy/young mother or custody
- 13.5 Therefore 78% were either in EET or exempted. The figures for September 2014 were very similar so there has been little development or drop-out since September
- 13.6 There is a 16+ PEP in place but this has not particularly effective or well used to date. The VSH will be reviewing, updating and re-launching the 16+ PEP form in early 2015, with a view to ensuring that PEPs are completed to a high standard for post-16 LAC in further education, and also used to support care leavers where appropriate.
- 13.7 In 2015 the Virtual School data set will be extended to include the attainment and progress of LAC in years 12 and 13. The Transitions team will input this data in the same way that COPE do for school-aged LAC. It has been necessary for the VSH to provide training and guidance to the Transitions team in this area, hence the delay in this process getting underway.
- 13.8 The VSH is involved in a new partnership project with Wolverhampton University and other Virtual Heads in the Black Country to increase the numbers of LAC and care leavers in higher education. This will involve university visits and events, a mentoring scheme for potential LAC university students and extra training and support for carers, beginning in early 2015.

14.0 Participation

- 14.1 Wolverhampton has a robust Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation programme, led by the COPE Team's Participation Officer for LAC. The VSH manages the Participation Officer and ensures that education is given priority and consideration as part of the CiCC and Participation programme.
- 14.2 Education is prioritised at a strategic level in the council's Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to LAC and Care Leavers, which were based on consultation with LAC and Care Leavers (strategic priority 3: *Help us to make achievements*).
- 14.3 The 2014 refresh of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, based on further consultation with the CiCC and a representative sample of LAC and Care Leavers, highlighted two additional priorities for young people, related to education:

1. the timing & venue of PEP meetings; young people often do not like to be removed from lessons to attend meetings, as this makes them feel different or 'singled out'
 2. A need for increased access to apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for LAC and Care Leavers
- 14.4 These issues were discussed with Elected Members at the September 2014 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, where a commitment was made to improving these areas in 2015. These will form part of the new Corporate Parenting Action Plan, which will be completed in early 2015 following the appointment of a new Corporate Parenting Officer and Assistant Corporate Parenting Officer (a post which is ring-fenced for appointment of a Care Leaver) to complete the COPE Team.
- 14.5 The 2013/14 Virtual School Headteacher Report will be discussed with the CiCC in the spring term 2015, and a written response from the CiCC will be shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel to inform further strategic decision making and scrutiny.
- 14.6 COPE and the VSH regularly address these issues at an operational level, and accepted two young people on work placements in 2014.
- 14.7 The LAC Awards Ceremony in February 2014 saw well over 300 young people receive recognition for their successes throughout the year. Educational success was a key award category alongside other achievements. COPE led in the organisation of this very successful evening, the biggest event in the Corporate Parenting calendar.

15.0 Training

- 15.1 The Virtual Head now has statutory duties related to the training of all key partners and the development of strong working partnerships. The following have been delivered in 2013/14, in relation to partnership working in Wolverhampton:
- 3 termly Designated Teachers Forum meetings. Attendance has been good (up to 35)
 - 5 2-hour 'skills gyms' for social workers in quality Personal Education Planning – these will continue every 2 months. Social workers' attendance requires improvement – VSH is working with managers and Workforce Development on this
 - Termly educational training sessions for foster carers, together with a compulsory education component on Skills-to-Foster training
 - Briefings for IROs and all social work management teams in improving PEP quality, good practice, current policy and statutory guidance on the education of LAC
- 15.2 An extensive programme of training is planned for Designated Teachers in 2015-16. This will begin with an 'Ignition Conference', a training conference on Attachment, Trauma & Resilience, followed by 4 half-day training sessions throughout the year (in addition to the termly DT's Forum meetings). A 'train-the-trainer' day in 'Emotion Coaching' has also been organised which will enable the attendees to deliver training on emotional regulation in schools. This training is all linked to the "Attachment-aware Schools"

programme which is being developed nationally between Virtual Heads and the National College for Teaching & Leadership (NCTL).

- 15.3 The aim is to achieve a consistency of vision and approach across the services supporting LAC in schools. Therefore colleagues from School Improvement, AEL (English as an Additional Language) and the Speech & Language Therapy team will also be included in the Ignition Conference and 'train-the-trainer' day on Emotion Coaching.
- 15.4 The VSH has a responsibility to raise awareness among school governing bodies of the needs of LAC, and related statutory responsibilities. This has been something of a gap in the past however an initial briefing for school governors has been arranged for early 2015

16.0 Partnership working

- 16.1 A number of initiatives have contributed to improved partnership working between key agencies in 2014
- 16.2 COPE Education Support Workers continue to meet with Designated Teachers in all Wolverhampton schools every term to review the progress of LAC and offer support
- 16.2 The VSH has held meetings between the Head Teachers of Wolverhampton's Pupil Referral Units / alternative provision and Wolverhampton's residential homes to facilitate better joint working and promote inclusion
- 16.3 Half-termly meetings are held with School Improvement, (1) to increase the focus on LAC in the local authority's scrutiny of schools and (2) to enable School Improvement to provide similar support and challenge to the Virtual School
- 16.4 Student reviews are held between the COPE Teacher Advisor and YOT every half-term, to focus on the attendance and progress of LAC who have offended or are at risk of offending
- 16.5 The VSH has written to all Wolverhampton schools, visited several schools, and attended the Wolverhampton Head Teachers' conference & briefings. The VSH is delivering a presentation on LAC at the first Head Teachers' briefing of 2015
- 16.6 As Chairperson of the West Midlands Network of Virtual School Heads, The VSH meets termly with other VSHs in the region and, as the regional lead, represents the West Midlands at the termly National VSH Steering Group
- 16.7 The 2013/14 achievements of the West Midlands VSH network include:
- Clear, agreed cross-boundary arrangements between all West Midlands Virtual Heads, to promote better educational planning for children educated outside their home local authority. This is being now considered as a nationwide model by the National Steering Group

- A post-16 learning agreement to promote improved educational provision for LAC and Care Leavers in FE / HE (partly to replace the now defunct Buttle Trust Quality Mark, ensuring quality)
- Close links with a new lead HMI for LAC in West Midlands Schools. This HMI role was established following a presentation that the VSH delivered in July 2014 to the West Midlands Ofsted Inspectors team on the educational needs of LAC. It is also part of a national drive by Virtual Heads to raise the status of LAC in Ofsted's inspections of schools. The VSH meets with the link HMI at least once a term
- Improving links with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The VSH has met with the Chairperson of ADCS to discuss ways of working together more closely to promote improved outcomes for LAC

17.0 Conclusion

- 17.1 Despite rising LAC numbers and other challenges, there have been numerous improvements made to Virtual School arrangements and processes in 2013/14, contributing to improving outcomes in several areas.
- 17.2 LAC are clearly doing better at school. Academic outcomes are above national averages and the progress of LAC in Wolverhampton schools is significantly better than that of their peers, especially at KS2. COPE and the VSH are ensuring that appropriate education placements and support are arranged in a timely manner, while challenging exclusions and strengthening transition arrangements. As a result, LAC are spending less time out of school and placement stability is much-improved.
- 17.3 At the same time there is much work to be done in 2015 and beyond, building on these successes and tackling areas in need of improvement. There is still an unacceptable attainment gap for LAC at KS4 in particular, compared to their peers, and Writing at KS1 (along with Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar at KS2) are areas in need of additional focus. Persistently low school attendance is still an issue for a minority of pupils and while the Virtual School data set has improved significantly, there are still some gaps in attainment and attendance data for out-of-city LAC. Educational data and support for post-16 LAC and care Leavers are also areas for improvement, as is the monitoring of LAC placed in Wolverhampton by other authorities. Actions to address these issues are outlined in the LAC Attainment Improvement Action Plan.
- 17.4 The Virtual School Head is also contributing, through the West Midlands Virtual Schools Network and National VSH Steering Group, to improved provision for LAC on a regional and national level. VSHs are working with Ofsted to increase the focus on LAC in school inspections and closer links are being made with ADCS to ensure joined-up thinking at a strategic level.
- 17.5 2013/14 was a very busy and productive year for the Corporate Parenting & Education Team and foundations have been laid for further improvements and exciting

developments in 2015 and beyond, as the Virtual School continues to promote better outcomes Looked after Children.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report [NM/08012015/Q]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 The relevant legislation is set out in the body of this report. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. RB/09012015/X

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 An initial Equalities Impact Analysis has been completed for this report. Based on this it was decided that a full impact analysis should be undertaken but that further data is required in order for this to be completed. The VSH is working with colleagues in Business Intelligence on this and a full assessment will be completed as soon as the necessary data has been collected.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 All of the proposed developments can be made within existing resources

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Children & Family Support Action Plan: LAC ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN – April 2014-April 2015: attached
- COPE (Corporate Parenting & Education Team) Framework 2014 – Offer to Schools & Key Partners