

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Corporate Parenting Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **7 January 2020**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Membership:

Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Abbie Akinbohun (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Daniel Chukwu, Barry Johnson, Steve Liddiard, Sue MacPherson and Jennifer Smith

Gregg Brown, Open Door

Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Kerry King, Children in Care Council

Billie-Jo King, Children in Care Council

Substitutes:

Councillors Luke Spillman, Gary Collins, Bukky Okunade and Lynn Worrall

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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2 Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 10 September 2019.	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
4 Declaration of Interests	

5	Children's Social Care Performance	13 - 24
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **20 December 2019**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 10 September 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Abbie Akinbohun (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Daniel Chukwu, Barry Johnson (Left at 7.45pm), Steve Liddiard (left at 8.26pm) and Jennifer Smith

Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
K King, M Abduirahma, M Mohammed, R Autnes and M Carter
Children in Care Council

Apologies: Councillor Sue MacPherson

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services
Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services
Janet Simon, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Sue Green, Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

12. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 4 June 2019 were approved as a correct record.

13. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

14. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Chukwu declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he owned a company with his partner.

15. Local Offer to Care Leavers

Before Officers introduced the report the Chair invited the Care Leavers present if they wished to talk directly to Councillors about their experience of

being in care and any issues they wished to raise with the Committee. Each of the Care Leavers introduced themselves and explained their care experiences.

Members heard how one of the care leavers was now in her last year at university and was training to become a Social Worker. Another explained he had been in the care system since 2016 as part of the aftercare team and lived in semi-independent accommodation; he further explained that he had previously been homeless before coming into care but was now focusing on his studies and getting back into education.

Members heard how one young person was in care for 5 years and was now back living with her family.

Following discussions the Chair thanked the young people for attending the meeting and for sharing their experiences and thoughts about the service with the Committee. All of the care leavers chose to remain for the meeting.

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children then presented the report, in doing so, she explained the Children and Social Work Act 2017 required each Local Authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its Care Leavers. It was highlighted that the Councils Local Offer was to support young people leaving the care of Thurrock Council. The offer was focused on achieving the best outcomes for care leavers and providing all young adults leaving care in Thurrock with the best possible chance of success.

Members heard Officers held an event in August to consult with the young people leaving the care of the Council to see what they thought should be included within the document. It was confirmed that all young people received a copy of the Local Offer and the document will be subject to review annually.

The Committee were taken through the report with the Strategic Lead for Looked After Children touching on points such as the Charter for care leavers in Thurrock and a summary of the Local Offer, which included the care leavers covenant, support with finding a home, Education, Employment and training as well as financial support.

Members noted it was important to understand the history of each individual leaving care and that the Council was committed to supporting them through the new challenges they would be facing as adults with personalised plans.

Councillor Akinbohun sought clarity on the focus groups which were held with Care Leavers. Janet Simon explained that she was setting up a series of focus groups with care leavers to hear their voice and for them to influence service provision for them. The focus group in July reviewed the local offer for care leavers. Care leavers will lead on the topics for future focus groups.

Councillor Chuckwu enquired as to the support offered to young people who might be struggling with addiction. It was remarked that there was support for care leavers from a personal adviser and specialist support services in place.

Referrals are made as appropriate for the young person, however if they were not ready to accept the help given to them; then they would and could refuse the support.

Members were notified that the Council would always be there for its young people when they were ready to accept help and support, even if it had been refused previously.

RESOLVED:

That the Members of the Committee were informed about Thurrock's Local Offer to Care Leavers.

16. Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy

The Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation introduced the report highlighting the Local Authority had a statutory duty to produce a Placement Sufficiency Strategy which outlined how it would fulfil its responsibilities in terms of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

Members were informed the strategy was focused on plans to meet the placement needs of children who were in care and young people who had recently left the care of the local authority and those who may be in care in the future.

The Committee heard how the strategy was an area of work which was reviewed and produced annually. The Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation stated high standards were expected from providers to ensure that the Councils Looked after Children had their needs met.

Feedback from young people was included within the report with 70% of children and young people scored their overall experience as 6 or above on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most satisfied) and 87% understood the need for children's services involvement. The feedback also included comments on what young people thought the Council could do to improve, such as help children explain their feelings/listen to the child's voice, help to acknowledge issues and make changes and sensitivity of the power imbalance between social worker and family.

The Chair of the Committee thanked Officers for the report and asked the reasons why there were 14 children under the age of one who were in care. It was explained that the Child's parents may not have been able to look after them or the Council may have known about the Child pre-birth.

The Chair and Committee were assured if there was a way to keep any child safely with their family then this was the first option, including within their extended family.

RESOLVED:

That the Members of the Committee were informed about Thurrock's Sufficiency Strategy and actions.

17. Children's Social Care Performance

The Assistant Director of Children's Services presented the report which was for information. Members were notified how during Quarter 1 2019-20 there was a total of 730 children and families assessments completed, which equated to a monthly average of 243 cases.

The number of children looked after had also reduced since 2017/18, which had a monthly average of 315, to 306 in 2018-19 and 295 for Quarter 1 2019/20. Numbers continued to show a steady decrease, this was in part due to the Eastern Region Protocol, where Local Authorities were assisting with unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

Members heard how the service was trying to keep families together as much as possible, with children being placed with extended family and special guardianship orders being used, if it was in the Child's best interest to do so.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services explained that the missing children figure was higher per instance than the number of children; should a child not be home on time or they may have gone out after being told they were not allowed, this was to be reported and therefore the child would be missing for that period of time. It was commented that the missing period was usually for a short period of time and the Child would be returned to their placement fairly quickly.

Members were advised that we had recruited 5 new foster carers in Q1 and the Council were committed to recruiting new Foster Carers through the year, with the assistance of additional funding for a fostering recruitment team.

Following remarks on the lack of encouragement around education for some children in care, the Foster Care Association representatives commented that sometimes it was difficult to encourage young people in care to go to school or college despite all the best efforts of foster carers and professionals. It was stated that it was important to remember that some young people go through traumatic experiences and so getting them to attend school for half a day was an achievement which could be built on. It was further stated that each child was different and putting pressure on a young person could sometimes do more damage than help.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Members noted the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory Social Care Services.**

2. For any specific areas of interest to be flagged for inclusion/expansion within the next report.

18. Children Coming Into Our Care During June And July 2019

Strategic Lead for Looked After Children addressed Members on this report, as members had asked previously to have an understanding of some of the reasons why children came into our care. Strategic Lead for Looked After Children explained that during June and July 2019, there were 29 young people in total who came into the Councils care; of those 29 children and young people:

- 15 were under 10 years of age
- 5 were aged between 10 – 15 years of age
- 9 were 16+ years of age; 7 of whom were unaccompanied asylum seekers
- There were 6 family groups
- 6 were female and 23 were male

The unaccompanied asylum seeking young people would be initially accommodated by Thurrock whilst waiting transfer to another Eastern Region local authority through the transfer protocol. The main presenting issues for the 16+ young people who are not unaccompanied asylum seeking children, who came into the Councils care was family breakdown, including parents who did not feel they could manage the presenting behaviours by the young people.

Officers explained children who came into the Councils care under the age of 15 (20 children) did so because the care offered to those children meant they were not considered to be safe in the family home.

Members were notified the Council went into court proceedings in respect of 14 of these children to secure their position in the Councils care and to plan for their permanence. 6 children were placed with extended family members, the remaining 14 were placed with foster carers.

Members heard some of the key issues which led to children coming into the Councils care, included

- Domestic Violence
- Mental health issues
- Substance misuse (including alcohol)
- Homelessness
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee noted the information in the report.**
- 2. For the information in the report to assist Members in their role as Corporate Parents**

19. The Council Pledge to Looked After Children

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children introduced the report which provided information on the Council Pledge for Looked After Children. She explained that all Councillors were corporate parents to the Councils looked after children. Ensuring that the Councils looked after children were able to influence and shape the services provided for them was both a statutory duty and a key priority.

Members were informed that the Pledge was therefore informed and developed with the Children in Care Council. It was further explained the Pledge set out a number of promises that the Councils children and young people had identified which, if delivered, made Thurrock Council a good parent and carer.

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr Redsell, said she wanted a copy of the Pledge to go to Full Council and for all Members to have a copy of the Pledge so they will be aware of the promises we have made to looked after children and care leavers.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee endorse and adopt the Thurrock Pledge for Looked After Children.**
- 2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee ensure the Pledge for Looked After Children is understood and effective across services working with looked after children.**

20. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

The Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing presented the report which outlined the appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority was a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

It was explained that the IRO had a number of specific responsibilities, including but not limited to ensuring that plans for looked after children were based on a detailed and informed assessment, were up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs.

Members heard how during the reporting period, the IRO service had remained very stable with only one change in personnel due to retirement. The Service continued to comprise of five, permanent Independent Reviewing

Officers. During the performance year April 2018 – March 2019, the IRO service conducted a total of 755 reviews, which was an increase on the number of reviews conducted the previous year.

The Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing advised Members that in preparation of the IRO Annual Report, an Audit was undertaken of Looked After Children reviews by the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parenting Committee noted the IRO Annual report 2018 - 2019 and the recommendations in the report.

The Chair of the Committee suggested that standing orders be suspended as the meeting was running beyond 9pm. Members agreed.

21. Intensive Foster Carer Training Action Research

The Chair advised Members that the report would be deferred to the next meeting as Keeley Pullen, Virtual Head teacher, was unable to attend this evening due to illness.

Resolved:

That this report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on 7 January 2020.

22. Corporate Parenting Committee - Annual Report 2018/2019

The Assistant Director of Children's Services introduced the report which highlighted the work of the Committee over the last year and asked that Member's refer the report to Full Council for all Members to see the work of the Committee.

Members heard how the report included an overview to being a Corporate Parent, key points to improving the outcomes for Looked After Children and what makes Corporate Parenting effective.

The Chair of the Committee thanked Officers for the report and commented that she welcomed the report. She continued to state that it was important to share the work of the Committee with all Members and felt this was a step forward.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

- 1.2 That the Corporate Parenting Annual Report be referred to Full Council, to share the work of Committee and their main achievements for 2018/19 municipal year.

23. Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme 2019/2020

The Committee discussed the work programme for the up and coming year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following reports be included on the Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme 2019/2020:
 - Children's Social Care Performance – January and March 2020
 - Ofsted Update/ Report – January 2020

The meeting finished at 9.15 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

7 January 2020	ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children’s Social Care Performance	
Wards and communities Affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Mandy Moore, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children’s Services	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Practice summary of performance and trends

The number of contacts to Children’s Services seeking advice and support has increased from Quarter 2 to Quarter 1. This is the same trend that was seen last year between these two quarters. The number of these contacts that become referrals has also increased slightly in Quarter 2 from Quarter 1.

The data continues to be closely scrutinised to ensure that decision-making remains robust and to ensure families are supported by the most appropriate service. The rate of referrals is below similar authorities matched for need (known as statistical neighbours) but more referrals result in full assessment of need and any risks. This is a more proportionate response for families. This has been achieved through the work of the “MASH” the multi-agency safeguarding hub and improving access to the Early Help Service. Having a multi-agency MASH has supported a shared understanding and management of threshold decisions so that children and families receive the right help at the right time and that the response to family difficulties is proportionate to risk.

Assessments of need and risk are completed in a timely way and more children and families are offered early help following assessment in addition to those receiving further support under a child in need plan or a child protection plan.

The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan due to concern about abuse or neglect has increased slightly but this in line with the slight increase of contacts becoming referrals and increased numbers of care and support assessment completed during Quarter 2.

The number of children looked after has dropped over the last two years and have remained lower this quarter at a rate of 67.5 per 10,000 compared to similar authorities at 69.5 per 10,000 and England average of 64 per 10,000 (2017/18 outturns).

We have increased our focus on permanence planning to ensure children do not wait to have a long term home. More children are moving to live with relatives where they cannot remain in their parent's care. The number of young children who are placed for adoption is improving with 9 year to date (September 2019), compared to 13 for total year 2018/19.

Children looked after continue to make good educational progress with better than national average figures for attainment for looked after children. Performance this year being in the top 25% of authorities.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members note the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services;

1.2 For any specific areas of interest to be flagged for inclusion/expansion within the next report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance. It describes current activity levels and performance of Children's social care services in responding to the needs of vulnerable children.

2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet internal and external reporting requirements. It is important to note that data reported is a reflection of what is formally recorded in the Social Care record management system as at the date a report is produced and can be subject to change.

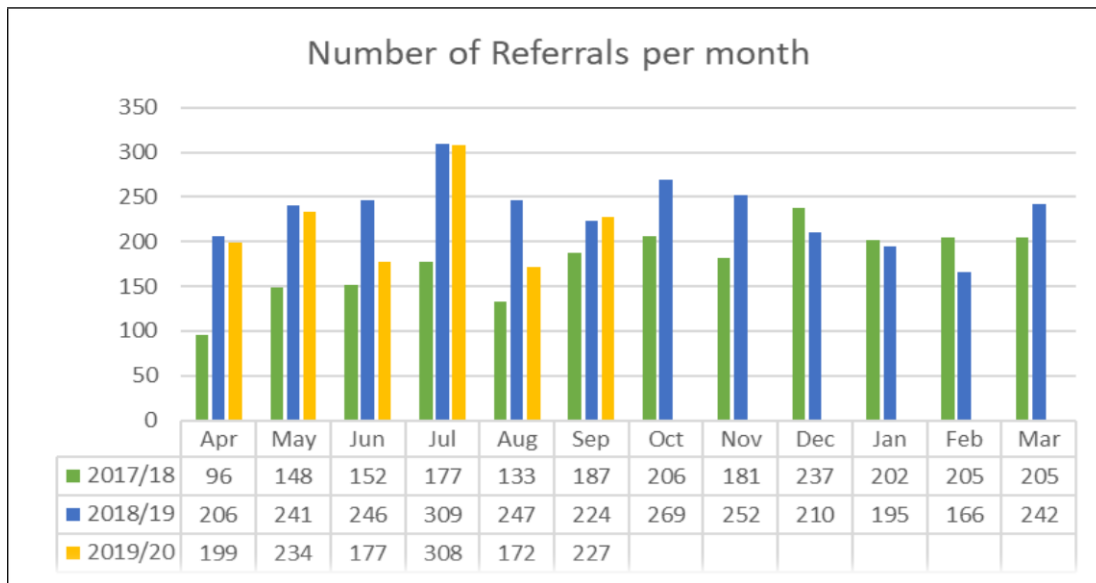
Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels and to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and information about how well children are doing. The information is also discussed with front line workers.

The data in this report is from the monthly performance reporting (At a Glance), regional benchmarking data and national data sets. This data has been presented and discussed with the Social Care Senior Management Team and the Corporate Director's Performance Group. Data has not yet been published in relation to statistical neighbours and national averages for 2018/19. 2017/18 outturns have been used within the charts for benchmarking purposes.

3. Performance

3.1 Number of referrals

Contacts progress to a referral if it is felt there are circumstances that need a social care intervention because of more serious concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing.



For Quarter 2 2019/20 we have received an average of 236 referrals per month. This is an increase on the Quarter 1 average (of 203 referrals per month), but below the monthly average for the same period 2018/19 of 260. The number of contacts to Children's Services seeking advice and support increased slightly. The number of these contacts that become referrals equates to 41%, which is slightly higher than the conversion rate for Quarter 1 of 38%.

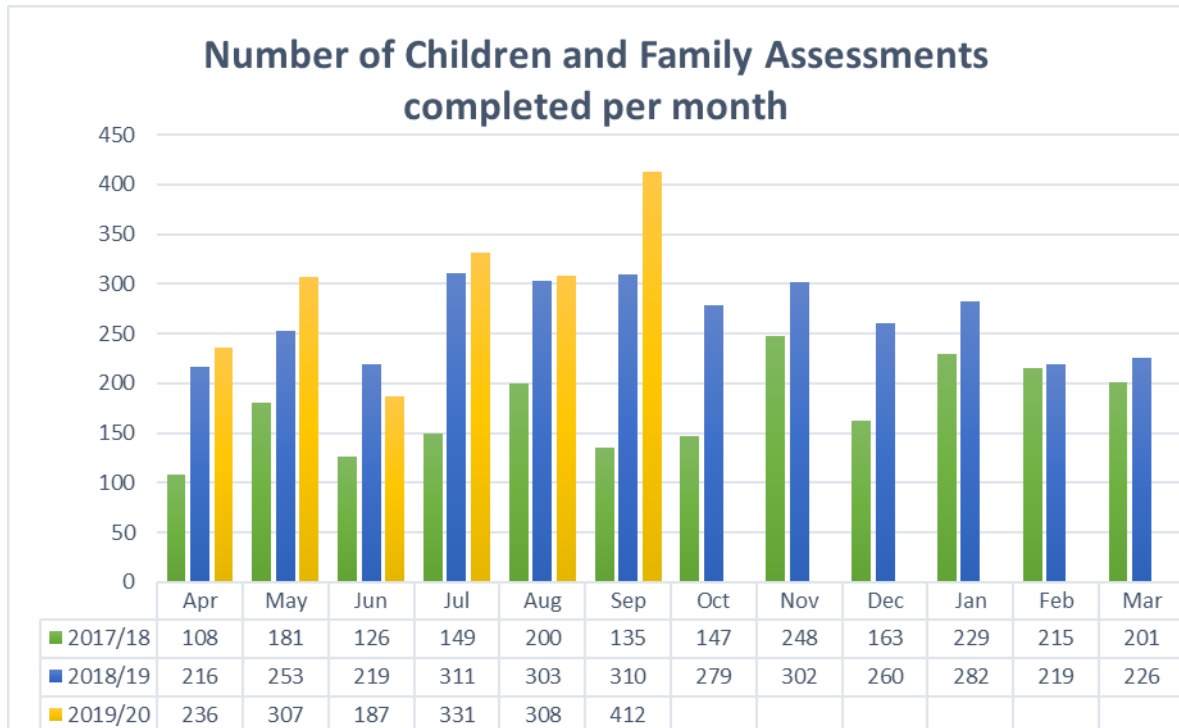
Number of repeat referrals

A repeat referral is counted if a child has been referred during the reporting period who has been referred previously within a 12 month period.

During the month of September 2019, 14.1% of referrals were for children that had been referred previously (within 12 months). Year to date for Thurrock 16.4% of referrals received are for children that have previously been referred (within 12 months). This is better performance than our statistical neighbours outturn for 2018/19, at 21%, and nationally, at 23%.

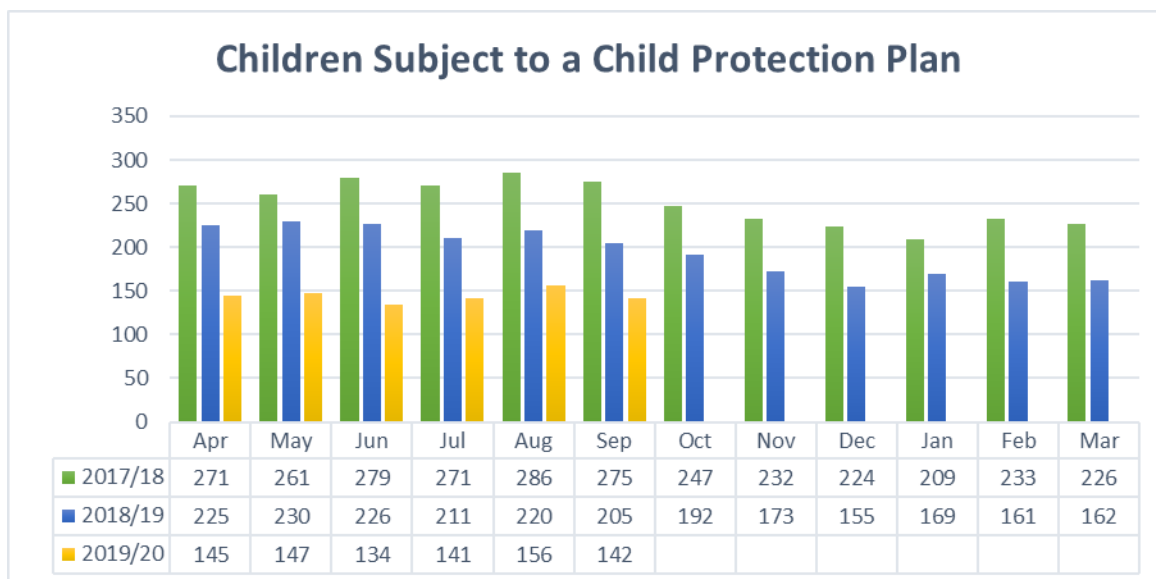
3.2 Assessments

Number of children and families assessments completed per month



During Quarter 2 2019-20, there was a total of 1051 children and families assessments completed, which equates to a monthly average of 350, this is higher than the monthly average for Quarter 1 (243) and Quarter 2 for 2018/19 (298). The percentage of children and families assessments completed within 45 working days remains good at 92.7% year to date, this is good performance compared to our statistical neighbours 2018/19 outturn of 78%.

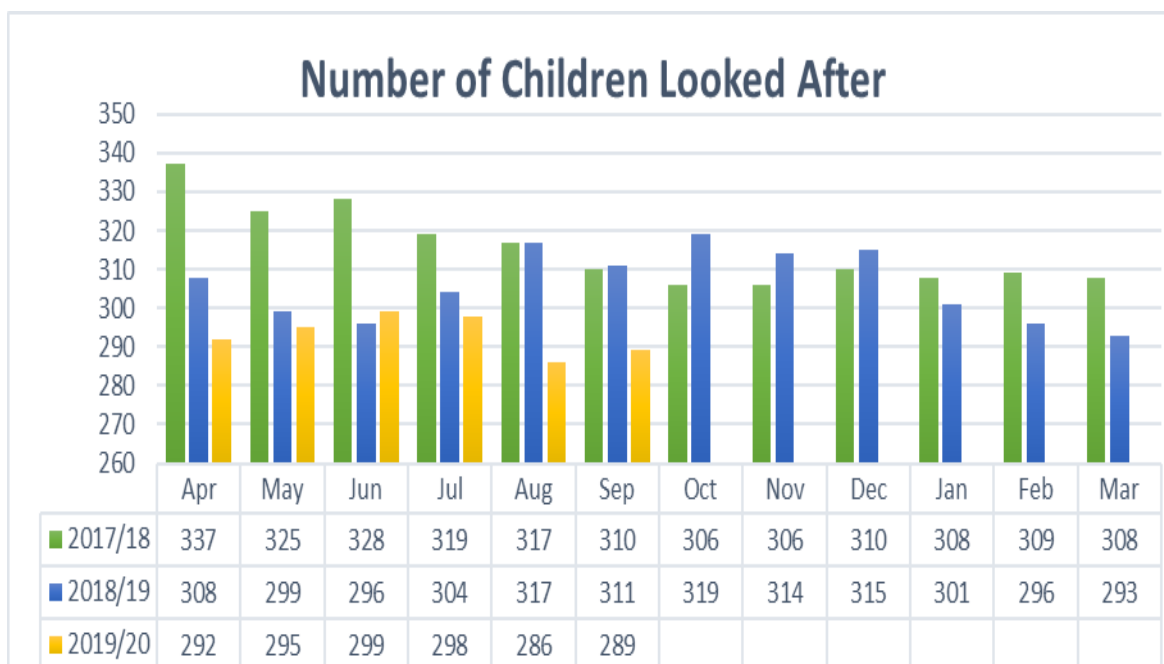
3.3 Children subject to Child Protection Plans



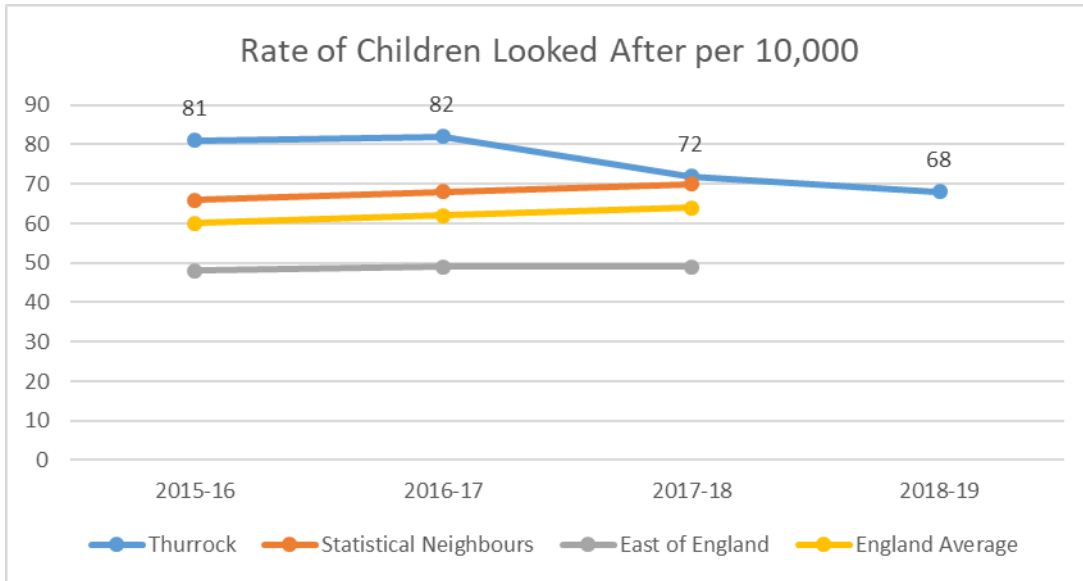
As at the end of September 2019 there was a total of 142 children subject to a child protection plan. The quarter 2 average of 146 is marginally higher than the quarter 1 average of 142. This is a rate of 33.2 per 10,000. This is below the similar authority rate of 50 and national average of 44 for 2018/19.

Authorities identified as managing child protection plans with purpose and pace tend to have lower rates of children subject to child protection plans as duration of plans reduce.

3.4 Children Looked After



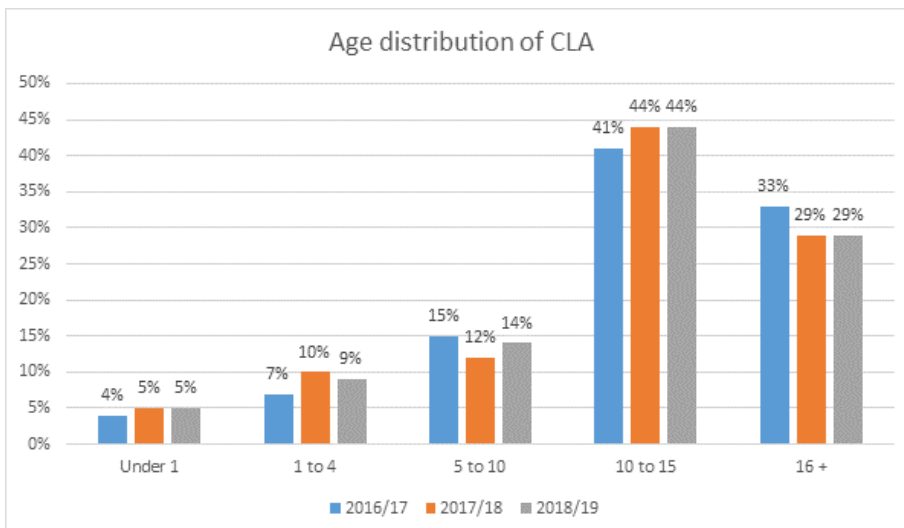
The number of children looked after has continued to reduce since 2018/19, which had a monthly average of 306, to 293 in 2019-20 year to date. Numbers have shown a steady decrease.



Our rate of Children Looked After as at the end of September 19 is 67.5 per 10,000, this is in-line with our end of year 2018/19 position (68.4), which brought us just below our statistical neighbour's outturn for 2017/18 (69.5), statistical neighbour averages for 2018/19 have not yet been published for comparison purposes.

The reduction in numbers of looked after children has been achieved by purposeful permanency planning, ensuring children who do not need to be looked after are found permanent homes outside of care, which includes more children being adopted. The success of our edge of care service 'Families Together' and the continued cooperation of Eastern Region colleagues in the dispersal of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Age of Children and Young People in Care

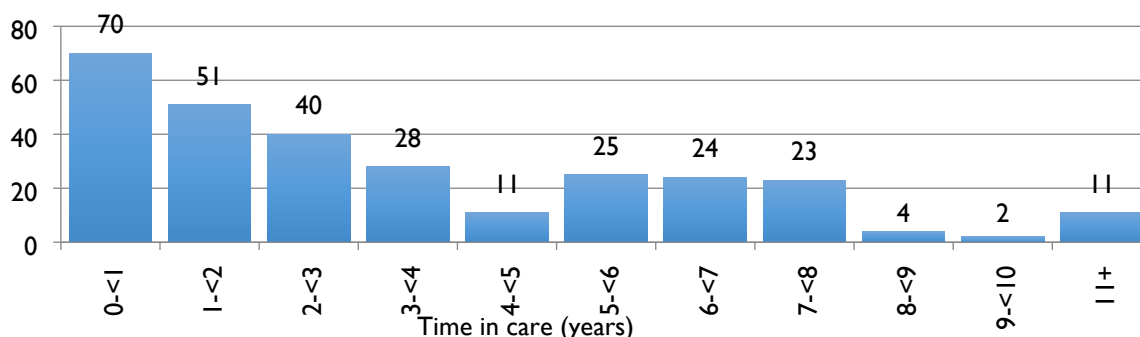


Age of children looked after as at 31st March 19

The age distribution represents improving practice in Thurrock, where the majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers. Those currently being looked after under 5 are progressing through the court and permanency plans are underway.

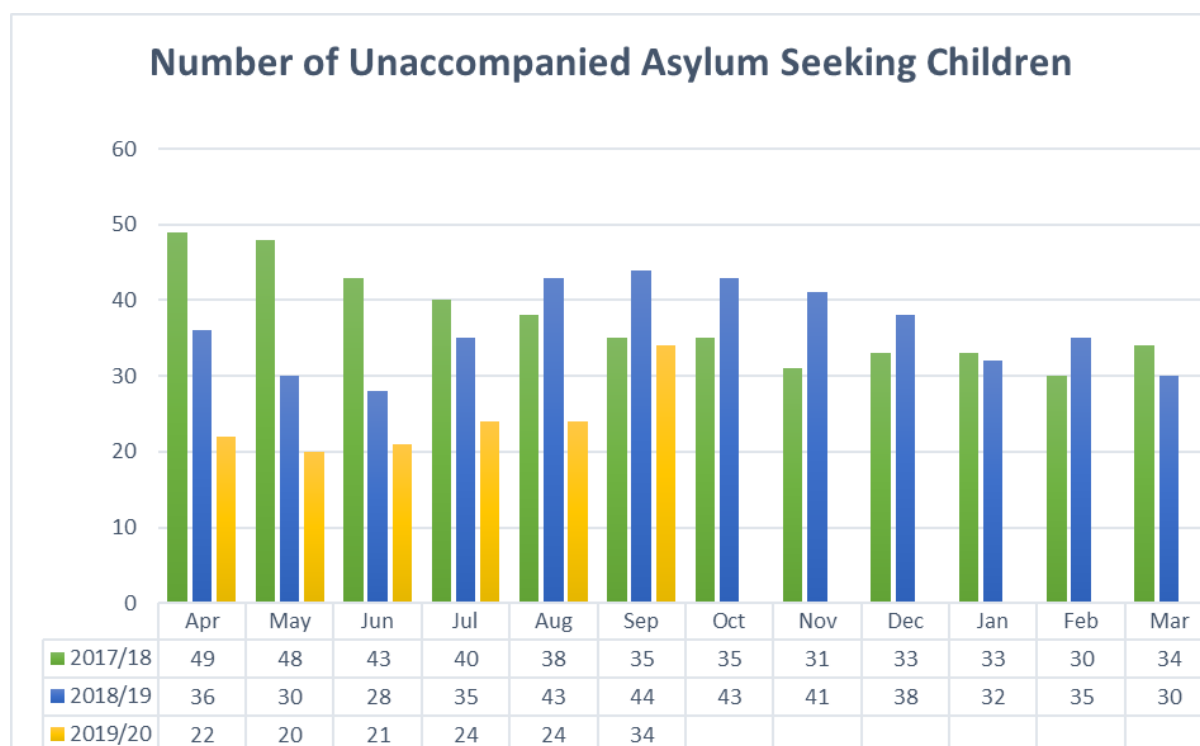
The impact of this can be seen in the number of children 5-10, where fewer children are remaining in care beyond five years old.

Time in Care for Children and Young People



This graph shows that last year's trend has continued with fewer children remaining in care long term and the majority of children coming into care for between 1 and 3 years.

Number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children



Our numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children has reduced due to the effective operation of the Eastern Region UASC transfer protocol.

There was an increase during the month of September (to 34) due to a high number of UASC arriving in Thurrock, however due to the effectiveness of the Eastern Region protocol, this has already reduced back down to 24 in October 2019.

3.5 Adoption

As at end of Quarter 2 2019/20, 9 children have already received an adoption order. This is indicative of improved performance on 2018/19 where we achieved a total of 13 Adoption Orders within the full year. A further 14 children have a placement order made by the Courts in proceedings 5 of these children have been matched to adoptive carers, 4 children are placed with adopters but an adoption order has not yet been made. We can anticipate a continued need for adopters in excess of the amount required last year. This reflects the significantly increased activity of our new adoption service which is driving adoption for those children that require it.

The average time for a child from entering care to being placed with adopters has reduced from average of 528 days in 2015 -18 to 393 2016 -19 (3 year average) days to 363 for Quarter 2 this year, this is above the 2017/18 National average of 486. The time scale from Court authority to place to matching with adopters has reduced from an average of 185 days (3 year average) to 145 days in Quarter 2, lower than the national average of 201 days, this is good performance. This has been achieved by robust tracking processes to achieve the good performance.

3.6 Children looked after with missing episodes

	Quarter 4 2018/19			Quarter 1 2019/20			Quarter 2 2019/20		
	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19
Child Looked After	17	16	16	17	10	12	12	11	12
Instances	34	34	29	56	26	23	43	27	26
Child Looked After (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child)	3	0	3	2	2	2	6	4	2
Instances	3	0	3	3	3	2	7	6	2

During September 2019 we had a total of 14 children with missing episodes recorded, 2 were unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There was a total of 28 incidents recorded against those children. Of the 28 missing incidents in September 2019 10 of those related to 2 children. The monthly averages for both children missing and incidents recorded for Quarter 2 are in line with Quarter 1.

Children are offered a return interview after they have been missing to try to address their reasons for going missing. The reasons range from not being settled in placement to the draw of friends. The rate of take up of return interviews with our independent provider remains low despite focus. Key workers from placements; foster carers and social workers discuss these missing incidents with children. We continue to review arrangements to try to reduce incidents of missing and engagement of children in return interviews.

3.7 Fostering

Most of our children looked after are placed with foster carers. We recruit and support our own foster carers but also have to use independent agency foster carers to get the right match for a child.

Area	Number
Number of new carers approved between Apr 2019 to date	9
Number of mainstream fostering applications currently in progress	10
Number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering households	93

The number of new carers approved in year to date is 9, which is an improvement on 2018/19 where the same number was approved for the whole year. This reflects more effective recruitment. Because carers also leave the service due to retirement or other changes in circumstance this does not mean the overall number of carers has yet increased. In addition to the 10 mainstream fostering applications in progress, there are an additional two for which the assessment has not yet started.

The number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering household of 93 does not include Connected Carers. This increases to 119 when Connected Carers are included.

3.8 Care Leavers

The percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training improved from 61% in 2017-18 to 65% for 2018/19. For Quarter 1 remained the same as our 2018-19 outturn at 65% and has increased slightly in Quarter 2 to 66%. This is good performance.

The percentage of our care leavers not in education, employment or training as at end of Quarter 1 is 22%, and has remained the same for Quarter 2. This is good performance and better than 2017/18 similar authority average of 41.6%.

The nature of the children looked after that are not in employment, education or training reflects their high need, i.e. teenage parents, long term illness.

There is close alignment of the aftercare service with the Inspire Youth Hub, a partnership which has seen a significant improvement in the number of young people in education employment and training. The On-Track

Thurrock Programme continues to offer a bespoke programme to ensure that care leavers can access education, employment and training. We have had considerable success with this.

For many of our care leavers we provide our Prince's Trust programme which is a way in which we enable young people to build confidence. We actively seek apprenticeship opportunities for our care leavers and continue to provide a range of support programmes to enable them to engage fully in the local communities in which they live.

Housing remains one of the key challenges for young people who are Leaving Care, to address this we have further developed the Head Start Housing Programme – which will look to support care leavers. This will provide a holistic approach to supporting young people in both sourcing and sustaining tenancies. We recognise that one of the key barriers relating to this is budget management and to address this we have developed a budgeting programme to ensure that young people can manage finances.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to note and comment on current performance position.

5. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

5.1 Not applicable

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

6.1 Not applicable

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

7.1 None

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

No implications identified.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Strategic Lead Legal Services Safeguarding & Deputy Monitoring Officer

1. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of child in need in its area.
2. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that it is looking after.
3. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act to have regard to the 'corporate parenting principles' in exercising any of its functions in relation to children that it is looking after.
4. The provision of performance data will form part of the assurance process of the Council to determine that it is fulfilling its statutory duties in relation to children in its area.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Community Development and Equalities Team Manager

Specific equality and diversity implications are identified within the main body of the report.

9. Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

9.1 Not applicable

10. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

10.1 Not applicable

11. Appendices to the report

11.1 None

Report Author

Mandy Moore
Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager, Strategy, Communications & Customer Service

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7 January 2020		ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to update Members of the Committee on Thurrock's outcome from the Ofsted ILACS inspection undertaken between 11th and 22nd November 2019.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Members of the Committee are informed about Thurrock's outcome from the Ofsted ILACS.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The ILACS inspections by Ofsted focus on the effectiveness of local authority children's services and arrangements in these four areas:

- Impact of Leaders on social work practice with children and families
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness

Thurrock's children's social care last Ofsted inspection was in February 2016, when children's social care was judged to be 'requires improvement'. We were notified of the ILAC inspection on the 4th November, which is the off-site week. During this week we uploaded over 200 documents, produced audit

reports of case work and the Lead Inspector conducted some telephone interviews. The onsite weeks began on the 11th November and completed on the 22 November. During that period of time there were up to six Ofsted inspectors in the service. The inspectors came and sat alongside social workers and reviewed their cases directly with them. The inspectors looked at many cases in their 2 weeks of onsite work.

At the end of the Inspection Ofsted rated services as:

- Impact of Leaders on social work practice with children and families; **GOOD**
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: **GOOD**
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: **GOOD**
- Overall effectiveness: **GOOD**

Please see the attached Ofsted report in full, which was published on the 20th December 2019.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Thurrock's Ofsted ILAC report is attached at Appendix 1.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Committee are aware of the outcome of the ILAC inspection, including the areas for development.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 None

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications Verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial Implications to this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications Verified by: **Judith Knight**
Strategic Lead Legal Services Safeguarding & Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications Verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead Community Development & Equalities

No implications identified in this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

- None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 – Ofsted ILACS Report 11-22 November 2019

Report Author:

Sheila Murphy
Assistant Director

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Thurrock Council

Inspection of children's social care services

Inspection dates: 11 November 2019 to 22 November 2019

**Lead inspector: Brenda McLaughlin
Her Majesty's Inspector**

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Since the last inspection in 2016, when children's services were judged to require improvement, an experienced senior leadership team has driven a sustained pace of improvement in most areas. Services for vulnerable children and their families in Thurrock are now good. Although some developments are recent, strong child-centred practice is evident across all teams and services. Skilled and committed social workers and other frontline practitioners listen to children and their parents. They take time to understand children's experiences. Staff act swiftly to prevent harm and provide support early. Current senior leaders have worked diligently to develop and support a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Stability of leadership and strong aspirations to 'get it right' for vulnerable children are key factors in their success. Action to support exploited and missing children is beginning to make a difference, but changes need to embed further to ensure that risks to children are fully understood and addressed.

Children in care, adopted children and young people leaving care benefit from teams of highly committed, ambitious and determined professionals and carers, who work well together, helping them to remain safe and achieve well in life. The local authority is a highly ambitious corporate parent. There is a palpable sense that staff across all directorates want to do the right thing. Work to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments is critical and necessary, particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children coming into care. Planned transitions for disabled children and care leavers need to happen earlier.

What needs to improve

- Planned transitions and closer collaboration with adult services needs to happen earlier for disabled young people and care leavers.
- Timeliness of initial health assessments when all children come into care.
- Alignment and effectiveness of systems that support children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and children missing from home and care, to ensure that children can tell their stories.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: Good

1. Judicious, targeted investment in the newly reconfigured locality-based preventative and support service (PASS) as part of Thurrock's Brighter Futures strategy means that early help is carefully prioritised for the most vulnerable families. The pathway into PASS is clear: a 'team around the family' and well-being model takes a holistic, multi-agency perspective in addressing families' needs. As a result, children and families get the right level of help and protection at the right time, delivered by caring and skilled professionals, and this is making a difference to their day-to-day lives and protecting them from harm. Actions by managers to align performance monitoring, as well as audit programmes with children's social care, are positive developments.
2. Strong partnerships in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) serve to protect children from harm. Thresholds between early help and social care services are well understood. The co-location with children's social workers of many other professionals, such as an approved mental health professional and a specialist female genital mutilation worker, enables highly effective collaboration and timely information-sharing. Proportionate checks are undertaken, and consent is routinely sought, or appropriately overridden, to protect children. Rigorous management oversight of this work ensures that children's experiences are constantly central to timely decisions about the steps needed to help and protect them from harm.

3. Assessments using the local authority's revised model of practice are comprehensive and analytical, and are a vast improvement on those seen during the 2016 single inspection. They are thorough and updated regularly, and they clearly reflect the child's voice. Focused, purposeful direct work is planned well, is done at the child's pace, and ensures that most children understand what is happening. Staff work skilfully to understand parental and family histories and cultures, as well as the impact on parents of mental illness, domestic abuse, poverty and insecure housing. Exceptionally competent examples were seen of social workers sensitively evaluating the impact that these and other vulnerabilities have on parents, while keeping a clear focus on children's needs at the heart of their practice.
4. Appropriate action is taken to safeguard and protect children who are at immediate risk of significant harm. Strategy meetings are thorough, and most involve a good range of agencies. Interventions are proportionate to risk, and, when children and young people need to be safeguarded, actions are taken promptly to ensure that they are protected. For instance, managers took decisive action to protect children who had recently moved to Thurrock and where previous local authorities had failed to act.
5. Child protection conferences are timely. Multi-agency core groups are held regularly; most are used effectively to review and update child protection plans. However, the quality of child in need and child protection plans is not consistently good. A minority of these plans lack clarity about risks, desired outcomes or timescales. Managers are aware of this and have increased their audit activity, which is supporting improvement. Assiduous management reviews and close monitoring of children's cases where child protection plans have been in place for more than a year have resulted in the number of plans appropriately reducing from 253 in 2018 to 144 at the time of inspection.
6. Effective monthly permanence planning meetings and rigorous monitoring and tracking of cases under the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline are preventing drift and ensuring timely decisions about applications to family courts. Increased risks to children are escalated swiftly. Plainly written 'letters before proceedings' ensure that parents understand the local authority's concerns. Where necessary, care proceedings are initiated quickly to ensure that children are not subject to neglect and other damaging home conditions for too long.
7. Leaders and managers have facilitated a range of evidence-based improvements, making a discernible difference to helping vulnerable children and their families sustain change. For example, additional investment in solution-focused 'families first' child in need teams, and in 'families together' edge of care teams, is resulting in persistent relationship-based work that is making a positive difference, enabling very vulnerable young people to remain living securely with their families. This effective and authoritative practice, while recent, adds value and leads to better experiences for

children. A culture of listening to children, understanding their world and acting on their views is increasingly embedded in practice across all teams in Thurrock.

8. Senior leaders have recognised the need to strengthen the operational coordination of information and alignment of systems to monitor and assess the impact of work with vulnerable adolescents and children at risk of exploitation. Having commissioned an external review in August 2019, they have put an appropriate action plan in place to drive improvement. While information on missing children is circulated daily to managers, leaders accept that the response to children who go missing or who are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation is not yet strong enough for all children. Return home interviews do not take place routinely. Therefore, some children do not have the opportunity to tell their story. However, social workers know children well and work tirelessly to help and protect them from harm. Safety planning for a small number of children needs to be sharper. This was an area for improvement in the 2016 inspection.
9. Effective strategic relationships with multi-agency partners have resulted in the successful disruption of known perpetrators who criminally exploit or traffic children and vulnerable adults. Gang injunctions have been issued and gang members have been constrained, imprisoned, or moved out of Thurrock. Online abuse is taken very seriously. Young people across schools and colleges have responded positively to the reintroduction of 'Walk Online' roadshows, a programme which covers broader safeguarding issues, including online exploitation, knives and offensive weapons, and the impact of gangs. The dangers of radicalisation are understood well by the local authority and partner agencies. The Prevent referral pathway is clear, simple and easy to use. A heightened level of awareness, particularly on the part of schools and colleges, is helping to protect children and young people.
10. Effective arrangements for identifying and responding to children and young people who are privately fostered helps protect them and ensure they are appropriately cared for. Private foster carers have the same access to training and support as other foster carers. Privately fostered children are seen regularly and are seen alone. Young people who present as homeless have their needs carefully considered and are very well supported to return home or to move to alternative provision.
11. The operational response to allegations made against adults who are working with children in a position of trust is rigorous. More work is needed to improve awareness-raising with partner agencies. Children and their families benefit from prompt, proportionate and effective help and protection out of hours. Communication with daytime services is good.
12. Until recently, disabled children and their families did not consistently get the right level of help and support from children's social care. Action by senior

leaders has strengthened management oversight for these children. Risks and safeguarding concerns are recognised, and children's cases are stepped up appropriately when needs change and a more intensive social work response is required. Assessments are updated routinely. Skilled social workers understand children's unique needs and find ways to communicate with them to ensure that services are attuned to their specific wishes. Work with adult services and other professionals to support young people into independence does not happen early enough. Further work is required to ensure that plans are of a reliably high standard.

13. Children who are electively home educated and those missing from school benefit from effective management oversight and interventions. Leaders quickly act where there are safeguarding issues.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: Good

14. Most children come into care either on a planned or voluntary basis or through the application of a court order when efforts to protect them at home have been unsuccessful. Children of all ages are safeguarded, and care orders for older adolescents are sought when appropriate. Children and young people benefit from help and support provided by dedicated, ambitious and determined professionals who work well together, helping children to remain safe and achieve well in life. Permanence planning for children in care is tightly managed and is effective in ensuring stability and avoiding drift. When children need alternative long-term care outside their families, joint plans are tailored carefully to their individual needs. Decision-making is timely, and prompt action is taken to ensure that children have good-quality stable homes together with their brothers and sisters.
15. Social workers know children well. While some children have experienced too many changes in staff, most children are able to build trusting relationships with new workers and their foster carers. Social workers visit regularly, and they spend time encouraging children to talk about their concerns or worries. For instance, when children are reluctant to engage with other professionals, social workers learn the relevant skills and work through the issues with the child. Respectful, tenacious work by staff who really care about helping children is helping them to recover from the trauma they have suffered.
16. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) work diligently with social workers and carers to support children to express their views. They visit children, listen carefully to what children would like to happen, and take swift action to make changes. Most review minutes are easy to read and understand. IROs are a valuable source of continuity in children's lives. They rigorously review children's care plans and provide effective critical challenge. Case recording is clear and up to date, and the voice of the child is consistently evidenced. Inspectors saw many examples of creative and sensitive work helping children

to come to understand why they cannot live with their parents or extended families.

17. Children are settled in their placements, including those who are living outside the local authority area. They are well supported by carers and other professionals and most are doing well. Children and their carers socialise and spend time doing fun things together. Faced with a long waiting time for access to child and adolescent mental health services, the local authority proactively commissions emotional help and support services. Responding quickly in this way to assist children and their carers is increasing emotional resilience. This is enabling children, particularly adolescents with complex needs, to remain settled in the same placements. Increasing numbers of young people remain living with their foster families after 18.
18. Social workers regularly update their assessments for children in care, ensuring that they are child-centred, comprehensive and analytical. Bespoke intensive support provided by the families together team enables children to return home safely to their birth families. Advocates are used effectively when children need them. Staff listen to and act on children's views and aspirations. They arrange family contact sensitively and support it well, respectfully taking account of parents' wishes. For example, when parents are in prison, staff visit and seek their advice about how they should communicate this to their children. Children regularly access a wide range of activities, such as brownies, rugby or gymnastics. Apps are being used well to help children express themselves, and there is evidence of creative and imaginative direct work, including work, in some cases, to help children understand and make sense of their life stories.
19. Routine, sensitive planning for children to enable them to live with family members is a real strength in Thurrock. Staff complete initial viability and risk assessments promptly, helping to reduce disruption and allowing children to remain within family settings with people whom they know and trust. They use connected care arrangements well to provide children with safe and effective care while parenting assessments are ongoing. Most connected carers are well supported to care for children, and a number have decided to make applications for special guardianship orders. The local authority guarantees that special guardians and children will receive support that is equivalent to that given to other care givers.
20. A significant increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children entering care and a relatively high percentage of older children in care present specific challenges. Many of these young people have suffered neglect and trauma, some are estranged from their families and others have been known to agencies for many years. Frontline staff skilfully build relationships with these children. They work in collaboration with partner agencies to ensure that they can access personalised help and support. However, delays in completing initial health assessments are a critical issue

for this group. Although leaders are working with health colleagues to resolve the delay, the pace of change is too slow.

21. The court team is emerging from a very difficult period, during which high levels of staff turnover have had a negative impact on the quality and timeliness of applications in the family courts. Currently, good-quality parenting and connected carers assessments contribute to effective and timely permanence plans for children who are unable to live with their parents. Anonymously profiling children whose plan is for adoption before placement orders are made has proved to be highly effective in ensuring that prospective adoptive families are identified early and quickly matched with them.
22. Children and carers benefit hugely from highly experienced and dynamic social workers and senior managers in Thurrock's fostering and adoption services. Staff take great pride in their work. Foster carers and adopters are positive about the support they receive. Excellent therapeutic support is available for foster carers and adopters. Trauma-based learning is integral to the authority's extensive fostering and adoption training programmes.
23. Since moving its adoption service back in-house in 2018, the local authority has widened the adoption options available for all children who need them, not just babies and toddlers. A creative, far-reaching recruitment strategy is increasing the range of placements available to meet children's diverse needs. The assessment process is well organised and responsive. Senior managers listen to and regularly consult with foster carers. Foster carers use their expertise to influence the organisation in a positive way. Their input during training and recruitment events, initial visits and mentoring of new carers is invaluable. Extensive investment in life-story work is greatly appreciated by adopters and birth families. This work is being extended to children living with special guardians and foster carers.
24. All children in care have an up-to-date personal educational plan (PEP). This is a useful tool to ensure that the right support is provided to meet children's education needs. The virtual school is very effective in supporting the achievement of children in care, getting them the help and support they need to do well. Staff quality assure the personal education plans that schools use to support and monitor pupils' academic and social progress. Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are strong. At key stage 4, they are improving year-on-year. Staff encourage children and young people to participate in their PEP meetings. They acknowledge their views and respond to them quickly.
25. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training over the age of 19 is high. However, for those aged 17 and 18, it is lower than it should be. Leaders recognise this and have recently moved responsibility for these pupils back to the virtual school. It is too early to see the impact of this change.

26. The transition from child in care to care leaver is not as seamless as it needs to be. The quality and effectiveness of early pathway planning is variable. Some young people don't have an up-to-date pathway plan. Others, who are clearly vulnerable, do not have a current risk assessment. Although personal advisers (PAs) attend 16-year-old children in care reviews, there is little evidence of meaningful involvement from the after-care team until young people are approaching their eighteenth birthdays. Capacity has been an issue. The local authority has employed four additional PAs and a senior practitioner to address this gap, but it is too soon to evaluate the impact.
27. Care leavers spoke positively and with genuine warmth about PAs who help them realise their ambitions. They have access to employment, training and apprenticeships delivered by enthusiastic staff via the inspire hub. At the time of inspection, 26 young people were attending university. Care leavers who originally arrived in this country as asylum-seekers benefit from the support they receive from a PA whose personal experience of the asylum-seeking process gives him a unique insight into the trauma, challenges and practical obstacles that young people face. Extensive corporate investments mean that all care leavers have access to customised high-quality accommodation up to the age of 25 years. There are no children under 16 in unregulated provision. PAs visit young people who are in custody regularly and they support them well when they are released from prison.

**The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families:
Good**

28. Effective and stable senior leadership has led to considerable improvement in the quality and impact of social work practice for children in need of help and protection, those in care and care leavers since the Ofsted 2016 single inspection. Although some improvements are recent, services are now good, with many examples of exceptional child- and family-centred practice. Good governance arrangements are firmly in place, ensuring that the senior leadership team and elected members communicate regularly and effectively.
29. The assistant director and the recently retired director of children's services (DCS) in children's social care have shown remarkably strong leadership, addressing considerable deficits in practice reported at the last inspection. Together with the unstinting support of the current interim DCS, the chief executive officer, elected members and strategic leads, they have created a culture of high expectation, support and challenge. Listening to children and acting on their views are practices that are becoming strongly embedded in practice.
30. Leaders know their communities well. They have focused on co-designing services based on what local people need. Senior leaders promote a strong ethos of participation and advocacy. They ensure that children's and

professionals' views are at the centre of their work. Strategic and corporate arrangements are congruent with this vision, providing a clear understanding and shared approach to prioritising and meeting children's needs. The senior leadership team and elected members demonstrate a collective determination to provide high-quality services that improve outcomes for vulnerable children. They are connected to frontline practice and have a good knowledge of individual children. A palpable sense about wanting to do the right thing fosters an open learning culture, and allows leaders to engage readily in internal and external reviews and challenge. For example, a review of the poor adoption performance resulted in them bringing the service back in-house.

31. Successful workforce planning and staff development in Thurrock have increased the number of frontline practitioners supporting children. This has increased capacity to sustain a good-quality service and is a substantial improvement since the last inspection. Leaders have tackled staff competence issues and have helped practitioners and managers who were resistant to raised standards to develop the requisite skills or to move on. While this has meant that some children have experienced changes of social worker, the quality of practice is stronger as a result, and recent action by managers is improving staff stability. Newly qualified social workers receive exceptional support. A strong emphasis on developing and nurturing all staff encourages more to remain in the local authority. A diverse workforce of practitioners and managers who reflect the local community is a real strength, leading to better engagement by young people and their parents.
32. The local authority takes its responsibility as a corporate parent for children in care very seriously. All directors across the council have had corporate parenting training. Work to improve support to the children in care council is positive. Elected members are ambitious for children and young people in their care and have ensured that their vision for outstanding quality services is underpinned by appropriate financial resources. This provides a sound basis for good service planning and provision. Active engagement with local and international businesses based in Thurrock is successfully securing apprenticeships and jobs for children in care when they leave school.
33. Performance management is well established and is a priority. Monthly development boards which are chaired by the DCS undertake regular analysis of data and monitor progress against priorities. The lead member also provides detailed scrutiny. Managers use weekly performance and audit information effectively in most service areas. Some of the developments are recent, and the changes, while showing positive and continuous improvement, need to embed further. There is no complacency. Instead, a strong culture of continuous learning, professional accountability and responsibility enables staff to flourish in a safe but challenging environment.

34. Staff consistently feel well supported in their work and their professional development by highly visible, approachable and involved managers at every level. Senior leaders take the time and trouble to nurture talent. There is a tangible culture of professional accountability and respectful challenge devoid of blame across teams. Morale is good. Supervision is frequent and mostly effective.
35. Social workers and managers are fittingly proud of the work they are doing in Thurrock. They know their children and families very well and speak with passion and enthusiasm about the often exemplary work they undertake with them. They work in an environment where caseloads are manageable and where leaders support them to do their jobs effectively.



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

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7 January 2020	ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Head Start Housing: Progress To Date	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: All
Report of: Tiffany Bright, Skills Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Local Authorities have a duty, as a corporate parent, to ensure continued involvement in supporting young people as they leave care and move into independence until they are 21 years of age (or up to 25 years if specific, targeted support is required). Thurrock is committed to ensuring that care leavers (CLs) and children in need receive targeted support in high quality accommodation.

Young people in care and leaving care can be highly vulnerable and at risk of experiencing multiple accommodation moves, and/or in the case of young people leaving care, are at risk of becoming homeless.

Head Start Housing (HSH) was formally launched in December 2018. This is a joint initiative between Children Service and Housing. The team comprises 4.5 officers, as part of the Inspire offer. There are 2.5 FTE Housing Officers, 1 FTE business administration apprentice, 0.5 FTE Commissioning Officer and 0.5 FTE Mediation Officer.

HSH sources and manages a portfolio of accommodation for young people either in care or in the process of leaving care.

The HSH Strategy aims to return all care leavers (CL) to Thurrock by December 2023. This is so they can be better supported by more visits from their After Care Personal Advisor, can easily access the plethora of local services, diverse education and employment opportunities and regular access to networks of family and friends.

Preparing CL for adulthood remains a key priority for Thurrock Council. HSH has been created to provide a solution for CL accommodation.

The aim of this report is to provide Corporate Parenting with an overview of progress to date and to make some recommendations for further enhancing the service.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Continue work on cross directorate specifications for services covering estate agency, repairs, storage and floating support;**
- 1.2 Continue work with Housing to purchase up to 12 beds for exclusive use by CLs;**
- 1.3 Create and promote innovative ways to engage CLs to evaluate the HSH service, as well as develop basic maintenance and cleaning skills;**
- 1.4 Continue reducing costs, improving quality, maximising cost avoidance, regularly reviewing/modifying processes and developing effective working relationships with partners to further extend the portfolio of properties;**
- 1.5 Continue work to develop joint protocols, enable consistent use of terminology and templates for services from 16 years+ and positively contribute to other directorates' strategies.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Early pilot findings

- 2.1.1 In March 2016, Children's Services and Housing designed a pilot to test HMO's for vulnerable young people, either in employment or working towards or at risk of losing their job on account of unstable accommodation.
- 2.1.2 The first property, 4 bedroom in Chadwell St Mary, accommodated two males and 2 females. Three were in employment and one was working towards employment. Out of hours support was provided on a one to one basis and in group sessions and the early success lead to the modification of a second property.
- 2.1.3 The second property, 3 bedroom, also in Chadwell St Mary, accommodated three males. Two were in employment and one had an offer of employment. Out of hours support was provided and this was successful for nearly a year.
- 2.1.4 Changes to tenants lead to anti-social behaviour and the first property withdrawn for use. One tenant returning home, from the second property, lead to anti-social behaviour and crime by the remaining tenants who were both detained in prison. The second property was returned to housing stock.
- 2.1.5 Considerable learning has been applied from the pilot to inform the Head Start Housing strategy, 2018 - 2023.
- 2.1.6 The aim is to return all CLs to Thurrock by December 2023. This is so they can be better supported by more visits from their After Care Personal Advisor, can easily access the plethora of local services, diverse education and

employment opportunities and regular access to networks of family and friends.

- 2.1.7 HSH sources and manages a portfolio of accommodation for young people either in care or in the process of leaving care.
- 2.1.8 Housing made a commitment to provide 6 beds each year, by 2023 for exclusive use by CLs. So far, the LA has provided 8 beds, with below market rental costs applied. 12 further beds are expected to be purchased by end April 2020. This makes use of Right to Buy receipts, increases LA owned housing stock and makes a positive contribution to the Housing Reduction Act 2017.

2.2 **Progress to date**

- 2.2.1 Once a dedicated team was appointed, a review of properties took place. This led to properties being handed back, the procurement of properties, repairs and maintenance for others, whilst developing effective working relationships with the tenants.
- 2.2.2 Over the past 10 months, 16 properties (14 out of borough) have been handed back. 17 beds, in borough, have been procured and, latterly the weekly rental charge includes essential furnishings, water rates, wifi and cleaning tools. This is designed to reduce the CL's outlay from their Setting Up Home Grant, enable online access to courses/employment, working with the communal cleaning contractor to learn how to keep the property clean, reduces the amount of property in storage and, an added benefit of reducing the number of financial transactions for the Finance team.
- 2.2.3 Robust negotiations have significantly reduced the average weekly rent paid in 18/19. An update will be provided after close of this financial year.
- 2.2.4 HSH Mediation has worked with more than 100 young people and their families to delay/avoid homelessness. This intervention is very successful with more than 87% positive outcomes. The calculation for cost avoidance will be provided after close of this financial year.
- 2.2.5 Robust negotiations on repairs, furniture, infestation treatments, gardening etc amount to further cost avoidance. Figure will be provided after close of this financial year.
- 2.2.6 A close working relationship, with a key contact in Housing, has led to the donation of furniture (left behind in garages by residents that had lived in LA accommodation) for exclusive use by CLs. This ranges from settees, numerous chests of drawers and coffee tables, outdoor furniture, dining tables and chairs. If HSH had paid for these items, a conservative saving of £1,000 has been made. Since then, more colleagues have learnt about the programme and we are receiving donations on a regular basis. The items are used to make the accommodation more comfortable for the CLs.

- 2.2.7 HSH works closely with After Care who have been working hard to prepare CLs for social housing in Thurrock. Housing have been working hard to provide accommodation for priority band residents.
- 2.2.8 The voice of the young person is integral to the way HSH operates. HSH attends Placement and Transition Panels to understand and plan for pipeline demand. A referral form is completed by the social worker or personal advisor (After Care) and HSH consider the young person's needs, available properties, risks of co-habitation and much more, before offering viewings.
- 2.2.9 A straightforward, easy to understand, licence agreement is explained to the young person, as well as house rules and a 'What's where guide' is in development, to help the young person settle into the area. The CL, if not in employment, is supported to sign up for universal credit, with the housing element paid direct to HSH. This reduces the amount of time, the CL is receiving £57.90pw, from After Care and offsets rental costs to HSH.
- 2.2.10 HSH provides a suitable, temporary housing solution for CLs allowing them a safe space to develop skills/transition into adulthood. It provides move on and 'move back' opportunities if the accommodation is too much for the young person to manage.
- 2.2.11 As of 6 December, HSH provides accommodation for 60 CLs. HSH is working with After Care to move on 7 CLs in the next two months. HSH is preparing for 9 new arrivals, either from foster care, residential care or prison. HSH works closely with a range of external partners to extend the portfolio of beds.

Property size	No. of properties types in portfolio	Additional skills development support from external partner	CLs accommodated
1 bedroom/self-contained unit	33	31	11
2 bed	8	4	16
3 bed	2	-	5
4 bed	3	-	12
5+ bed	3	-	16
	49	35	60

- 2.2.12 Close working, with colleagues in Procurement, Commissioning and Housing has led to the creation and implementation of quality assurance templates (using national good practice), a contract issued for cleaning the communal areas of HSH properties, an invitation to tender young parents accommodation and support, hostel accommodation and support.

2.3 What's Next

- 2.3.1 Single specifications are being prepared for estate agency services, repairs and maintenance, climate controlled storage for CLs' belongings between tenancies and floating support.
- 2.3.2 Continue working alongside Housing to review the suitability of properties for sale so £1.3mn is maximised to provide up to 12 beds, for exclusive use by CLs. A robust process for identifying and shortlisting properties before a cross directorate review including a surveyor, before viewings and offers made, is in place. Once the properties are ready for occupation, we should be in a position to realise rental income from these beds.
- 2.3.3 Making use of the engagement portal and other methods, HSH will develop innovative and perhaps, incentives for CLs to provide feedback, learn new skills (light maintenance and cleaning). HSH is in negotiation with Mears Group and the dedicated Careers Advisors, CL into EET to provide a programme of learning during monthly open sessions at Inspire Youth Hub. An automatic invitation, to the trade skills programme run by Mears Group, will be extended to CLs.
- 2.3.4 An automated compliance notification system would be useful. Design discussions with an ICT Business Analyst stalled after he left the organisation, but would be exceptionally useful to enable efficient 100% compliance.
- 2.3.5 HSH will continue working with partners to extend the property portfolio to meet demand and provide 'move back' opportunities.
- 2.3.6 HSH will continue reviewing systems and processes, making modifications as required to ensure a high quality service is delivered to CLs.
- 2.3.7 Continued work, cross directorate, to develop joint protocols, standardise templates and consistent terminology for services provided 16+ years, should provide a coherent transfer across services and improve young people's understanding of their entitlements and how to access them.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 ICT hardware and software utilised is prohibitive eg. HSH takes photographs as inventories; before and after repairs as a record of condition for future reference. The android phone functionality is very limited and taking too long to resolve. Limited and any such issues can take too long to resolve.
- 3.2 Despite an active recruitment process, the After Care team is still under resourced. In practical terms, this means that a request for accommodation is made, HSH identify options and there is a delay with the information we need to provide it.

3.3 Research and working in partnership with CLs and other local authorities, with Ofsted ratings of outstanding, will continue so we continue improving the service.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and use the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of HSH's services, on behalf of CL.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 There is no additional information for the committee as part of this report.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 This report relates to the council priorities: People, where all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay; and Prosperity, a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

This report asks that the Committee notes the work involved in providing suitable accommodation to CLs. The responsibilities of HSH do not cross over to the work of After Care. The growing demand for accommodation, including financial support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker (UAS) children, often with no recourse to public funds is impacting on the budget. The growing demand for a diverse range of services has been absorbed by Inspire Youth Services ability to secure funding for tailored provision.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Strategic Lead Legal Services & Deputy
Monitoring Officer

Any joint working arrangements between a children's services authority and a housing authority for CLs' transition to independent living should include ensuring the delivery of effective preparation for independence with planned, sustainable moves into supported or independent accommodation. Local processes and/or practices do not involve CLs routinely being treated as homeless when care placements come to an end in order to place the

housing authority under an obligation to secure accommodation under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which came into force in October 2001 and gave Local Authorities the statutory duty to provide significantly **enhanced** leaving care service, with the intention to raise the quality of our support to that of good parents.

"Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. The local authority responsible for their care should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need, which will include offering them more than one chance as they grapple with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood." Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers.

The main purpose of the Leaving Care Act 2000 is to:

- Delay young people's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready;
- To improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care;
- To provide better personal support for young people after leaving care;
- To improve the financial arrangements for care leavers.

Relevant legislation:

1. Local authorities have a duty to offer **Personal Adviser** support to all care CLs towards whom the local authority had duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989, up to age 25 - irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes CLs who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request such support. This includes suitable accommodation;
2. There is a duty on local authorities to explain housing options as part of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017; and
3. The Leaving Care Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to delay discharge from care until ready through personal support.

The ultimate aim of HSH is to provide CLs with suitable accommodation (safe, secure and affordable) so they can commit to study/employment, develop positive networks in the community, have good health and contribute to society; whilst improving quality, turnaround times and reducing costs to the local authority.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Community Development and Equalities Team
Manager

Supporting CLs with suitable accommodation is a significant function for Thurrock's most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Decisions are based on each young person's needs, including equality and diversity, SEND and emotional health needs.

The Authority recognises the importance of ensuring that young people who are leaving the care system can and should have access to the offers available locally. They are positively discriminated for priority housing and, by being in borough can access a full range of offers and services to lead to sustainable employment. We are working cross directorate, in an holistic way, to provide CL's with the best life chances and ensure that they have a voice that is heard and shapes the provision.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children.

There are no other implications as a result of this report.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

8.1 There are no background papers to this report.

9. Appendices to the report

9.1 There are no appendices to this report.

Report Author

Tiffany Bright
Skills Manager

7 January 2020	ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Intensive Foster Carer Training Action Research	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

One of the roles of the Virtual School is to provide training to a range of colleagues including social workers, designated teachers and foster carers. This training includes providing information which enables those professionals to support the educational outcomes for Children Looked After [CLA].

The Virtual School Headteacher [VSHT] is currently participating in an exciting new professional qualification for Virtual Schools which explores support for a range of colleagues who support children in care. .

This two year course is being provided by Bath/Spa University and the National Association of Virtual School Heads [NAVSH]. The VSHT's attendance on this course is being funded through Thurrock's Continuous Professional Development programme. This course will ultimately lead to the VSHT for Thurrock obtaining a Masters Degree in Professional Practice for Care Experienced Children.

A key element of the course is to complete a piece of action research which relates to the role of the Virtual School Head. The focus of this particular subject was chosen based upon prior research into the impact that foster carers can have on promoting the educational outcomes for children in their care. The title chosen by the VSHT for this action research is 'What is the impact of a structured training programme, with a focus on key educational information, on improving the confidence and knowledge of foster carers to support children in their care?'

Details of the specific expectation and statutory guidance for training can be found in the document 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The Committee support the structured training programme to be delivered to foster carers which is provided annually by the Virtual School;**
- 1.2 That the Committee sets an expectation that all Thurrock foster carers attend the training to improve their knowledge and confidence to support the education of the children and young people in their care.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The main aims of the action research were to:

- Create a structured programme of training which included power points, video clips and paper based and online resources which could be delivered by the Virtual School team
- Provide carers with a folder of useful resources, information and documents which could be kept for future reference
- To – provide carers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to promote the education of the children in their care.

2.1.1 The programme was delivered across 20 working hours. This was achieved by providing 4 weeks of sessions which totalled 16 hours, plus the option of a further 4 hour session to cover any subjects that a carer may have missed due to missing any of the preceding 4 weeks.

The participants of this action research were all volunteers obtained from the Thurrock Fostering team. The VSHT attended key meetings of carers to explain the course content and why it was being offered. The dates and times were negotiated prior to the training commencing. It was important that it did not interfere with the crucial times of the start or end of the school day to enable carers to complete 'drop off' and 'pick up' duties.

It was also essential that there was a clearly agreed set of rules linked to confidentiality within the training group in order to ensure that children and carers were safeguarded.

2.1.2 In order to gauge the level of knowledge and confidence that each participant had before the training commenced, a questionnaire was provided for the carers to complete. These were anonymised and carers did not add their names or mention the names of the children in their care. This is was to ensure that the strict ethical guidelines of Bath/Spa University and the General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR] guidelines were adhered to.

At the end of every training session, the carers completed an evaluation of their learning and of the content of the session. This was to ensure that the course content was meaningful, relevant and that the delivery of the training and quality of the resources were meeting the course objectives and the learning needs of the carers.

At the end of the completed programme of sessions, the carers completed the original questionnaire to gauge their knowledge and confidence after the training.

3. Course Content

3.1 The course was specifically written to cover the key components that carers should have knowledge of in order for them to maximise their ability to support their children educationally and to be the daily educational advocate for the children and young people on their care.

3.1.1 The first session incorporated the subjects of: the roles and functions of a virtual school, the role of the designated teacher in schools, the purpose and content of a personal education plan and how pupil premium plus is used by schools and the virtual school to raise pupil attainment.

3.1.2 In the second session the carers learnt about the impact of carers in the education of care experienced children, how the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is used to gauge the mental health of children, how mental health can be supported in schools, behaviour policies and how schools promote behaviour, exclusion guidance and anti-bullying.

3.1.3 The third session comprised of a trauma and attachment overview and how this affects children and young people in school including the ability to learn and develop. The session also covered Special Educational Needs including categories of need, barriers to learning and the Educational Health and Care Plan process.

3.1.4 The final session focussed on the assessment of children and young people from pre-school to A Levels. The areas covered included: the types of assessment methods that schools use, how to judge good progress and the national testing arrangements. The carers were provided with an insight to the types of tests and assessments that schools and other educational settings have. A particular emphasis was made on how children learn to read and how these experiences can be supported in the home.

4. Impact and Feedback from the Carers

4.1 There were originally 8 carers who started the course. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, 2 did not complete all of the course, but they did attend some of the sessions. For the purpose of the action research piece, the data provided by the questionnaires will be focussed on the 6 carers who attended all of the sessions and who completed the on-entry and exit questionnaires.

4.1.1 The questionnaire [Please see Appendix 1] was designed to establish the degree of knowledge and confidence that the carer had before and after the course. For each questionnaire completed, there was an increase in the carers' self-score in terms of their own knowledge, understanding and confidence. This would suggest that the course content covered the areas that carers need to have knowledge of in order for them to support their CLA. There was a consensus among the group that the training needed to be provided by an educational professional who knew the content of the subjects covered as well as being able to answer supplementary questions that arose during discussions. One carer commented that 'depth of knowledge is really important to offer training properly'.

All participants welcomed the training and felt that there was a need for a structured training programme. One carer wrote it 'gives confidence to carers to challenge the school and support the child'. Another carer felt strongly that a programme should be available and during feedback noted, 'much of the training for foster carers is based on care and well-being, very little (if any) is re – education'.

4.1.2 Each training session had an evaluation form to be completed at the end of the session [Please see Appendix 2]. When asked 'What is the most significant piece of learning you have taken away from today's session?', comments included:

'Understand my role as a carer and responsibilities of professionals'

'Bullying policies and how schools should be addressing this'

'Knowledge of exclusion'

'Reminder of impact of trauma'

'Phonics and watching the progress of my young person'

'Importance of reading to babies'

4.1.3 Overall the provision of this training course enabled carers to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence and make them more aware of how important they are in supporting our CLA in educational matters. It was a pleasure working with this group of carers as they were extremely keen and reflective about practice and how it can be developed to improve the educational outcomes for our children and young people.

Moving forward, the Virtual School would like to see this training approach become embedded as standard Thurrock practice for all carers. There would need to be some flexibility for sessions so that topics covered could be delivered in smaller subject areas. The sessions could also be offered more

frequently across the year in order to enable all carers to attend different training over a time period and gradually build up their portfolio.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 Our carers play a very important role in supporting our CLA and young people. The more knowledge, skills and understanding that carers can have in how to support their CLA's education, the greater impact they can have.

6. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance And Community Impact

- 6.1 This report relates to the council priority to create a great place for learning and opportunity.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

This report asks that the Committee notes the level of resourcing used to support foster carers access to training. The Virtual School fulfils a range of functions, and training is one aspect of this. The Virtual School would be providing a significant time commitment to ensure that this training could be offered flexibly across the year and, therefore, it is cost effective if carers were able and encouraged to attend.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Social Care & Education

This report asks that the Committee notes the outcomes, and offer its commendations, taking into account in so doing the various contextual influences described by the report author. No decision is required. The Council is required by s22(3A) of the Children Act 1989, as amended, to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended s22 to require the Council to appoint an officer to ensure that the duty is properly discharged. There is statutory guidance "Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children" that must be followed in meeting this duty.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead Community Development & Equalities

Supporting the equality of access for carers to attend training is essential when providing training. Resources and teaching styles, will be adapted to support needs. Access arrangements should be in place for carers.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children.

There are no implications as a result of this report.

8. Conclusion

8.1 In summary, the above report details the action research project which was conducted by the Virtual School Head. As a result of the positive feedback from the participants, the Virtual School are now requesting that there can be a structured approach for foster carers to access training to develop their knowledge and confidence to support their children and young people in education.

9. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

9.1 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018

10. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - Foster Carer Questionnaire

Appendix 2 - Foster Carer Session Evaluation

Report Author:

Keeley Pullen BA (Hons), PGCE, NPQH

Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

Foster Carer Knowledge and Confidence Questionnaire

Date:

What would you like to find out about as part of this course? (please write in the box below)

The first set of questions focuses on knowledge

Using a scaled score, please circle your level of knowledge linked to the following educational aspects for children looked after.

0 means no knowledge, 1-4 some basic knowledge, 5-8 good level of knowledge, 9-10 excellent level of knowledge.

The role of the Virtual School

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The role of the Designated Teacher

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The purpose of the PEP

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Pupil Premium Plus Grant

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How children learn to read

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How children and young people are assessed in education

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What the appropriate stages of progress are for my child

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Behaviour and Exclusions Legislation and practice

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Expectations for schools linked to mental health and well-being

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Supporting with homework

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is there anything else you want to find out about? (please write in the box below)

The next set of questions focuses on your confidence

0 means no confidence at all, 1-4 some confidence, 5-8 good level of confidence, 9-10 very good level of confidence.

Supporting with homework

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Voicing your views in a PEP meeting

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Knowing what questions to ask at meetings in school

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Supporting with homework

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Being the daily first point of contact for schools

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Dealing with the difficult and unexpected conversations in school

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How to support your child with educational matters

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thank you for completing this part of the questionnaire. All answers are confidential and will be used to support your development of knowledge and confidence.

Is there anything else you would like to share or tell the instructor?

Do you feel there is a need for a structured training programme for foster carers that focusses on educational matters?

Please explain your answer below

Do you think it makes a difference if it is delivered by an educational professional or can it be delivered by other members of the local authority?

Please explain your answer below

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. All answers are confidential and will be used to support your development of knowledge and confidence. This will be repeated at the end of the course

Foster Carer Evaluation Form - Session 1

Date:

Using the scaled rating please evaluate the session for today.

Please circle

Content of the session

Poor 1-3

Fair 4-6

Good 7-9

Excellent 10

Quality of Resources

Poor 1-3

Fair 4-6

Good 7-9

Excellent 10

Development of own knowledge

Poor 1-3

Fair 4-6

Good 7-9

Excellent 10

Presentation Style of the facilitator

Poor 1-3

Fair 4-6

Good 7-9

Excellent 10

What is the most significant piece of learning you have taken away from today's session?

What will you do with this knowledge?

Are there any other comments from today?

Thank you for completing this evaluation and well done and thank you for your contributions.

7 January 2020	ITEM: 9
Corporate Parenting Committee	
The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After – Academic Year 2018-2019	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Raising achievement in all areas of education for our Children Looked After [CLA] is a key priority for Thurrock Council. The Virtual School monitors and supports the educational progress and outcomes for CLA irrespective of where they are placed, in or out of borough. The Virtual School is responsible for pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and this includes those who have left care during an academic year.

The annual report of the Virtual School Headteacher details the broad scope of services provided. Additionally it contains the Department for Education [DFE] validated attainment outcomes for pupils in the Virtual School cohort for 2017 - 2018 for those pupils in care for one year or more. Indicative data outcomes for 2018-2019 are also included. The annual report has been presented to and approved by the Virtual School Governing Board as part of the meeting held on 14th November 2019.

This Corporate Parenting report details a brief overview of the content of the annual report and should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **The Committee notes the non-validated DFE outcomes of the summer 2019 teacher assessment, tests and examinations and commends the pupils, their schools and parents/carers on their achievements;**
- 1.2 **That the Committee notes that prior attainment for pupils will impact on attainment in later years and CLA in care have made good progress;**

1.3 The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2018-2019 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate and if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all CLA.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The target for Thurrock Children Looked After is for them to be improving year on year and to meet the expected standards. The target is to close the attainment gap between CLA and non-CLA and to be above national outcomes for all CLA. This was achieved in 2016, 2017, 2018 and indicative data suggest that this has been at least maintained in 2019.

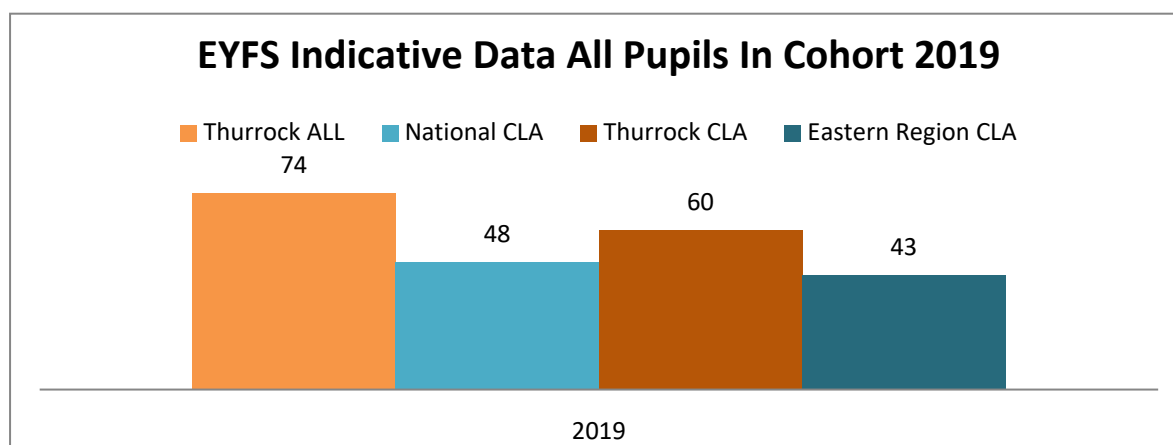
2.1.1 The year groups to be reported are outlined as follows:

Early Years – Foundation Stage [4-5 years old]
Year 1 (5-6 years old)
KS1 (6-7 years old)
KS2 (10-11 years old)
KS4 (15-16 years old)

2.1.2 The annual report should provide the Committee with detailed information regarding the broad scope of work of the Virtual School. The aim of the report is to provide members with a greater depth of knowledge in order to enable the Committee to challenge. Please refer to Appendix 1.

3. Attainment for Children Looked After

3.1 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS age 5)



The diagram above illustrates the performance of Thurrock CLA against national and Thurrock non-CLA pupils. Thurrock looked after pupils are consistently performing above national and eastern region looked after children. There were 5 pupils in the cohort who were in care at the end of the academic year, however, only 1 pupil had been in care for 12+ months.

A challenge for the Virtual School is linked to the transition of children in this year group moving in and out of care. We work closely with social care to ensure that there is a clear sharing of information and that the right support is put in place within the schools as soon as the child comes into care.

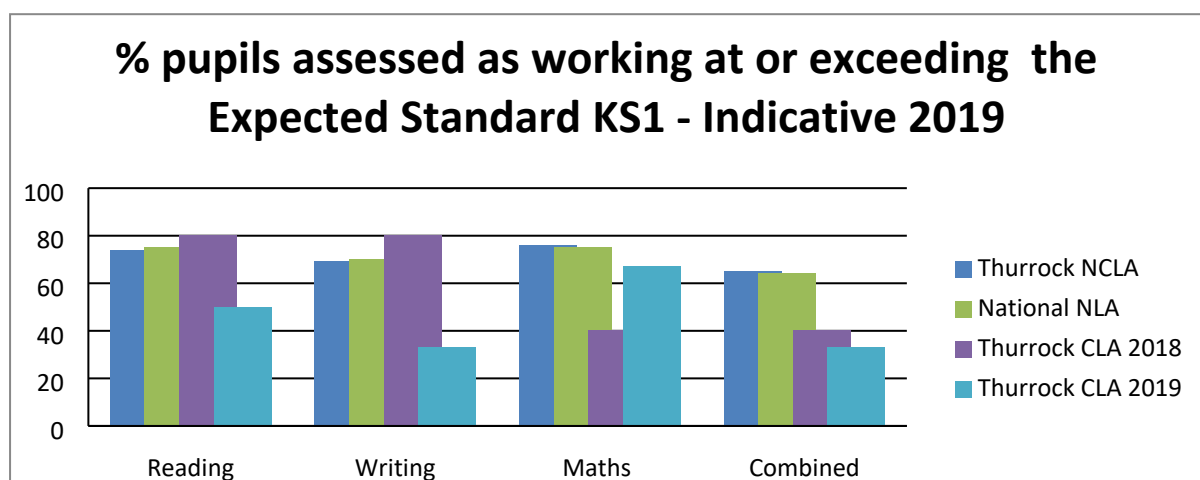
Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the EYFS 2019 data

- Ensure that transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils as they move into Year 1
- Monitor pupil progress through the use of the Pupil Premium Plus allocation and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided based upon needs
- Create provision maps for each child with their school to detail rates of progress and impact of interventions
- Support the application of Education Health Care Plans for those SEN support pupils who are not making rapid progress
- Provision of the Literacy Book Trust home learning resources and phonics learning packs to Nursery and Reception age pupils
- Provide educational advice and support for children moving out of care to ensure continuity

3.2 Year 1 Phonics Screen

As noted in the annual report, attainment in the phonics screening check was low for this year. In response to this, the Virtual School have purchased phonics resources for them to use at home which are linked to developing recognition, synthesis and segmentation of letters and words. These games and practical approach should support the work they complete in school. For those pupils who are finding phonics difficult, their schools should be providing group interventions and so careful monitoring of pupil premium spending and support is a key aspect of the work the Virtual School are completing for our Year 1 pupils.

3.3 Key Stage 1 Results

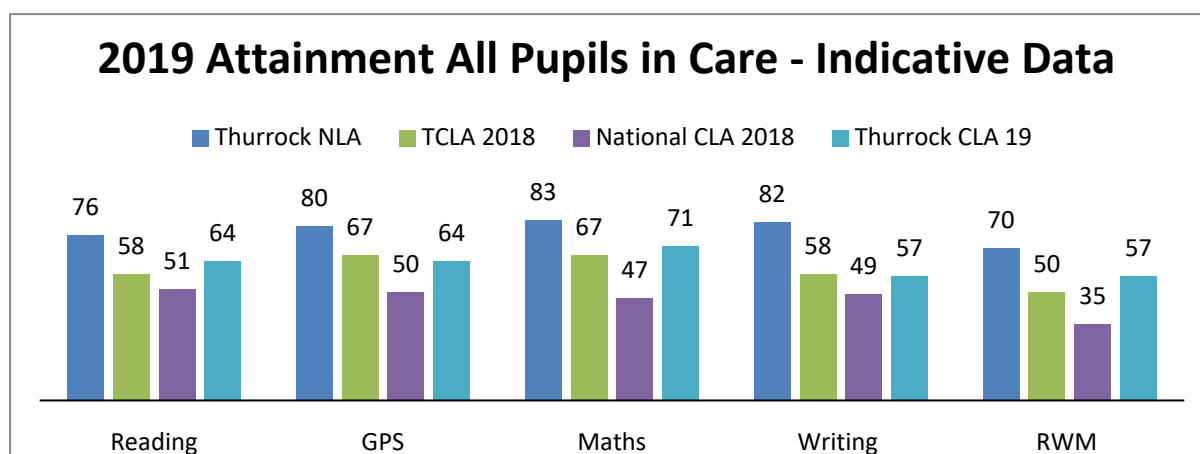


The above data is based upon a cohort size of 6 pupils. Analysis of this data indicates that Thurrock CLA have performed better in maths than the previous year but have performed less well in reading and writing compared to previous year. This is indicative data and includes all 6 pupils in the year group irrespective of the time in care. Challenges for Key Stage 1 included, 1 child was disappled from completing the tests due to their SEND needs and low academic level. Turbulence of the cohort should be considered as 3 pupils became CLA in this academic year including 2 who have been looked after since May 2019. Therefore, this data may change once the validated data is available as some pupils have entered and left care during the academic year.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- Provision of home learning packs from Literacy Booktrust to support learning at home.
- Monitor progress for current year 3 to check that those who did not meet the expected standard are being appropriately supported.
- Provision of writing support packs in the home to support writing activities at home with carers

3.4 Key Stage 2 Results



The cohort size for 2019 was 14 pupils. There were 3 pupils who were disappled from the SATs this year. These all had an EHCP. For Thurrock CLA the statistics for those achieving the expected standard were as follows: reading 64%, GPS 64%, maths 71% and writing was 57%. Combined scores for reading, writing and maths [RWM] were 57%. The indicative results show that there have been improvements in reading and maths and RWM combined. There has been a slight decrease in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS) and writing. Thurrock CLA are closing the gap overall for RWM against Thurrock all children. A comparison against prior attainment shows that the children made good progress. This will be better shown once the validated data is available.

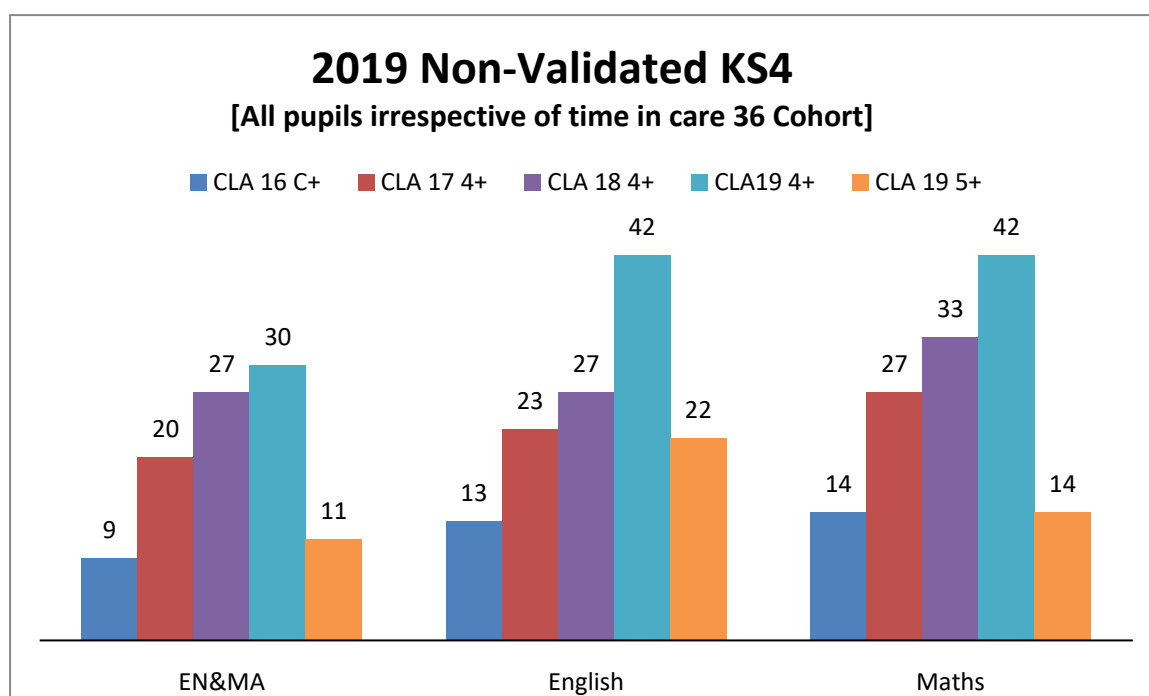
Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- Identification of those who did not achieve Expected and support transition into Year 7
- Provision of Literacy Book Trust resources for Primary phase pupils
- Support for those pupils in Year 7 who have SEND to ensure that the provision is matching need
- Provision of Year 6 tuition from October 2019 for those children currently in Year 6.

3.5 Key Stage 4 GCSE

More pupils have achieved Grade 4+ than in the previous 3 years indicating an upward trend. Grade 4+ has made good improvements. More improvement is needed for pupils to achieve grade 5+ as this has remained the same in English but slightly declined in maths and combined from the 2018 validated data.

GRADE 4 + and 5+ - all children in year 11



Improvements have been made for attaining grade 4 and 5 in English. An area for development would be maths. However, this will be in line with the national picture due to the changes in the maths exam this academic year. Potential Challenges for this year groups included those 7 students [20%] did not sit formal GCSE qualifications. This is a reduction compared to the previous 2 years of data. Additionally 13 pupils [39%] of the cohort had SEND needs with 7 pupils [20%] with EHCPs. These students did not achieve above grade 4 in their exams if they were eligible for GCSE. Those students who have SEND Support took qualifications matched to their individual needs with

some able to sit GCSEs. Despite not reaching grade 4 or above, they did meet their target grades to enable them to enrol at colleges for post 16 courses.

At the beginning of the academic year of the 19/2020, only 8.3% of the Year 12 cohort are NEET at the beginning of the term.

Planned interventions to support KS4 as a result of 2019 data

The Virtual School will continue with key actions that were begun last year and some additional measures are being taken.

We are continuing to:

- Attend Year 10 and Year 11 PEP meetings
- Ensure that schools provide robust Pupil Premium Plus information
- Link the quality of the PEP with release of Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Triangulate data predictions with further evidence such as work sampling
- Provide support for Post 16 pathways
- Targeting tuition for particular students who are on the cusp of 4/5/C grades which will be additional to that received by the Pupil Premium Plus in school
- Complete home visits for particularly vulnerable students
- Provide intensive pastoral support alongside their school for high priority cases for those at risk of poor performance due to social and emotional difficulties
- Provide Year 11 with revision stationary packs for the start of the autumn term
- Visit year 11 pupils – not within a PEP meeting – to listen to their views.

4. Summary of Analysis for all Key Stages

4.1 What are we doing as a result of this year's performance?

- Provision of Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to those aged between 3-13
- Provision of tuition for year 11 which started in the summer term of year 10
- Conducting termly school visits for key year groups of children and those who are not making expected progress
- Evidencing the work of the Virtual School through visit notes and case notes
- Evidencing outcomes for individual targets for every pupil to measure progress
- Continuing the interventions and key actions developed over the previous year to build upon good practice and successful outcomes.
- Embedding the use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires [SDQ] for every pupil from year R to 17 years old and triangulating scores with other professionals to identify specific intervention
- Provision of tuition for year 6 pupils

- Provision of revision packs for year 11
- Provision of phonics and reading resources for Reception, year 1 and year 2 pupils
- Provision of attendance awards for those pupils with outstanding attendance records.

5. Additional Information for the Committee

5.1 Detailed within the annual report is an overview of progress towards last academic year's school improvement priorities.

Key Headlines Include:

- The Virtual School Headteacher is particularly pleased with the improvement in attendance rates to be above the national average for all schools
- Successfully implementing the use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires within the Personal Education Plan which aids conversations about social and emotional mental health. This means that better support is provided to those pupils who need it
- The compliance rates for the completion of Personal Education Plans remains in the high 90s. This means that more pupils have a relevant, up to date education plan
- Successfully training a group of foster carers to enable them to feel more confident to support their children and young people in education matters
- The Virtual School Headteacher completing a Post Graduate Certificate of Education in Professional Practice linked to Care Experienced Children
- Strengths of our relationships with schools both in and out of the borough

5.2 A key challenge this past year was the increase in fixed term exclusions. Although this data is related to a small group of students and we did avoid permanent exclusions, it is still an area that needs to improve in the forthcoming year. The Governing Body for the Virtual School have drafted a letter which will be sent to Headteachers who have high levels of exclusions for our Children Looked After. The Virtual School team members continue to support individual pupils to reduce exclusions and ensure that the right support is provided in school.

5.3 The annual report [Appendix 1] details a wide range of the work that the Virtual School does and the various agencies that we work with. The Virtual School is very proud of the achievements of our Children Looked After. It was fantastic to see that celebrated at the recent awards ceremony at Orsett Hall in October 2019. It was also very pleasing to see our hard work acknowledged during the recent Ofsted of Children's Services.

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and use the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of the Virtual School on behalf of Children Looked After

7. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

- 7.1 This report relates to the council priority to create a great place for learning and opportunity.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

This report asks that the Committee notes the increasing demand of services for Children Looked After and the range of services provided as detailed in the annual report. The responsibilities of the Virtual School have increased to support those in pre-school and in post 16 as a result of the changes to the Statutory Guidance in July 2014. The growing demand for services, particularly for those who are post 16 and/or needing alternative provision for their specific needs has had an implication on spending and budgets. This is reflected in the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus top slice which is evidenced in the annual report.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Strategic Lead Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

- The Council has a statutory duty under Section 22 (3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the education achievement of looked after children. It has a further duty to appoint at least one person to for the purpose of discharging the duty in Section 22(3A). The person appointed must be an officer employed by Thurrock Council or another local authority.
- The Council also has a duty under Section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 to make advice and information available to relevant children in the Council's area for the purpose of promoting their educational achievement. Relevant children are, in essence, previously looked after children. The Council has a duty to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging this duty. The person appointed must be an officer employed by Thurrock Council or another local authority.

- These duties are subject to statutory guidance which is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This means that the guidance must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. This guidance forms part of the background papers listed below.
- The person appointed by a Local Authority to discharge these duties is known as the Virtual School Head or VSH. The Council needs to consider the corporate parenting principles set out in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- There is no decision required by the Council. The report assists the Council in providing assurance that it is discharging its statutory duties.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Community Development and Equalities Team
Manager

Supporting the improved educational attainment of Children Looked After targets Thurrock's most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Individual plans are informed by each young person's personal needs, including equality and diversity as well SEND and emotional health needs.

8.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

There are no implications as a result of this report

9. Conclusion

9.1 In summary, the above report details attainment outcomes for those in care during the academic year 2018-2019. All of our Children Looked After achievements should be recognised and celebrated and we as a Council will continue to support them in the next stages of their academic journey.

10. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- 10.1 'The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data' ADCS
- 10.2 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018

11. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher Academic Year
2018/2019

Report Author:

Keeley Pullen BA (Hons), PGCE, NPQH

Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

**Annual Report of
the Virtual School
Headteacher
Academic Year
2018/2019**

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1. **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to detail the work of the Thurrock Virtual School and the academic outcomes for Thurrock Children Looked After for the academic year 2018-19.

The data contained in this report uses validated DFE data for 2018 outcomes, which was obtained in March 2019. Current attainment uses indicative data for the 2019 results. Validated data for 2019 will not become available until March 2020.

This report will be provided for the Governing Body to approve in the autumn term 2019 and will subsequently be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

2. **The Role of the Thurrock Virtual School**

A separate document is available named the Roles and Responsibilities of the Virtual School. For the purpose of this report a brief outline will be provided. The Department for Education document: Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children [February 2018] details the roles and responsibilities of Virtual School Heads. In summary it specifies that:

Parents want their children to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential. As corporate parents, local authorities should have equally high aspirations for the children they look after.

As leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their looked-after children, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure that:

- top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and that the authority strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children;
- looked-after children have access to a suitable range of high quality education placement options and that, when commissioning services for them, the authority takes account of the duty to promote their educational achievement;
- VSHs are in place and that they have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively;
- VSHs have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; and
- the authority's Children in Care Council (CiCC) regularly considers the educational experiences as reported by looked-after children and is able to respond effectively to any issues.

The VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's looked-after children, including those placed out-of-authority.

VSHs should ensure the educational attainment and progress of children looked after by the local authority are monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.

The VSH should ensure that there are effective systems in place to:

- maintain an up-to-date roll of its looked-after children who are in school or college settings, and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress;
- ensure sufficient information about a child's mental health, SEN or disability is available to their education setting so that appropriate support can be provided;
- inform head teachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked-after by the VSH's local authority.
- ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP;
- ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes, and that all looked-after children, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP;
- avoid drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive, multi-agency co-operation. Where this requires negotiation with other authorities this should be completed in a timely manner and with the best interest of the child as paramount;
- ensure the educational achievement of children looked after by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare; and
- report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of looked-after children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

[Pages 8 and 9 of Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children DFE 2018]

The Virtual School has overall responsibility for monitoring, supporting and providing interventions to ensure that Children Looked After [CLA] achieve the best possible outcomes. We achieve this by:

- Coordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans [PEP]
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus grant
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of CLA
- Using our tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and ensuring that the correct educational support is provided
- Ensuring that Special Educational Needs or Disability [SEND] needs are identified and supported appropriately
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards
- Providing support and challenge to students, schools/colleges and carers

- Ensuring effective educational transition is in place between schools or specialist providers
- Encouraging our young people to high aspirations about their future and remove barriers to further education
- Leading training for Foster Carers, Designated Teachers, Social Workers, school governors and providing bespoke training where appropriate to educational staff
- Celebrating the achievement of our pupils

Staffing of the Virtual School

Mrs Keeley Pullen – Virtual School Head Teacher

Mrs Grace Page – Virtual School Operations Co-Ordinator

Ms Rebecca Prince – Early Years and Primary Education Adviser

Ms Gemma Lilley – Secondary Education Adviser

Miss Lee-Anne Jenkins – Post 16 Education Adviser

Mrs Tina McGuinness – Administrator for the Virtual School for LAC

Additional Services [commissioned by Virtual School]

Looked After Call – to monitor attendance (this will change to Welfare Call in Sept 2019)

TLC Live – Online Tuition

Fleet Tuition Service – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Equal Education – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Prospero – for provision of 1-1 tuition

3. **Mission Statement**

At the core, is the aspiration to ensure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to learn effectively and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they are able to make informed choices about their futures from a range of options. This range will be at its widest when children succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school.

The Virtual School believes that every child and young person really does matter; every child and young person has a right to a childhood and has the right to a first class education that enhances their life chances as an adult. We believe that Children Looked After and Young People should be given every opportunity to aspire to be the best they can.

The Virtual School provides additional support, advice and guidance over and above the universal services that all Thurrock children and young people can access, alongside direct support to the children themselves. We believe there should be no educational gaps between attainment and potential and there should be a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards.

The main outcomes we want for our children and young people accord with the Thurrock Children and Young People's Plan and are that CLA:

- ❖ value themselves and grow up to be fair, tolerant and supportive, learning to respect others and enjoy the respect of others;
- ❖ are engaged in and are challenged by high quality education and enjoyable learning experiences;
- ❖ are able to show resilience and cope with change;
- ❖ are not disadvantaged by circumstance, poverty, disability or race;
- ❖ seek out and engage in opportunities for self-improvement, with the guidance and support of multiagency teams;
- ❖ achieve recognised and appropriate qualifications in line with their academic potential, so they access a wide range of training, employment and further education opportunities when they leave school, allowing them to take an active and full role in society as adults.

To achieve this, The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools, educational settings and social care to create a high quality experience for Children Looked After and Young People.

4. **Guidance Documents Developed by the Virtual School**

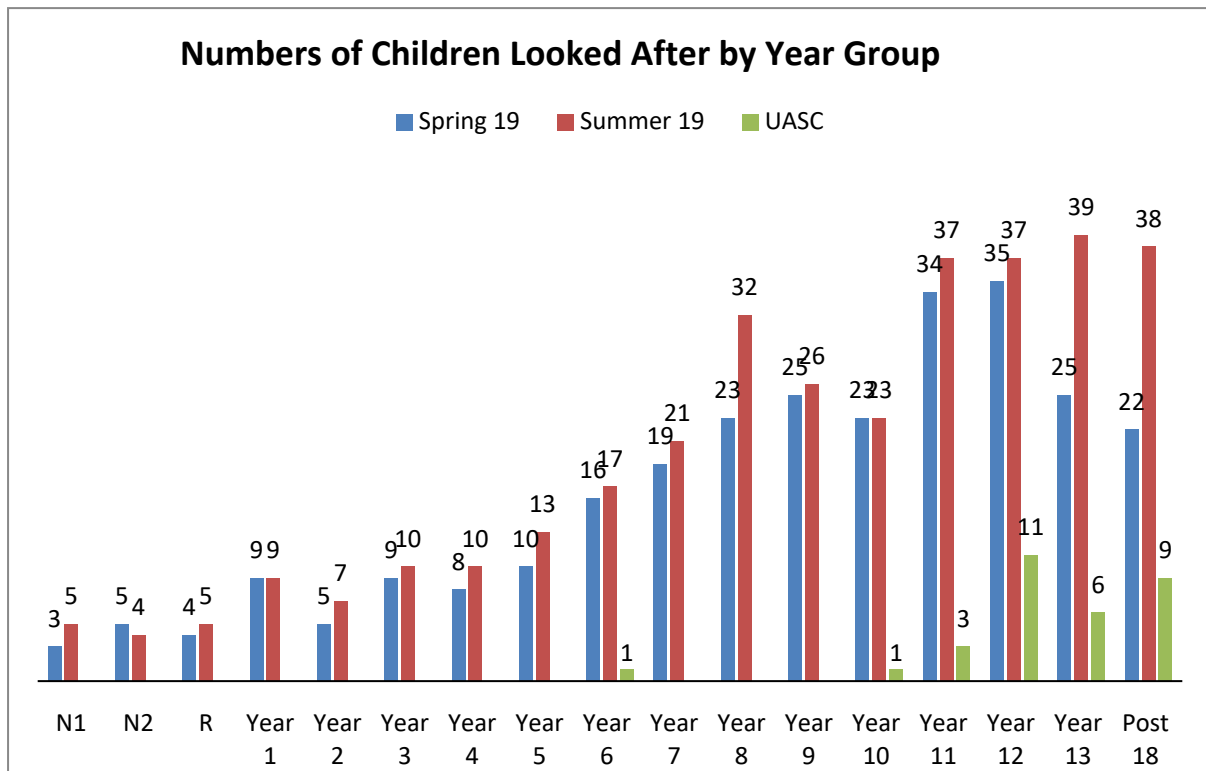
- Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Schools
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Colleges
- Thurrock Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Anti-Bullying Policy
- PEP Protocol for Social Workers and Designated Teachers – Schools, Colleges and Early Years
- PEP Flowchart for Social Workers
- Quality Assurance Process Flowchart
- Quality Assurance Criteria for PEPs
- Completing Attainment on EPEP
- EPEP and Target Setting
- Roles and Functions of the Virtual School
- Phonics Resources Packs for Foster Carers
- Quality Assurance Process of Education Provision
- Social Worker guidance for high quality PEP minutes
- Child Missing Education Policy/Process
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Previously Looked After Policy
- Pupil Premium Spending Strategy Document 2019/2020

Additional Documents:

- School Improvement Plan
- Head Teacher Termly Reports
- Phase Teacher Termly Reports

5. **Corporate Parenting Committee**

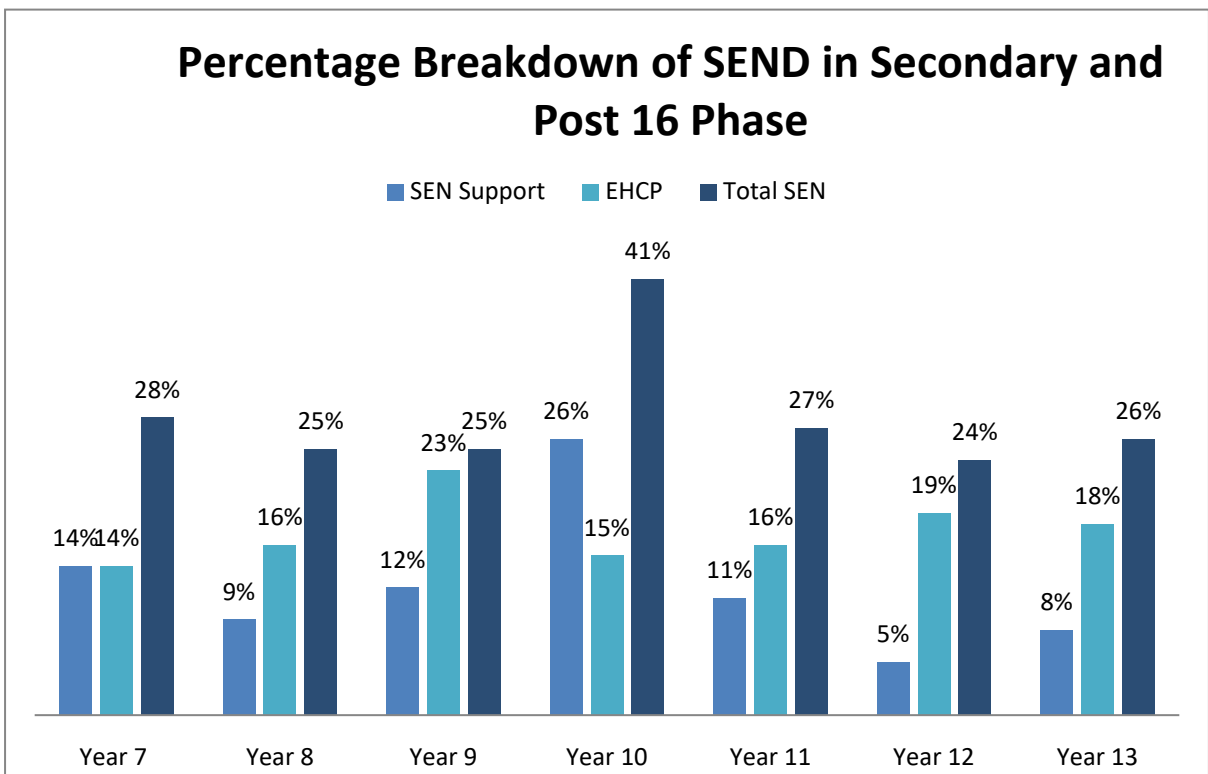
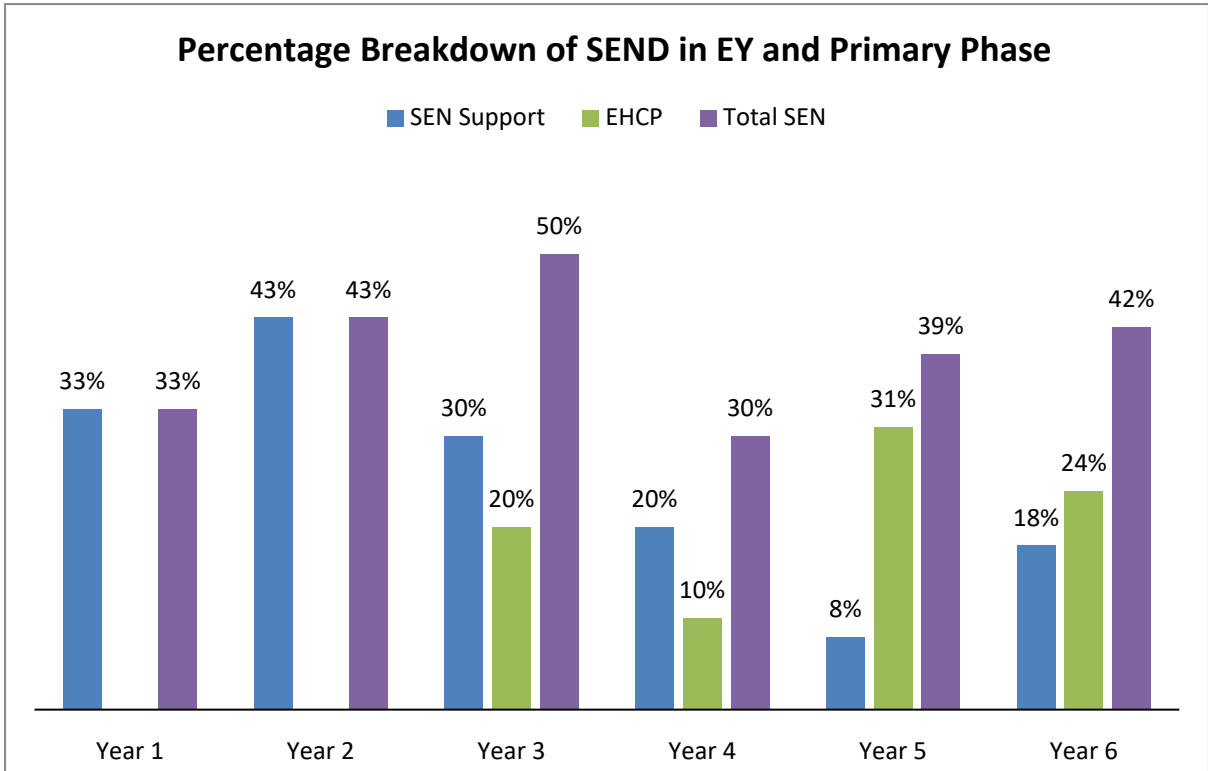
The Virtual School Head Teacher is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for the educational achievement of Children Looked After [CLA]. The Committee comprises 8 Members and exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the children looked after by Thurrock get the best possible service that can be offered. The Committee promotes the role of all Councillors as corporate parents and provides the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people. There are also four Co-Opted Members of the Committee who each possess a range of knowledge and experience in order to advise Members and add to the scrutiny process. These include representatives from the Children in Care Council (CICC), Open Door and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association. This committee meets termly and managers from different sectors of social care and education present reports and recommendations as part of a cycle. This process acts as a measure of accountability and supports the development of strategy and policy for meeting the statutory requirements for children in care.

6. Current Contextual Data**Number of Looked After Children by Year Group [Updated July 2019]****Number of Pupils in Alternative Provision/SEND School/Specialist Provision by Year Group**

N1	N2	R	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5	YR 6	YR 7	YR 8	YR 9	YR 10	YR 11	YR 12	YR 13
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	4	6	1	9	1	0

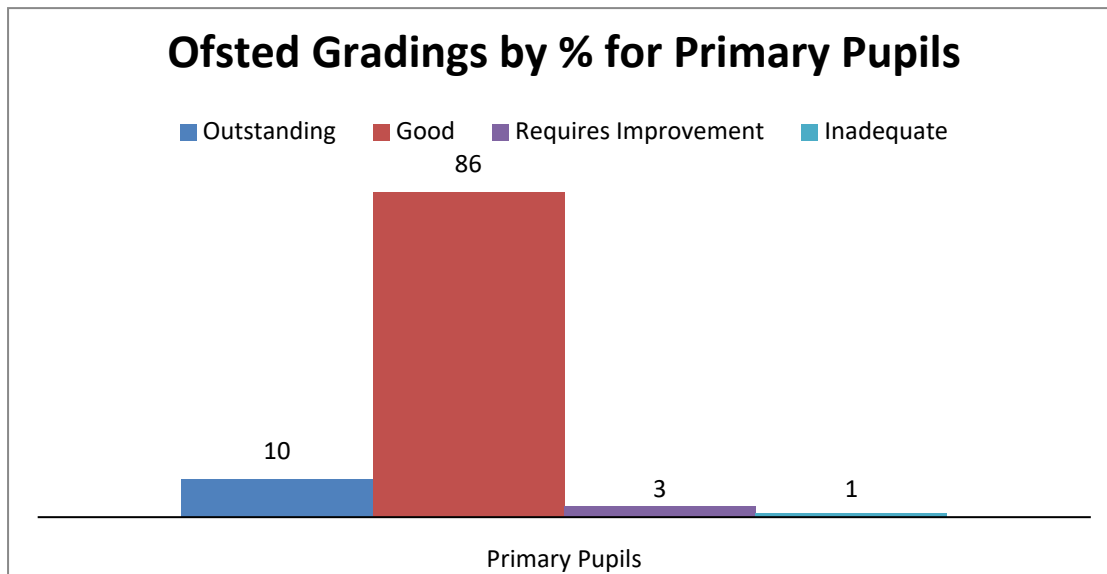
Number of CLA with SEND by Year Group

	N1	N2	R	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR4	YR5	YR6	YR7	YR8	YR9	YR10	YR11	YR 12	YR 13
	0	0	0	3	3	5	3	5	7	6	8	9	10	10	9	10
SS	0			3	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	6	4	2	3
EHCP						2	1	4	4	3	5	6	4	6	7	7

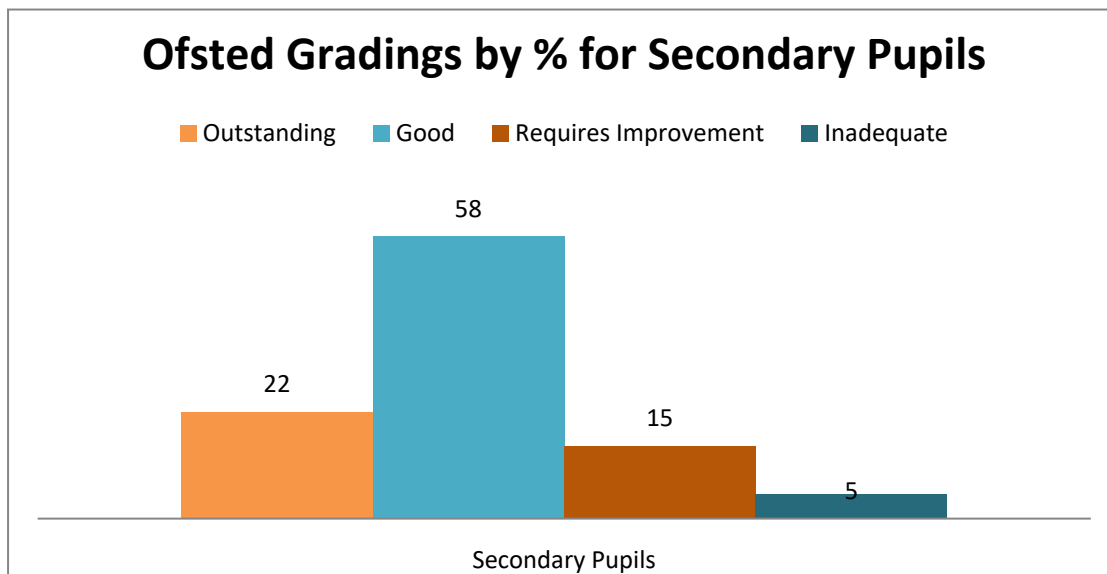


School Placement of CLA by OFSTED classification July 2019

Primary Phase



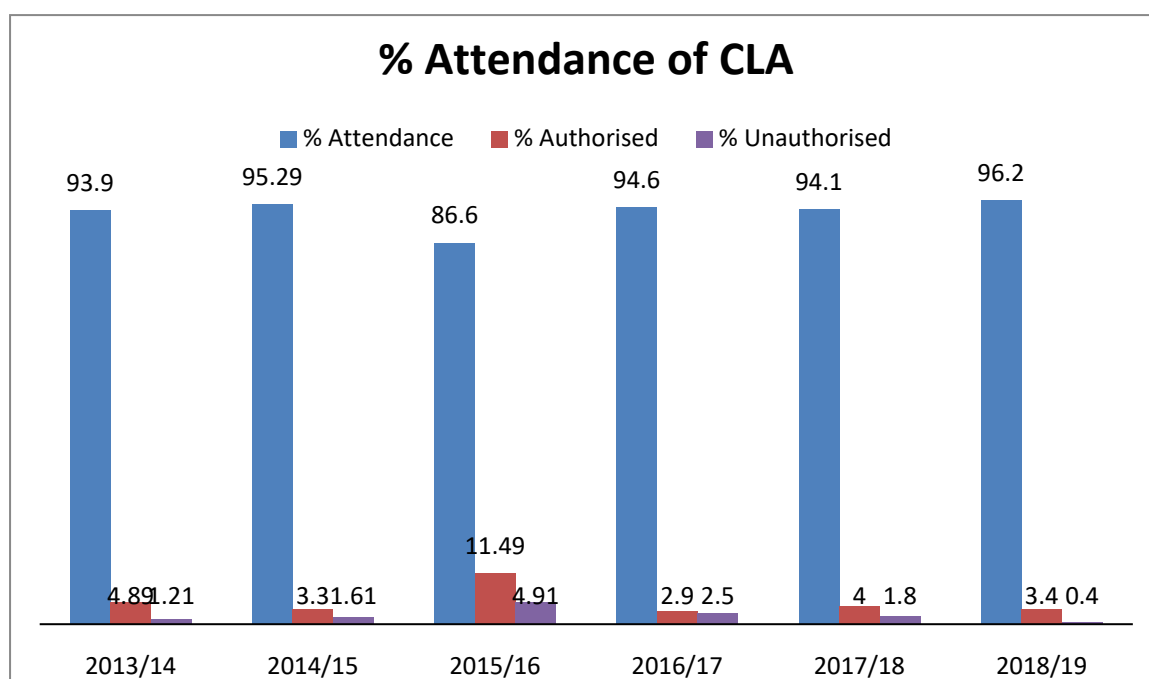
Secondary Phase



Overall School Ofsted Grading Year R to Year 11 is:

- 85.5% of pupils attend a school graded good or above
- 68% attend a good school
- 17.5% attend an outstanding school
- 10.5% attend a school that requires improvement
- 4% attend an inadequate school

Schools graded less than good are visited by the Virtual School every term.

7. Attendance

Robust tracking of attendance is vital in ensuring that good attendance is prioritised. Attendance rates have increased compared to the previous year. Our attendance rates are comparable to all schools. Unauthorised attendance has decreased as has authorised attendance. For the forthcoming academic year, we are striving to remain above 95% and will continue to do so. Prior to the summer term attendance rates were reported to governors as 96.4% with 0.7% unauthorised. Termly attendance data is reported to governors and the key stages are represented individually and then overall attendance rates are also reported.

There were 19 pupils who had persistent absence below 90% this equates to 10% which is in line with the national average for CLA. In the spring term 2019 persistent absence was as low as 5.78%. There are a number of pupils who had poor attendance prior to coming into care and they entered care in the summer term 2019. A pastoral support programme is always put in place for students who are refusing to attend school and the Virtual School works closely with foster carers, social workers and their schools to support the child/young person. Attendance is also discussed at PEP meetings.

Attendance is monitored daily through the use of Looked After Call. The Virtual School Headteacher monitors the attendance of priority CLA as identified by the Virtual School on a weekly basis. Attendance monitoring for all pupils is conducted by the Virtual School Headteacher on a fortnightly basis to identify any concerns. The Virtual School receives daily updates from Looked After Call for any pupil who is absent or excluded. If a pupil is absent and this is unauthorised the social worker and foster carer is contacted by Looked After Call to find out the reason why s/he is

not at school. This system compliments the safeguarding measures that are in place for individual schools and prevents delay when a student may be missing.

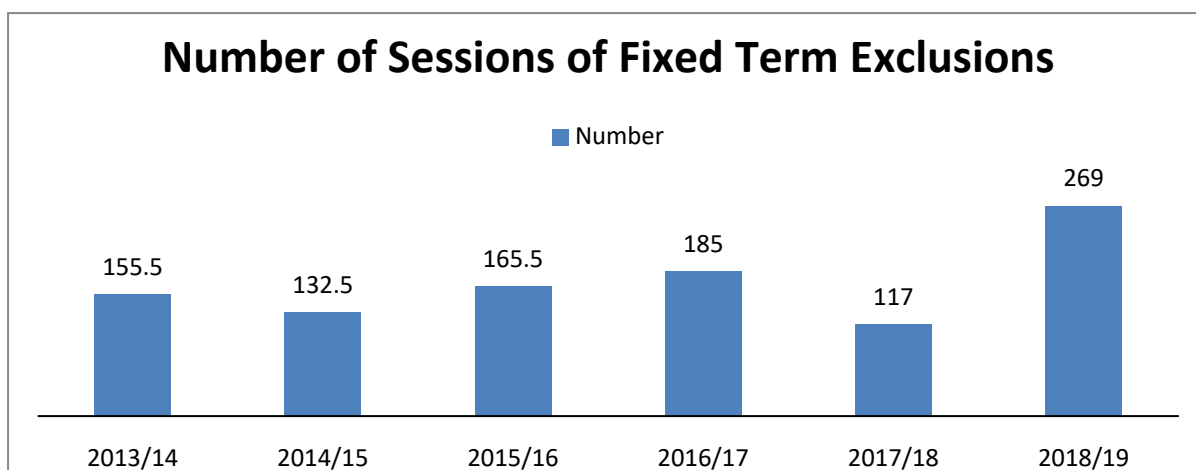
The Virtual School is supportive of the DFE Absence protocols and only supports holiday or absence in term time in extenuating circumstances and supports the school of the particular pupil if they are given an unauthorised absence if planned absence is taken without the school's consent. An attendance policy is in place and this is reviewed by the Head Teacher annually and put forward to the Governing Body to approve.

8. **Exclusions**

There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA for over a six year period. Wherever possible we encourage schools to avoid fixed term exclusions [FTE]. After managing to reduce the FTE rate to the lowest it had been over five year, unfortunately in 18/19 it has increased. A total of 16 pupils have been excluded across the academic year. This equates to 8.2% of the cohort. This is below published national figures of 10% for academic year 17/18. Overall 4.2% of possible school sessions were missed due to exclusion. There have been several incidences of young people with a history of exclusion, who became looked after in the academic year and then being excluded again within a week of going into care. A review of needs and support is always made whenever a CLA pupil is excluded. The Virtual School work with schools to reduce fixed term exclusions, however, some of our pupils are participating in activities that would warrant the need for exclusion. We have managed to negotiate alternatives to exclusion off site through measures such as:

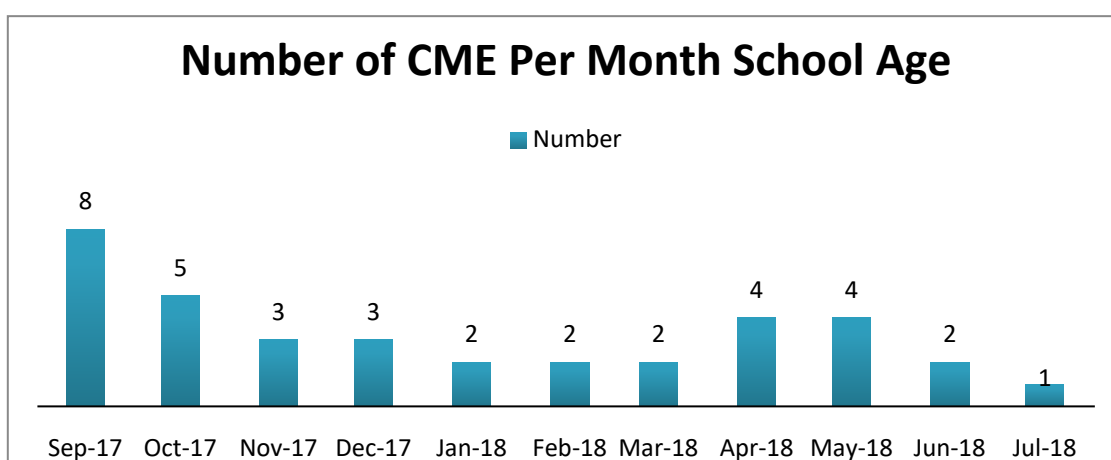
- Internal support
- Action plan meetings when excluded
- Alternative provision

As a result of this increase in data for FTE, the school improvement priorities have been set to reflect this and actions are planned in the School Improvement Plan for 2019/2020. A proactive and challenging approach with Governors as well as Headteacher is being planned.



9. Children Missing Education [CME]

The Local Authority carefully monitors any child missing education for those CLA placed in and out of borough. The Virtual School produces weekly data for any child who is missing education due to lack of a school place or through extended absence. This data is shared and discussed in Directors Management Team monthly. Monthly CME data is available and provided to Governors on a termly basis. The Virtual School takes action which is individualised to meet the needs of the pupils and where necessary, works with the Admissions Team, Inclusion Manager and SEN Service teams in Thurrock and other boroughs to secure school places or alternative provision. For pupils who are without an educational placement, a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting is held to plan actions for how to secure education provision. Wherever possible the Virtual School provides tuition through commissioned tuition services whilst a student is between educational placements. In the academic year 2018/2019 a procedure was written to detail the specific process for the steps taken by all professionals to support the placement of CME in appropriate provision.



The table highlights a fluctuation of figures and this very much depends on the profile of pupils coming into care and whether they have education prior to becoming looked after or if they have to move away from their school due to placement availability in borough. The figures are relatively low, however, the virtual school staff work very hard to access education as soon as they are made aware that there is a child missing education. It is more difficult to access education if a child/young person has Special Educational Needs because due to the consultation process.

10. **Child Sexual Exploitation [CSE]**

Particular attention is paid to Children Missing Education through lack of school place or poor attendance as this is a potential factor for making a pupil vulnerable and higher risk of CSE. The Virtual School works very closely with all services to minimise the risk of child sexual exploitation for our children/young people in and out of borough. The authority holds a fortnightly meeting where a range of partners from health, youth offending services, WIZE Up, the police, mental health, education welfare and education attend. In this meeting all vulnerable pupils are discussed and actions are directed to provide the necessary support. The Virtual School attend Strategy Meetings when required to discuss pupils at risk of CSE and when they are missing from placement. Separate data is available through the social care liquid logic children's system which details every child/young person's CSE risk assessment and actions taken to support them. This data is held and reported separately from this document. The Virtual School is not responsible for collating this data but can access it if required. The Virtual School has a clear Safeguarding Policy which considers CSE as part of this in line with Thurrock processes and policy.

11. **Attainment Data of CLA**

Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS] 2019

Indicative data

The Good Level of Development (GLD) measure is awarded at the end of EYFS when a pupil has achieved at least the expected level in the entire prime areas of learning and in literacy and mathematics.

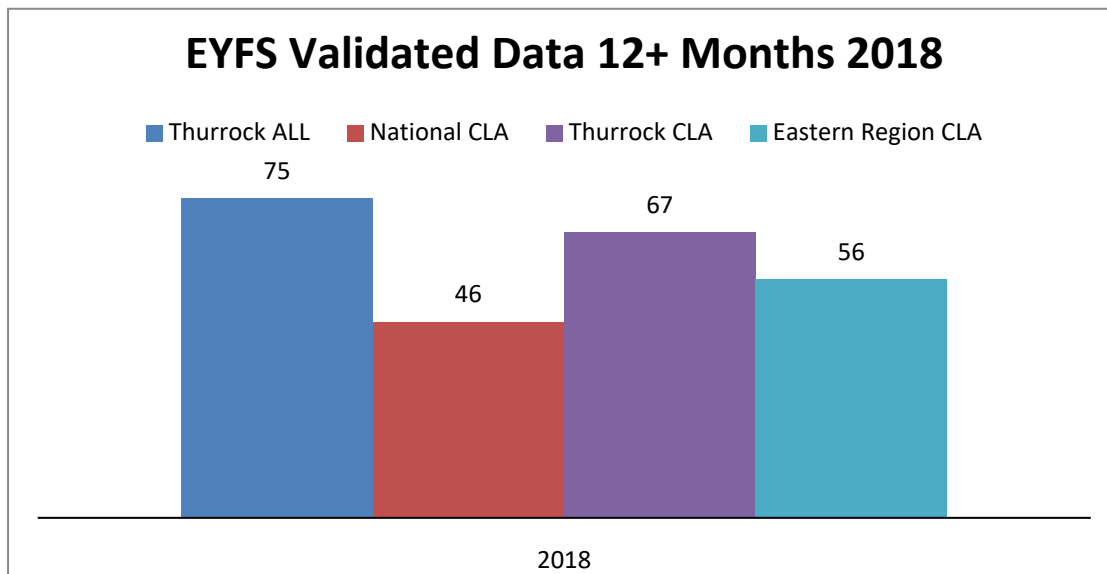
To reach the percentage of children making a good level of development, each child is assessed against 17 Early Learning Goals; whether she/he meets the level, has not yet reached the level or exceeded it and points are awarded accordingly in a range between 17 to 51. If a child meets every Early Learning Goal, she/he will receive at least 34 points.

The GLD has fluctuated significantly over a 6 year period and this demonstrates the uniqueness and small size of each cohort. The size of each cohort shows that each child's result is worth a significant percentage amount. Additionally, Year R has a large amount of movement in and out of care across an academic year. Some pupils

return home or are adopted and some new into care are only looked after for a short period of time as they may move to the care of family relatives.

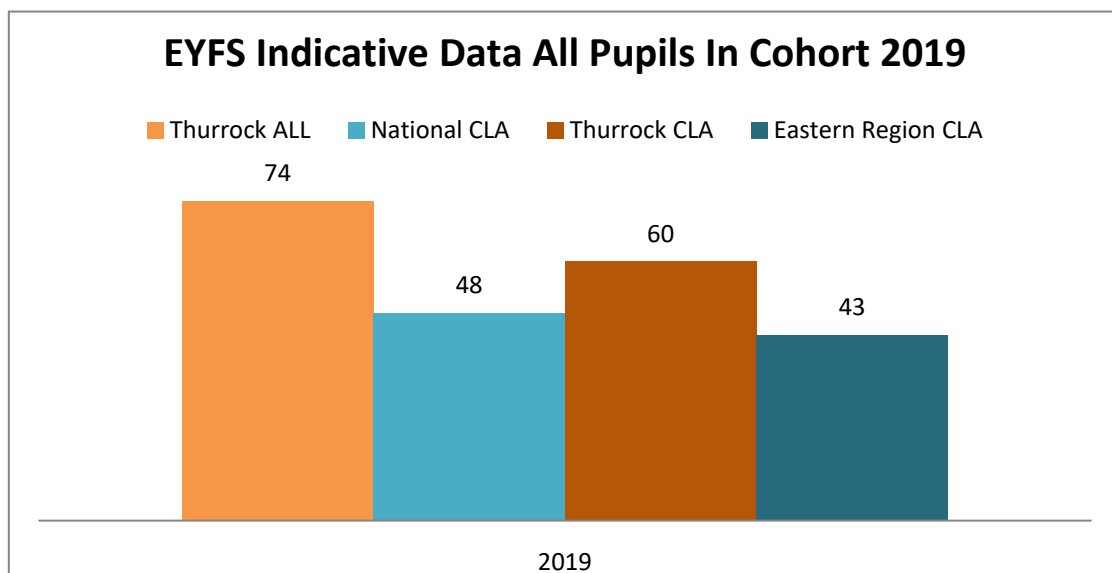
The diagram below illustrates the performance of Thurrock CLA against national and Thurrock non-CLA pupils.

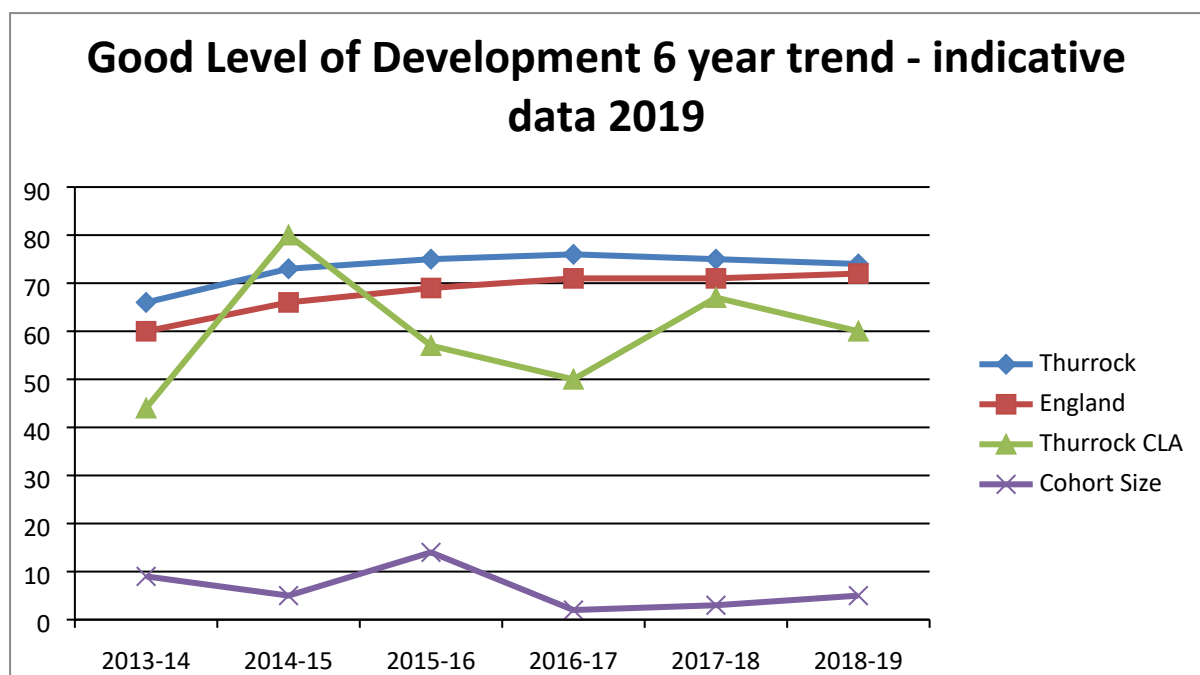
Validated Data 2018 – Pupils in Care for 12+ Months



Validated Data for 2019 will be available for comparison later in the year when this is released by the DFE.

EYFS Indicative Data for 2019





For the 2018/19 academic year the provisional GLD result for Thurrock CLA is 60%. However, this result is based on 5 pupils who were in care at the end of the academic year and does not account for the movement of pupils in and out of care during their reception year. Validated data will be available later on in the year and will be released by the DFE. There was only 1 pupil in the 18/19 academic year that had been in care for 12+ months. This pupil did not achieve GLD due to SEN needs. However, the pupil made steady progress over the year. 3 pupils became looked after in 2019 with a further 1 pupil entering care in the Autumn term 2018.

More clarity in terms of trends will be available once pupils are cross referenced with the SD903 LA census return and made available with the validated data.

In terms of monitoring of progress this was through the Personal Education Plans [PEPs] for each pupil. These took place every term that the child was looked after and detailed the learning and development for every pupil and specific targets were set to enable them to make progress. Pupils made progress across the year by achieving their targets and by the Virtual School holding schools to account for the quality of teaching and support they provided and by the use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus funding. All pupils in this cohort made at least expected progress across the academic year from on entry starting points.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- Ensure that Transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils as they move into Year 1
- Monitor pupil progress through the use of the Pupil Premium Plus allocation and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided based upon needs
- Link with schools needing additional support
- Obtain on entry data for current 2019/20 Year R cohort to enable the measurement of progress.

- Create provision maps for each child with their school to detail rates of progress and impact of interventions
- Support the application of Education of Health Care Plans for those SEN support pupils who are not making rapid progress
- Provision of the Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to Nursery and Reception age pupils
- Provision of phonics learning pack for carers to use at home with Nursery and Reception pupils.

Year 1 Phonics Score Results 2018

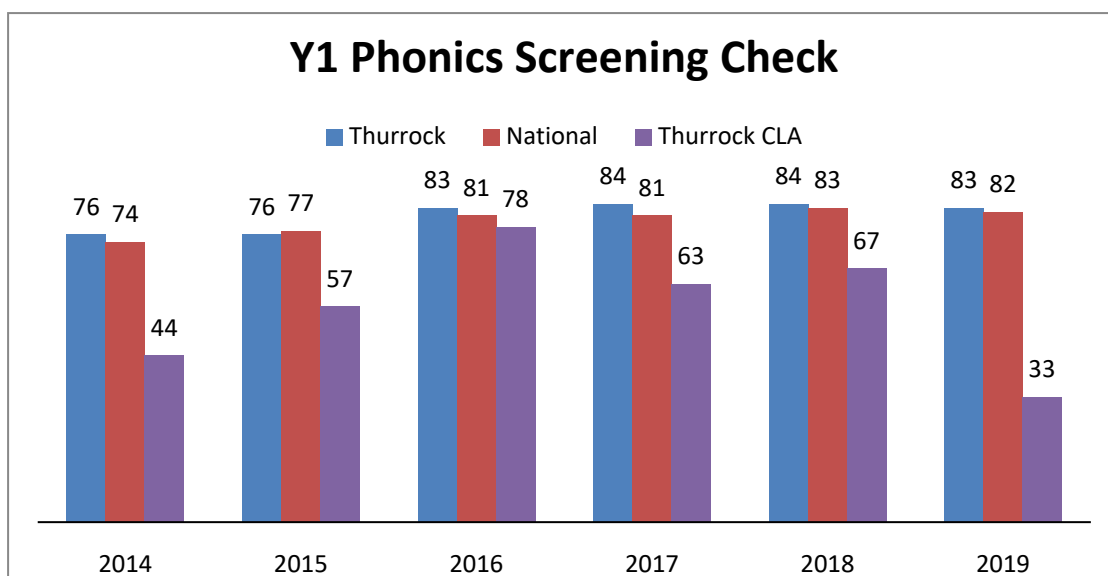
The year 1 phonics screening check is undertaken in June by all year 1 pupils.

The percentage of children who reached the expected standard has decreased compared to the previous year. The cohort sizes are small year on year.

This is illustrated in the table below

Year	Total Cohort Size	Number who passed
2015	7	4 pupils – 57%
2016	9	7 pupils – 78%
2017	8	5 pupils – 63%
2018	6	4 pupils – 67%
2019	9 – 3 were disapplied	2 pupils – 33%

The data is declining. The 33% score is based upon the 6 pupils who were able to take the phonic screen as 3 were disapplied from the test due to their low levels. There were a further 2 children who scored 31/40 and so were on the cusp of the 32 pass mark. They will be expected to pass the Year 2 screen next academic year. Out of the 9 pupils in the cohort only 4 (44%) had been in care over 1 year with the remaining 66% coming into care in the academic year. Of the cohort 44% have an identified SEND need. Out of the 6 pupils who had been in care for 12+ months, 2 (33%) were disapplied as noted above. Of the remaining 4 pupils, 2 (50%) passed the screening test. This score is lower than national CLA and Eastern region CLA for 12+ months. This issue will be addressed in the School Development Plan.

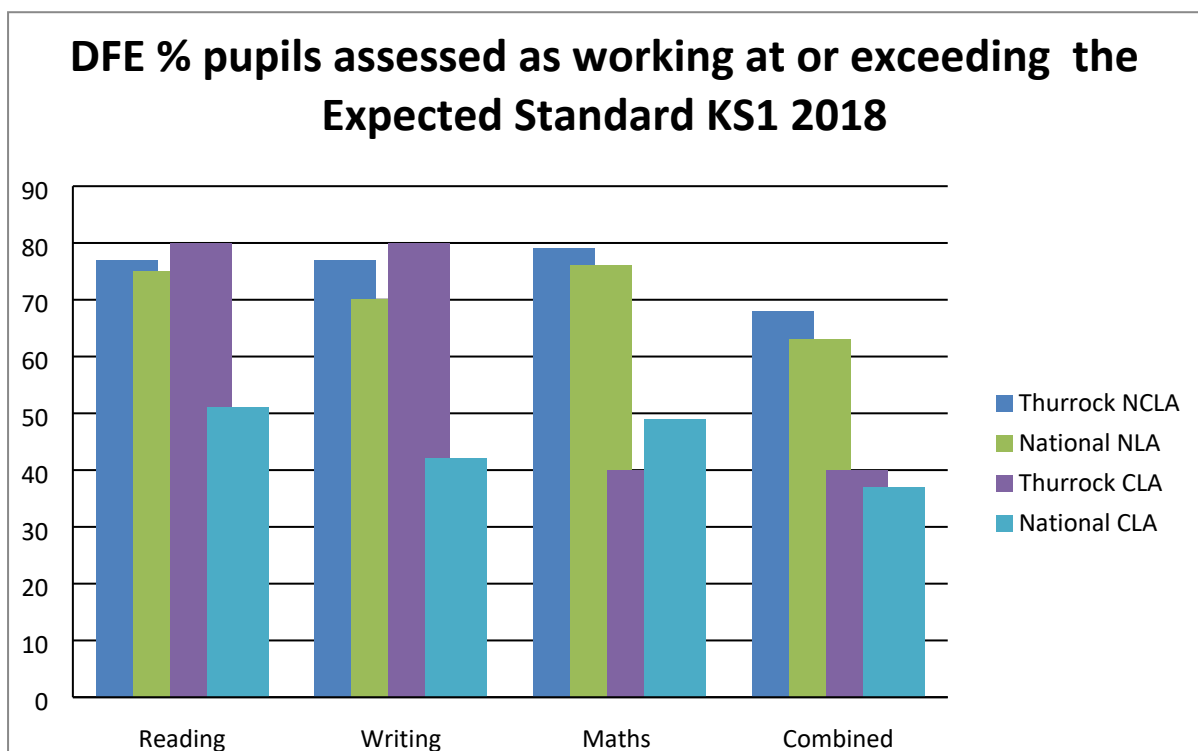


Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- This year the Virtual School has already spoken with the schools of the pupils who have not passed and planned interventions are in place for Year 2.
- Continue this forthcoming academic year with the provision of Phonics home learning packs
- Provide phonics training to foster carers to enable them to support at home
- Provide at home phonics games for children to access electronically
- Provision of reading and phonics activities to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 through the Literacy Booktrust initiative. [This is detailed further on in the report]

Stage 1 (age 7, year 2) 2018

Validated data



Graph of Validated 2018 Data Comparing Thurrock CLA to National and Eastern

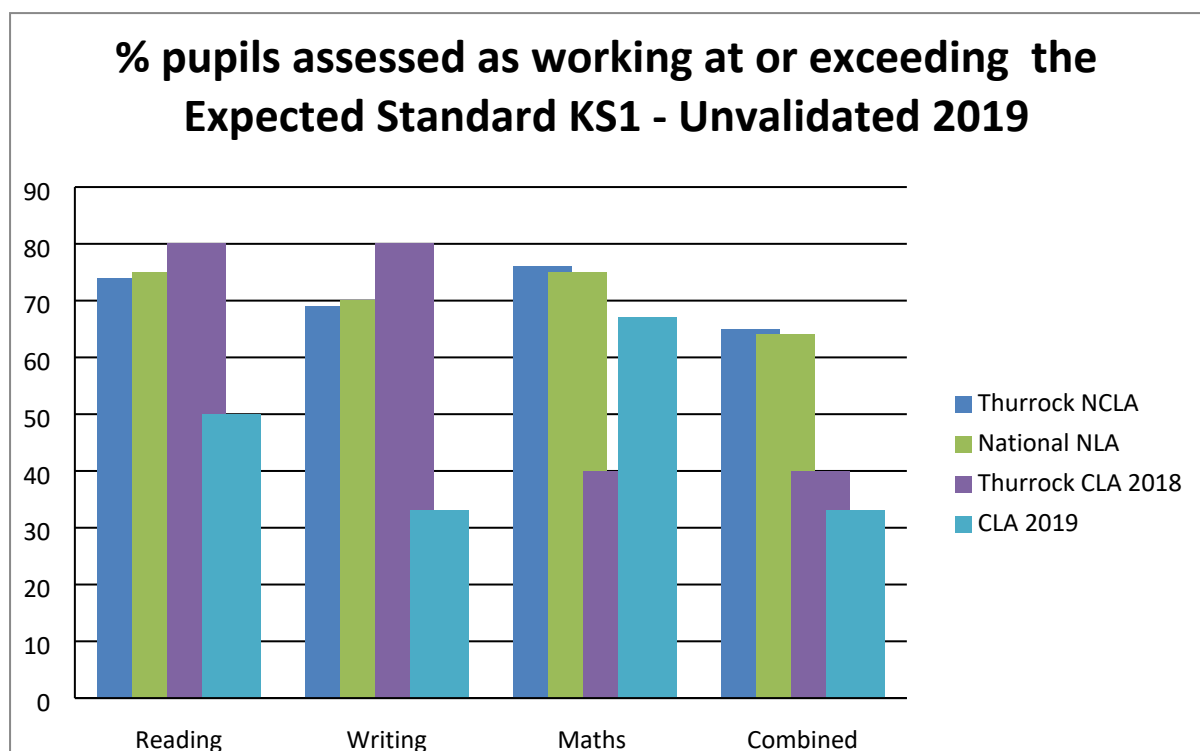
The data shown in the table above is validated data which the Department for Education use for those pupils in care for 12+ months. There have been improvements in reading and writing compared to 2017 validated data. However there has been a decline in maths and thus the combined score.

Key Stage 1 (age 7, year 2) 2019

Non-Validated data

The reported data is based upon all pupils in the Virtual School year 2 cohort during this academic year. Specific analysis of those in care for 12 months or more will be provided by the DFE later in the year.

In the graph below, it is possible to see how Thurrock CLA performed against National and Thurrock non-looked after.



The above data is based upon a cohort size of 6 pupils. This is a very small data set for comparison particularly when comparing against very large numbers for Thurrock and all Year 2 Nationally.

Analysis of this data indicates that Thurrock CLA have performed better in maths than the previous year but have performed less well in reading and writing compared to previous year. This is unvalidated data and includes all 6 pupils in the year group irrespective of the time in care.

There was 1 pupil who was disapplied from the SATs due to their SEND needs and low level. 2 pupils have been in care for 12+ months and additionally the 1 pupil who was disapplied. 3 pupils became CLA in this academic year including 2 who have been looked after since May 2019.

Therefore, this data may change once the validated data is available as some pupils have entered and left care during the academic year.

Subject	Number of Pupils	Percentage [2019]	National [2019]	CLA	Eastern Region CLA {2019}
Reading	3	50%	52%		51%
Writing	2	33%	42%		35%
Maths	3	67%	50%		47%
Combined	2	33%	38%		32%

In terms of prior attainment, only 3 pupils [50%] of the cohort obtained a good level of development at the end of their reception year two years prior to the Key Stage 1 assessments. This would suggest that the rate of attainment and progress for these pupils has remained consistent across key stage 1 for reading and accelerated for maths. These pupils would have needed to make accelerated progress in that time to be able to reach the expected standard. 3 pupils [100%] out of the 3 who did not reach GLD at the end of the Foundation Stage, reached the expected standard at KS1 for reading and maths but 1 did not make expected progress for writing.

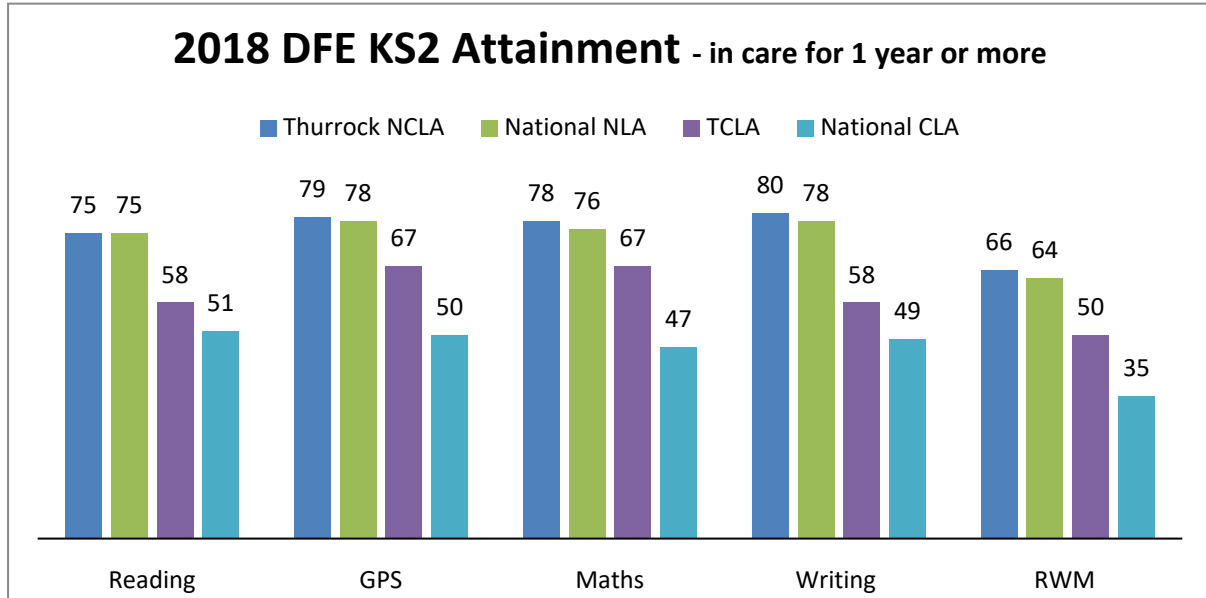
There were 3 pupils who had been in care for 12+ months and additionally the pupil who was disappplied had also been in care for more than a year. Of the 3 pupils in care for 12+ months, 2 (67%) met the required standards in all areas. Therefore, the validated data for 12+ months once obtained from the DFE will show better results. The 1 pupils who was disappplied has made expected progress based upon starting points. This pupil did not achieve a GLD at the end of reception due to developmental delay. The school provides 1-1 support and specialist intervention.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

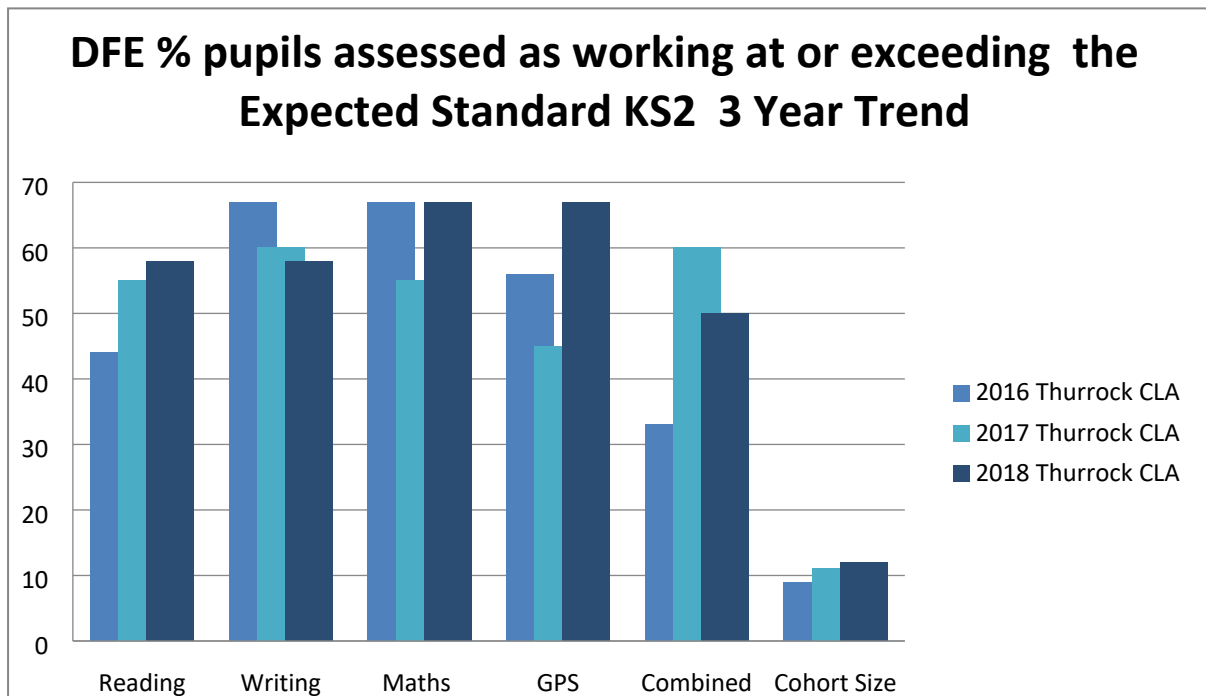
- Provision of home learning packs from Literacy Booktrust to support learning at home.
- Monitor progress for current year 3 to check that those who did not meet the expected standard are being appropriately supported.
- Provision of writing support packs in the home to support writing activities at home with carers

Key Stage 2 SATS 2018
Validated Data

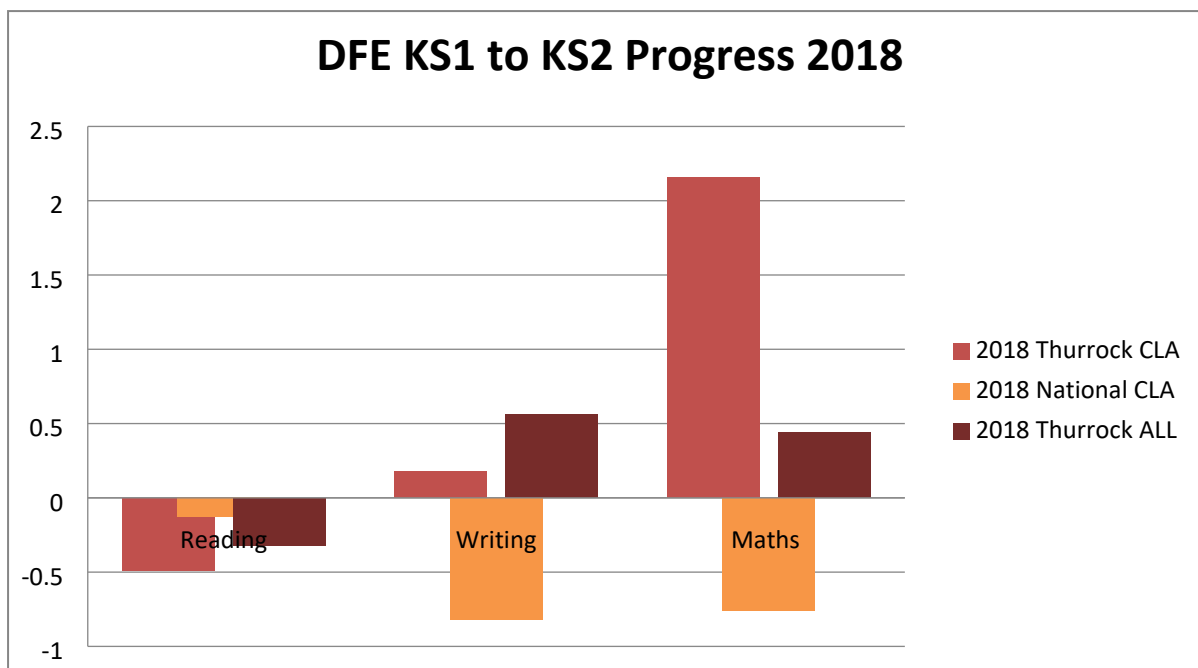
The following graph details the validated data for 2018 for Key Stage 2. The data demonstrates that Thurrock CLA performed better than national CLA.



The following table details the 3 year trend for validated from the DFE for those in care for 12+ months.



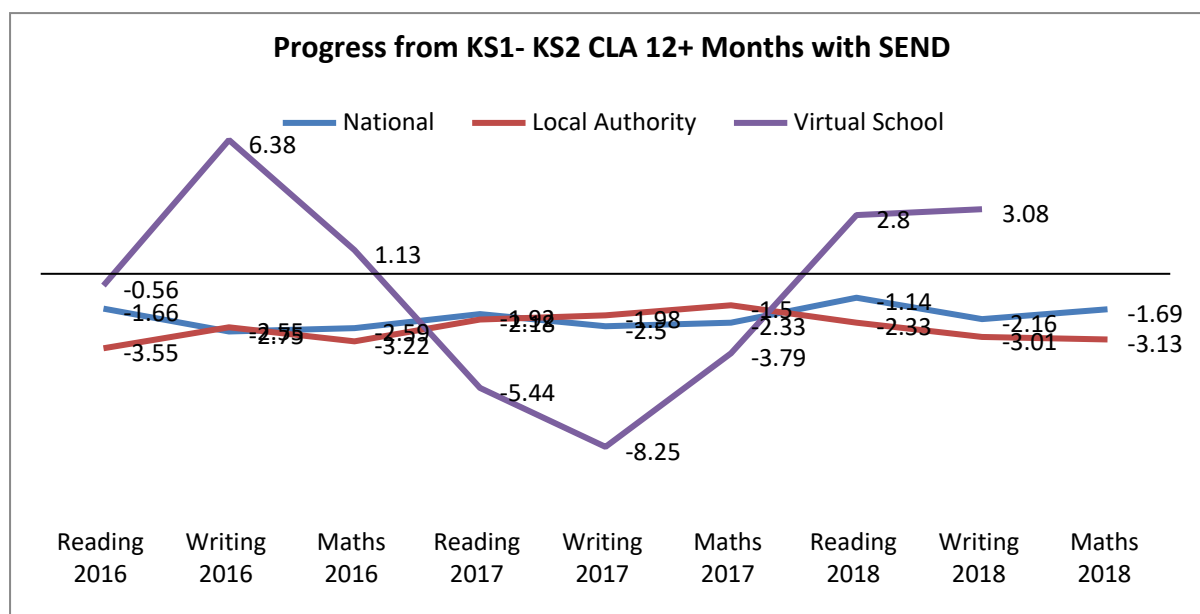
This data shows improvements in the areas of GPS, reading and Maths. However there has been a slight decline in writing. The overall combined score was lower than the previous year due to the nature of the cohort attainment summary.



The above graph details the amount of progress made from Key Stage 1 SATs results to Key Stage 2 SATS results. Thurrock CLA have made good progress compared to national CLA in writing and maths. Progress in maths also exceeds all Thurrock non-looked after children. The area for development in terms of progress would still be reading although reading results have increased year on year since 2016.

Pupils with SEND 2018 Key Stage 2 Data

For pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) who had been in care for 12+ months, their attainment across a three year period has improved. In 2016 and 2017, no pupils with SEND achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined. In 2018, 50% of CLA pupils with SEND achieved the expected combined standard. In terms of progress, Thurrock Children Looked After with SEND are making better progress than national and Thurrock pupils with SEND. Although there was a dip in progress in 2017, overall our pupils with SEND compared to similar pupils is good.



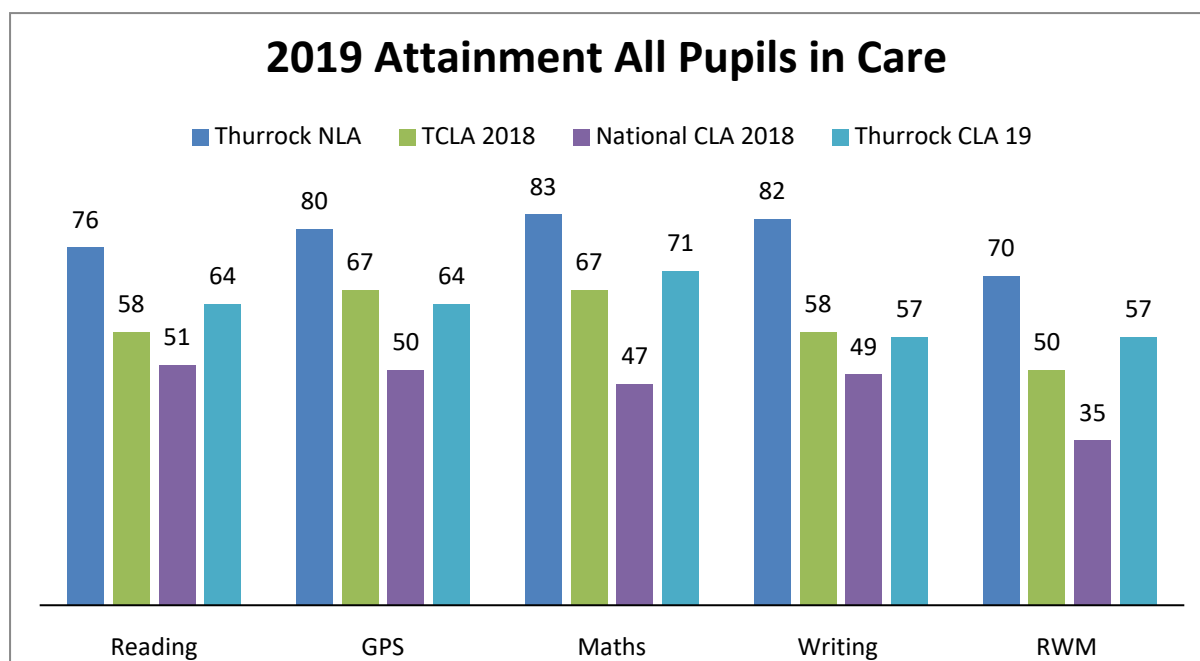
Graph detailing progress comparisons against pupils with SEND 2016-2018.

In 2018 our pupils with SEND made excellent progress. When comparing Thurrock CLA to National non-CLA and National non-SEND, our CLA with SEND are making more progress from KS1 to KS2. In reading this progress is +2.4 points above national, in writing it is +2.58 points progress and in maths it is +4.23 points. This is excellent progress and clearly demonstrates what can be achieved with high aspirations and a supportive environment. This data demonstrates that the gap has been closed against non-looked after children and that our children with SEND are making accelerated progress.

Key Stage 2 SATS 2019 **Non-Validated Data**

The cohort size for 2019 was 14 pupils. There were 3 pupils who were disapplied from the SATs this year. These all had an EHCP. Only 1 pupil had been in care for less than 12+ months and this pupil achieved expected in all areas. This data may change when the validated data becomes available later in the year.

For Thurrock CLA the statistics for those achieving the expected standard were as follows: reading 64%, GPS 64%, maths 71% and writing was 57%. The graph below illustrates the comparisons with non-CLA nationally in 2018 and all pupils in Thurrock for 2019 results.



Graph of Indicative Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2019]

The indicative results show that there have been improvements in reading and maths and RWM combined. There has been a slight decrease in GPS and writing. Thurrock CLA are closing the gap overall for RWM against Thurrock all children. National data for CLA and non-CLA 2019 is not yet available for comparison at the time of this report.

Prior Attainment for the 2019 Cohort

Current data would suggest that children made expected progress based upon prior achievements in KS1. This will be available when the progress data for validation is made available by the DFE later in the year.

Monitoring and tracking was extensive for this cohort of pupils. Schools were required to provide termly tracking data and evidence how pupil premium plus was supporting learning and progress.

The Year 6 cohort contained 7 pupils [50%] out of the whole cohort had SEND needs.

Prior attainment at Key Stage 1 for this cohort was broadly in line the outcomes for KS2. For reading at KS1 71% achieved the standard, 50% achieved writing and 57% achieving the maths standard. Maths has been the biggest area for progress as now 71% achieved the standard in KS2 compared to their previous outcomes at KS1.

The length of time in care varied for this cohort between 2007 and 2019. The table below illustrates this:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 14]	Met expected KS2 standard RWM [% of those in this period]	Met expected KS1 standard in RWM	Expected Progress [% of those in this period]
2019	1 pupil [7%]	1 pupil [100%]	1 pupil [100%]	100%
2018	2 pupils [14%]	0 pupils	1 pupil [50%]	0
2017	1 pupils [7%]	0	0	
2016	0			
2015	2 pupils [14%]	1 pupil [50]	0	50%
2014	2 pupils [14%]	1 pupil [50%]	1 pupil [100%]	100%
2013	2 pupils [14%]	2 pupils [100%]	2 pupils [100%]	100%
2012	2 pupils [14%]	2 pupils [100%]	2 pupils [100%]	100%
2011	1 pupil [7%]	1 pupil [100%]	1 pupil [100%]	100%
2007	1 pupil [7%]	0	0	100%

This data would show that there is a strong correlation between prior attainment and achieving the expected standard. The length of time in care has also had an impact on those pupils with the exception of those who have SEND needs.

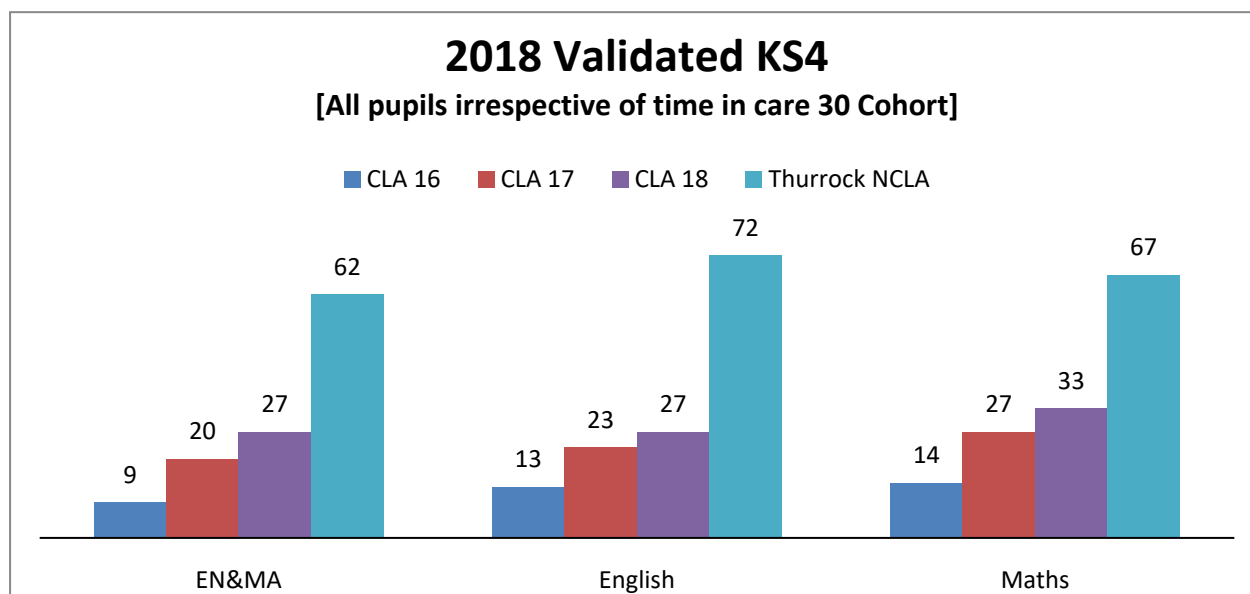
Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- Attendance at PEPs or Quality Assurance visits to the schools to check pupil progress
- Identification of those who did not achieve Expected and support transition into Year 7
- Provision of Literacy Book Trust resources for Primary phase pupils
- Support for those pupils in Year 7 who have SEND to ensure that the provision is matching need.
- Provision of Year 6 tuition from October 2019 for those children currently in Year 6

Key Stage 4 GCSE Results 2018

Validated results

The data for the whole cohort which was presented in the January 2019 report details all pupils' achievements for points 4 and above, as this was in line with Thurrock schools and the data they were presenting. This is detailed in the graph below.



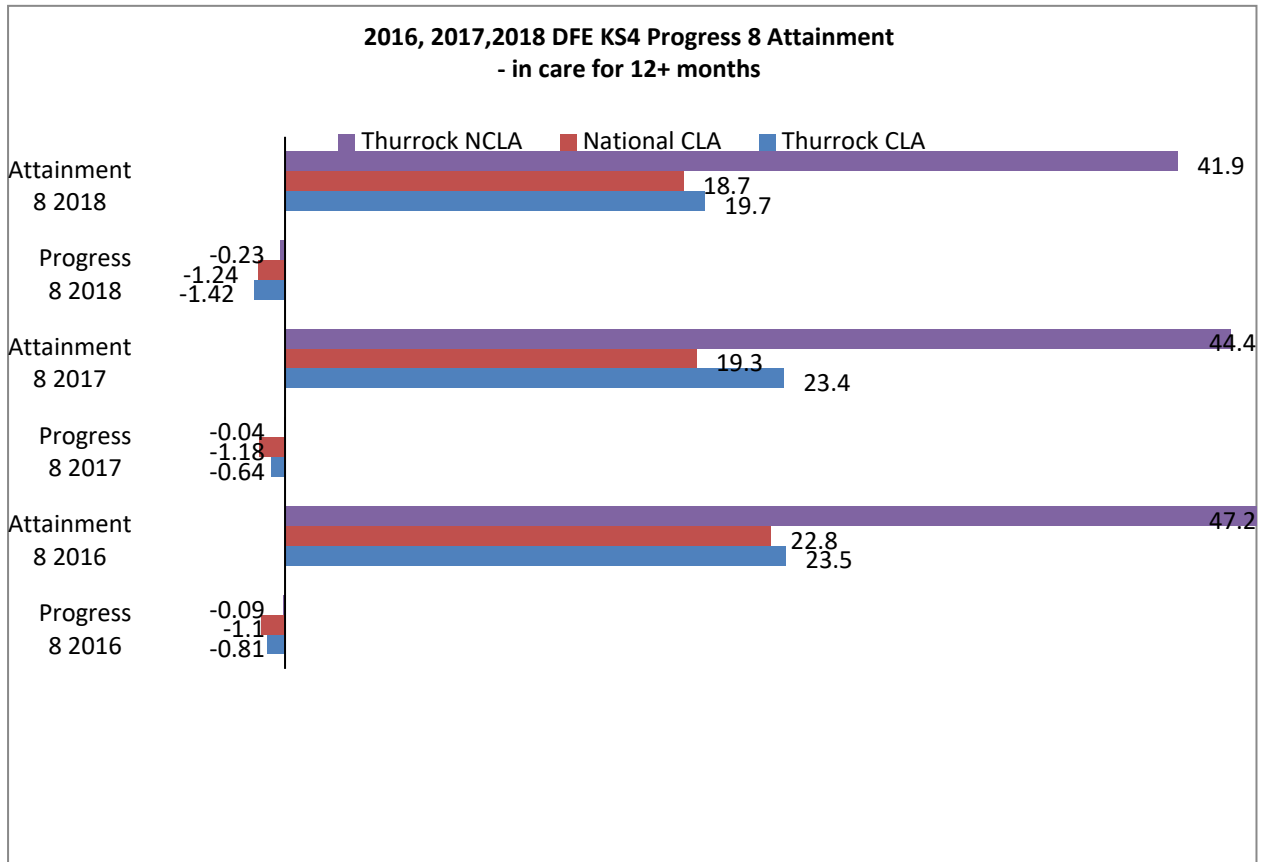
For those pupils in care for 12+ months the cohort size was 23 children (not all of them took GCSEs for reasons explained in the previous Corporate Parenting report dated January 2019).

The Department for Education has provided data for those children who have achieved a point 5 or above. This is a point above that originally reported, as point 4 has previously been the accepted standard. This standard has now been raised to point 5.

In 2018, Children Looked After for 12+ months figures show that:

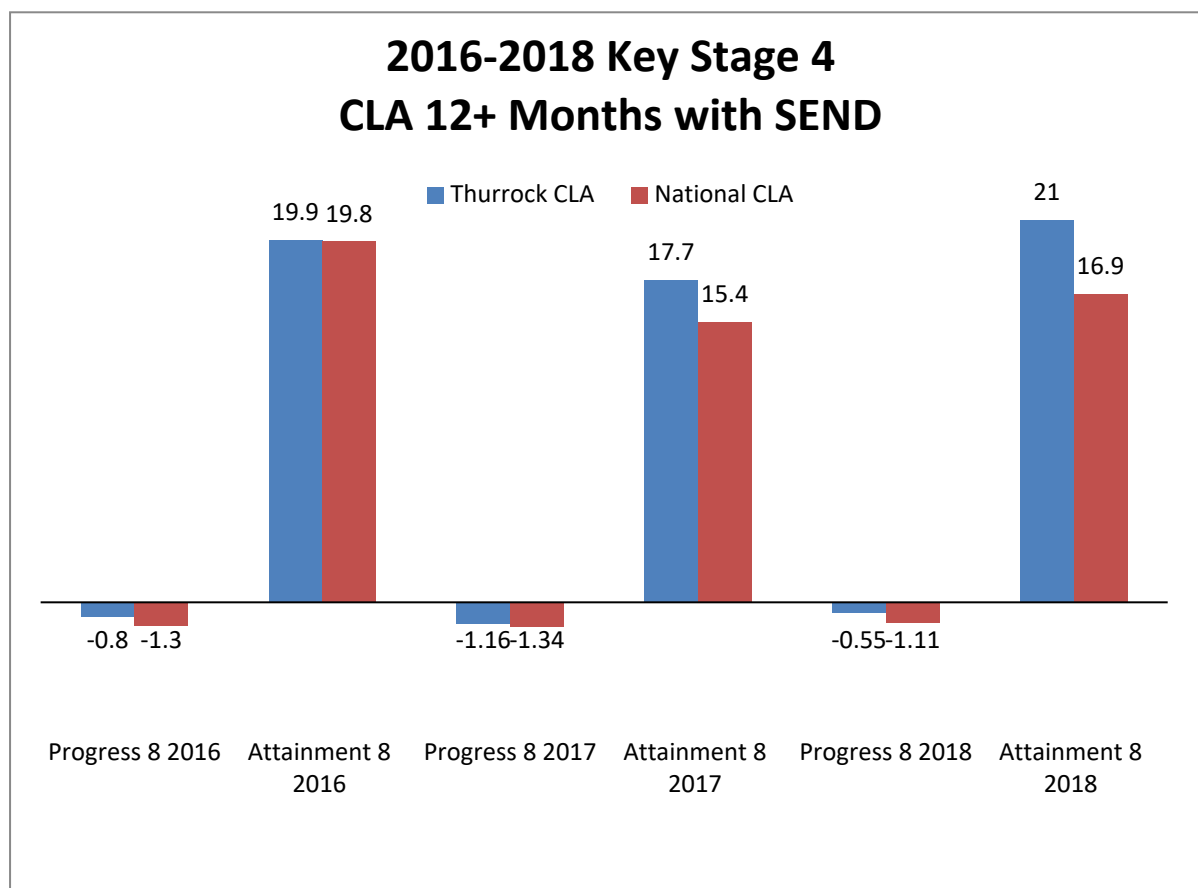
- 13% achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of point 5 or above. This is 5% above the national CLA figure.
- For English, 22% achieved point 5 or above. This is 6% above the national CLA figure.
- For maths, 17.4% achieved point 5 or above. This is 5% above the national CLA figure.

The graph below details the Progress 8 and Attainment 8 data trend for CLA for 12+ months. It shows the 3 year trend against Thurrock non-CLA and National CLA



This set of data needs careful analysis. Our pupils are performing better in their GCSEs than national children looked after and our data is improving. However, in 2018, the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 data score has declined compared to the previous two years. This trend is in line with Thurrock non-looked after. The CLA decline is despite the overall data trend showing an upward improvement in those achieving GCSEs. The academic data for 2018 showed better outcomes for CLA pupils achieving GCSEs in English and maths, however, a number of children could not have their progress scores calculated by the DFE because they did not have prior attainment in Key Stage 2 to compare to. This meant that although they achieved high GCSE grades of point 5 or above, their progress score was 0 due to no prior attainment. The data has also been affected by the increase in standards for achieving point 5 or above. The expected standard prior to this was point 4 or above.

Thurrock CLA pupils with SEND have achieved well in 2018. There was a decrease in attainment and progress in 2017 compared to 2016 but this was recovered in 2018. The pupils in the Virtual School for Thurrock who are CLA have performed consistently above national CLA with SEND. The three year trend is outlined in the graph below.



Thurrock CLA with SEND are also closing the gap against national non-looked after without SEND.

- The Attainment 8 gap has reduced from -33.3 in 2016 to -24.8 in 2018.
- The Progress 8 gap has also been reduced from 0.86 in 2016 to 0.42 in 2018.

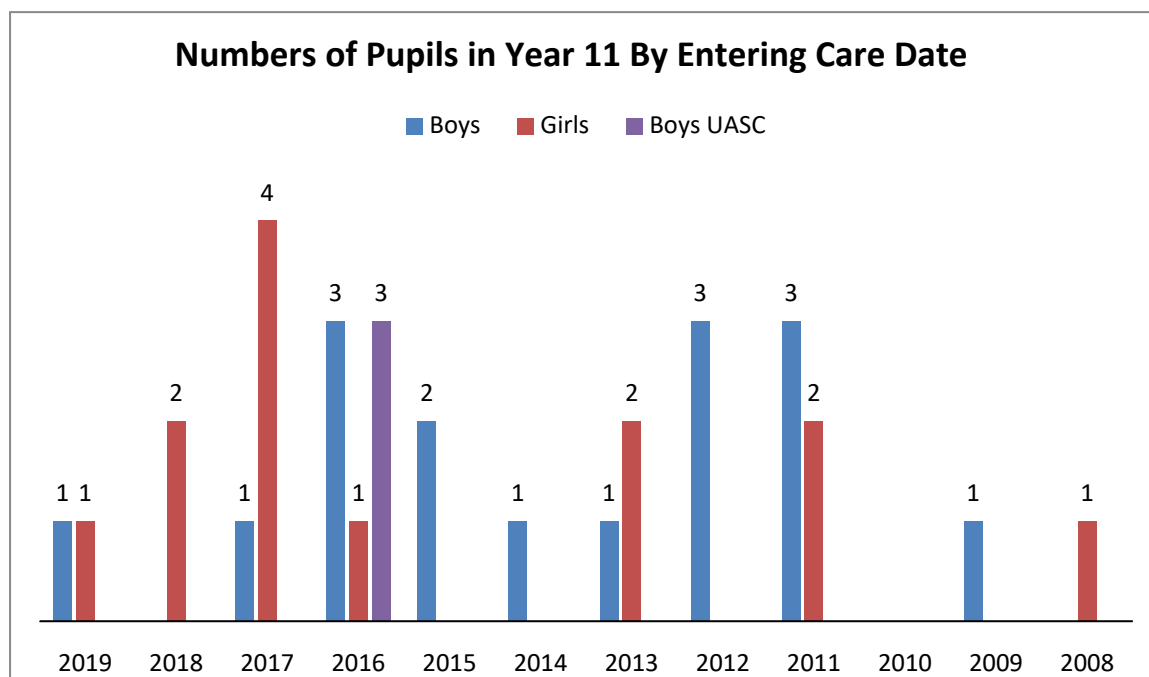
This means that our most vulnerable groups are making good progress and reaching good attainment compared to others.

Key Stage 4 GCSE Results 2019

Non-Validated Results

The following section of this report includes the 2019 data for GCSE. Progress 8 and Attainment 8 is not being reported in the following section due to the availability of data at the time of this report being compiled. This will be reported later on when this becomes available.

The GCSE information used for this report is currently Non-Validated data.



The graph above shows the period when various pupils in Year 11 became looked after. Potentially the length of time in care will affect educational outcomes.

When adolescents come into care during this time it is usually unplanned and in an emergency situation. This makes it extremely difficult for placements and education to be found in parallel. In the vast majority of cases when a young person is without education, it is extremely difficult to provide them with a school place. Schools are reluctant take a Year 11 pupil into their school citing the reason that they are not able to match their GCSE modules. This is even more difficult for those who have no English language.

When a young person is taken into care it is often an extremely traumatic time for them. This would potentially affect their ability to perform in the GCSE exams as their focus may be elsewhere. The lateness of them coming into care also means that services have not been able to support education as extensively prior to them entering care. They may not be in full time mainstream education before becoming looked after, their attendance could be poor. They may have missed significant parts of schooling and are therefore trying to catch up. If they do attend a school prior to becoming looked after, they may not have been entered for qualifications due to their

ability or previous educational performance. All of these factors should be considered when looking at the achievements of these young people.

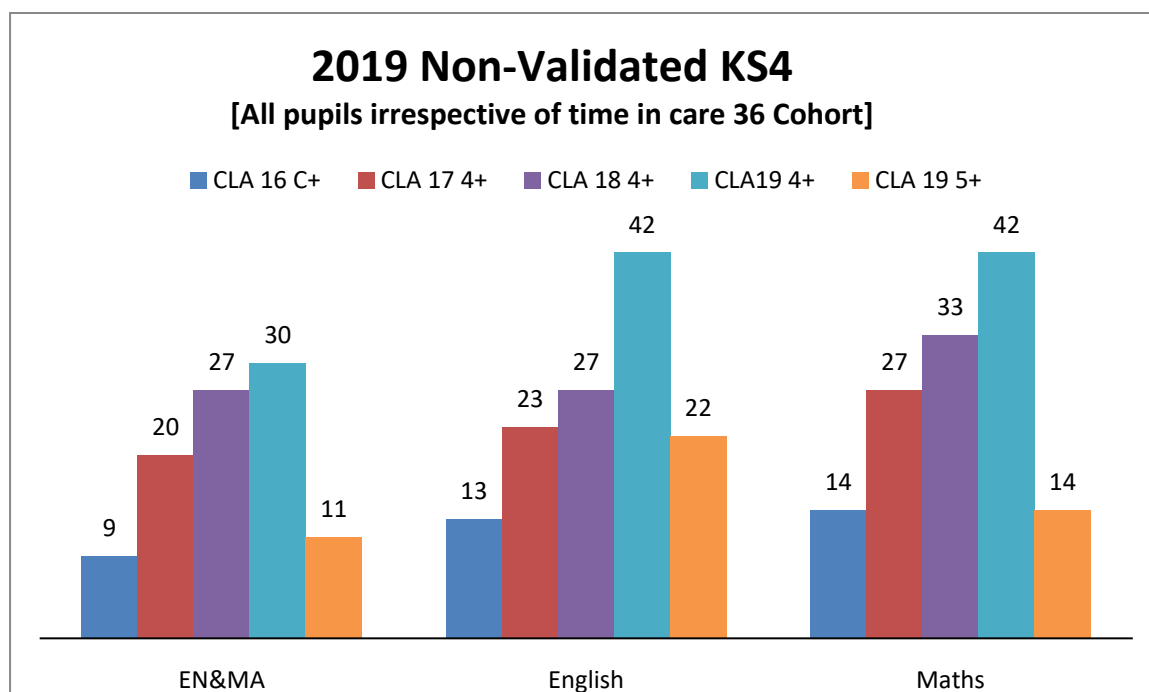
Key Headline Data [Cohort of 36]:

- There were a total of 36 pupils in the year 11 cohort and 29 pupils [80%] were eligible to take GCSEs in English and maths. This has been the highest proportion of the cohort eligible to take GCSEs over a five year period.
- 11 pupils [30%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grade C [point 4] or above
- 15 pupils [42%] achieved English at grade 4 or above
- In Maths, 15 pupils [42%] achieved the expected standard or above.

More pupils have achieved Grade 4+ than in the previous 3 years indicating an upward trend.

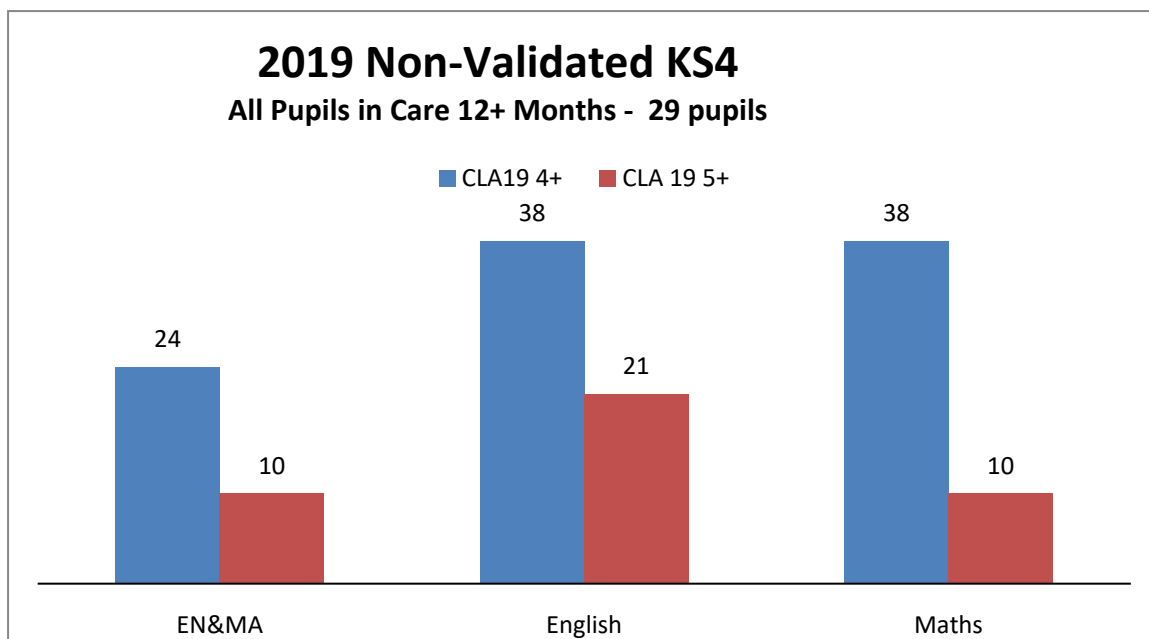
Grade 4+ has made good improvements. More improvement is needed for pupils to achieve grade 5+ as this has remained the same in English but slightly declined in maths and combined from the 2018 validated data.

GRADE 4 + and 5+ - all children in year 11 – 36 in total in cohort



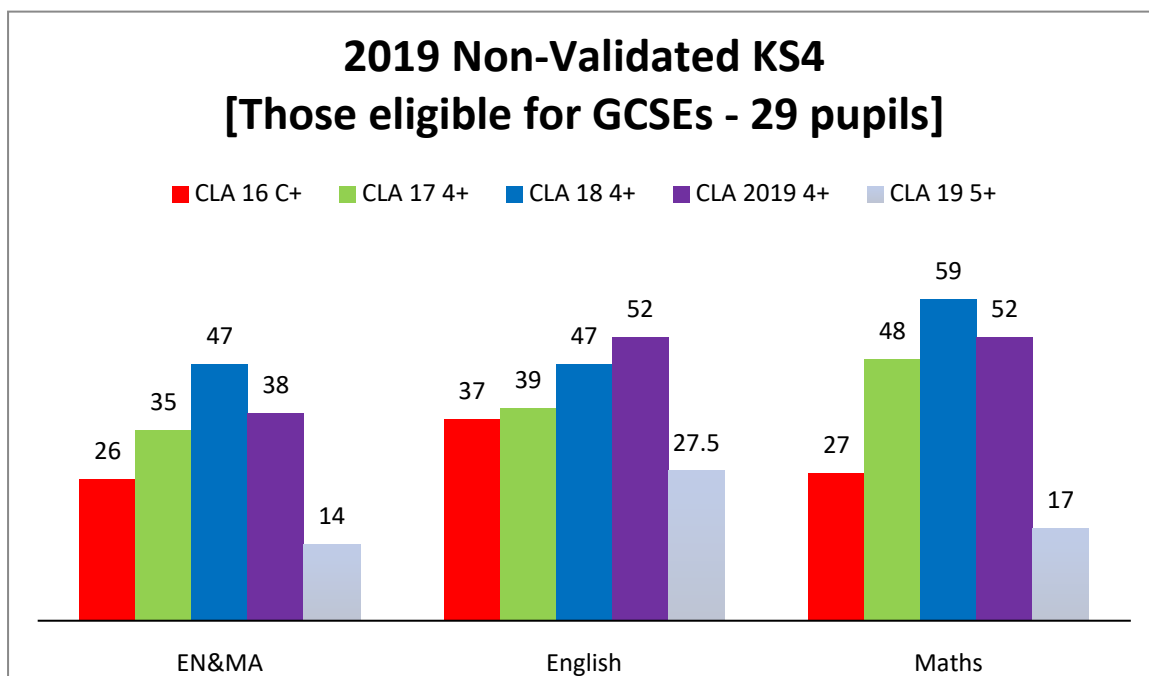
Indicative Attainment for All Pupils in Care 12+ months

In total there were 29 pupils who had been looked after for 12+ months. Not all took GCSEs. The data below reflects the attainment of the whole cohort of pupils in care 12+ months.



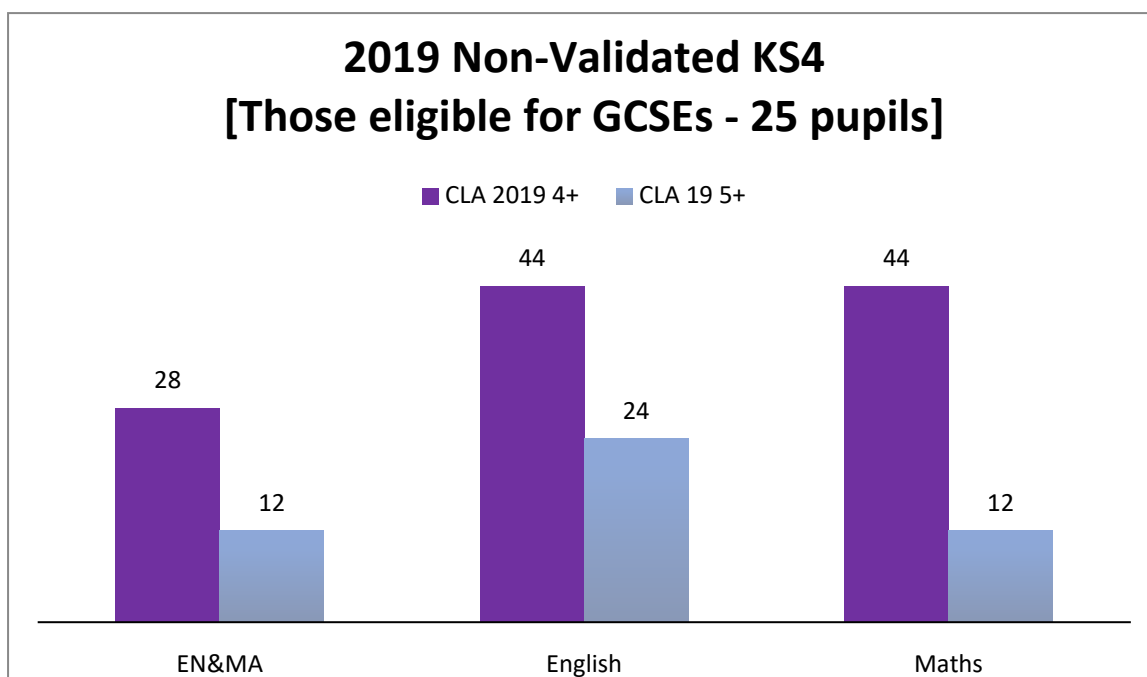
The graphs below demonstrate the improvements that Thurrock CLA pupils have made compared to the previous 2016 and 2017 cohorts.

In the year 2018/2019 there were 29 pupils eligible for GCSE exams. This was 12 more pupils eligible to take GCSEs than the previous year. This meant that 80% of the cohort were working within the standards for GCSEs. The following table depicts the indicative attainment for these 29 pupils



Improvements have been made for attaining grade 4 and 5 in English. An area for development would be maths. However, this will be in line with the national picture due to the changes in the maths exam this academic year. There is no current national data available for comparison in this report.

Cohort of children in care 12+ months eligible to take GCSE – 25 pupils



Additional Information for Key Stage 4 Cohort

There are specific reasons as to why not all of the 36 pupils were able to sit GCSE qualifications. It is important that this report includes these young people and accounts for their educational outcomes

20 pupils [55%] of our year 11 pupils looked after by the local authority attended a provision that was out of borough. This is a reduction from the previous year of 7%.

There were 8 [22%] students attending specialist provision. Specialist provision includes alternative provision, residential specialist schools, and SEND schools. These placements matched the needs of the pupils at that time, based upon their social care and educational needs. Where possible these students sat formal qualifications which included GCSE, BTEC, functional skills or Entry Level exams. However, due to the nature of their needs, not all were able to sit either English or maths GCSE combined. It is important to note that these students obtained positive outcomes for them based upon their needs and their academic level or educational ability at the time.

A total of 7 students [20%] did not sit formal GCSE qualifications. This is a reduction compared to the previous 2 years of data.

3 pupils did not sit any formal qualifications. 2 of these pupils have high SEND needs and it was not appropriate for them to take exams. 1 other pupil attended a PRU and was a school refuser. This pupil became CLA in March 2019 and despite numerous interventions, was a school refuser. This pupil has now returned home. 2 pupils took entry level qualifications.

Additionally 13 pupils [39%] of the cohort had SEND needs with 7 pupils [20%] with EHCPs. These students did not achieve above grade 4 in their exams if they were eligible for GCSE. Those students who have SEND Support took qualifications matched to their individual needs with some able to sit GCSEs. Despite not reaching grade 4 or above, they did meet their target grades to enable them to enrol at colleges for post 16 courses.

At the beginning of the academic year only 8.3% of the now Year 12 cohort are NEET at the beginning of the term.

Planned interventions as a result of 2019 data

The Virtual School will continue with key actions that were begun last year and some additional measures are being taken.

We are continuing to:

- Attend Year 10 and Year 11 PEP meetings
- Ensure that schools provide robust Pupil Premium Plus information
- Link the quality of the PEP with release of Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Provide additional home tuition from the summer term of Year 10 Summer 2019 and for current year 10, summer 2020
- Triangulate data predictions with further evidence such as work sampling
- Access exam stress counselling where necessary
- Provide support for Post 16 pathways
- Targeting tuition for particular students who are on the cusp of 4/5/C grades which will be additional to that received by the Pupil Premium Plus in school
- Complete home visits for particularly vulnerable students
- Provide intensive pastoral support alongside their school for high priority cases for those at risk of poor performance due to social and emotional difficulties.
- Provide Year 11 with revision stationary packs for the start of the autumn term

In addition we are:

- Providing termly Designated Teacher Forums, social worker forums and termly foster carer forums to promote the educational outcomes of pupils by communicating key messages and training and to provide information advice and guidance for individual cases
- Supporting social care to minimise the change of school or college when there are placement changes

Key Stage 5 2018

Our pupils in years 12 and 13 continue to be supported by the Virtual School Post 16 Education Adviser. There have been some real successes this year in Key Stage 5,

with 5 pupils starting university for the academic year 2019 and 1 pupil deferring for the following year. Pupils have achieved a range of A-Levels and Level 3 equivalent qualifications. 16% of our cohort acquired Level 3 equivalent qualifications. Other pupils have achieved Level 2 qualifications and their equivalent. The aftercare team continues to support our pupils and the Virtual School assists where required.

12. Summary of Analysis for all Key Stages

Key Headlines of Actions from All Data Collections

What are we doing as a result of this year's performance?

- Provision of Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to those aged between 3-13
- Provision of tuition for year 11 which started in the summer term of year 10
- Conducting termly school visits for key year groups of children and those who are not making expected progress
- Evidencing the work of the Virtual School through visit notes and case notes
- Development of an SEND strategy to further improve the outcomes for this group of children
- Continuing the interventions and key actions developed over the previous year to build upon good practice and successful outcomes.
- Embedding the of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires [SDQ} for every pupil from year R to 17 years old and triangulating scores with other professionals to identify specific intervention

13. Case Studies and Positive feedback

Case studies provide some insight into the individual work that is complete by members of the Virtual School to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Case Study- Yr7/8

Overview/ Summary

J became CLA in 2017. J has been placed with the same carers since coming into care and is settled in placement.

School experience

He repeated year 6 in primary due to his specific learning needs and the amount of schooling he had missed before becoming CLA. Chronologically he is now year 9 but is attending as year 8. He has an EHCP to support his additional needs. J was consistently working below ARE but making steady progress. There were concerns about social skills and some behaviour issues. He has attended secondary school since the start of year 7.

At the end of the second term of year 7 school staff were raising concerns about disruptive behaviour in certain classes. There were a number of meetings related to

the EHCP, support in place and what additional support could be given. The EHCP was updated to reflect the current situation and the VS commissioned an Education Psychologist [EP] visit to assess J's current needs as he had not been seen since being in primary school.

Virtual School were requested to support school directly and it was agreed to make weekly visits to do work with J around his social skills, friendships, general relationships and managing his trauma and attachment issues in school. This was done in conjunction with school, VS, carers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and Designated Teacher.

VS met with J initially to talk about the purpose of the visits and to see if he was happy for this to go ahead. He was and has been thoroughly engaged throughout the term.

Work mainly consisted of getting to know how he felt about school, friends, staff etc. We worked on memory and recall skills as this was raised by the EP following her visit. We did some informal social story work, looked at managing behaviour skills and generally discussed how things had gone in the week between visits.

In the months that the work was taking place school were reporting that J had improved his behaviour and there were fewer incidents of being taken out of class and seen by Head Teacher. He appears more settled in class, he is now making better friendships and is working well.

Following on from the EP report another meeting will be held to ensure the school is meeting the recommendations made within the report.

Staff are reporting that J is improving within lessons and is able to stay in lessons more and do his work especially in lessons which had previously been a challenge for him.

Social Care Views

Social care are pleased that J is getting consistent support and that the situation is improving for him at school. They are satisfied that his needs are being better supported following several meetings to look at provision within school.

Foster Carer Views

Foster carer feels that J is more settled. She reported directly to VS that J has commented at home that he looks forward to the visits in school and she feels he has made a strong connection during this time.

Child Views

J had some good relationships with certain members of staff. He tended to struggle with some staff and found their different teaching styles difficult.

He responds really well to being given responsibility and likes to feel helpful.

He is now engaging more in lessons, he is still experiencing some issues but the incidents of disruption are fewer. VS will continue to support with visits into the coming school year and it is expected that the visits will gradually decrease as J is more able to manage his own needs and emotions within the setting.

Case Study- Y5

Overview/ Summary

X is currently living in a 52 week residential, therapeutic placement in Kent. X has been known to Thurrock LA since 2015 (although previously removed in 2011 short term). X has two other siblings, X is the middle of the three. Concerns further escalated and in Jan 2017. Interim Care Orders were granted. X moved into the therapeutic placement based in Kent in July 2017.

School experience

X attended a mainstream primary school prior to moving to Kent. She then attended a school based provision within the setting which had a very bespoke and individualised curriculum. X was able to learn in an environment which was supportive and nurturing. The home also set up rigorous support for assessing attainment, emotional behaviour and development. The home, social care and Virtual School [VS] supported the move to apply for an Education Health Care Plan [EHCP] in order to support X going back into a mainstream school. VS co-ordinated the application and evidence and submitted the application to Thurrock SEN. The residential provision sourced schools in the area and made an application. X started at the new school in Feb 2019 and was granted an EHCP in March- April 2019.

To date X is excelling in the mainstream setting and has expressed an interest in sitting the 11+, which VS and social care have also supported.

VS Support/ Views

As well as the above support, VS have supported at LAC Reviews, PEPs and all information gathering meetings for the EHCP application. VS also led the outcomes meeting to further gather the information needed for the EHCP.

X is a lot more settled than when she first started at the home and has come a really long way. X was really excited about starting at a new school and it is what she wants.

VS have supported the EHCP from the start and will continue to support as X moves through the school education system.

Social Care Views

As a corporate parent support for X is high at the setting both educationally and residentially. The home is structured and X is supported well. X has received a high level of support and the plan to move her to a school has always been an outcome. Social care have supported the EHCP application in order to contribute to the process and ensure social care needs are highlighted. X's significant harm and trauma from early childhood has and does impact on her social and emotional needs significantly. Social care have supported X's step into school and want her to develop her skills in all areas so that she achieves everything she can academically and emotionally.

Foster Carer Views

X is in residential, therapeutic care. She seems happy there and contributes to all the routines that the care home brings. She does activities like dance at the weekends. She has just started at a mainstream school and so far (as this is very recent), it seems to be going well. X is extremely happy to be in school as this is what she wanted.

X enjoys reading and becomes immersed in books. She remembers facts and dates and discussions with X are interesting. She speaks very well and is able to converse confidently and frankly with adults.

Child Views

X has had a very smooth transition into mainstream school. She has now been at the school for 4 weeks (three of which were parts of the day). This is what X wanted and she is extremely happy. She has made some friends and is working well. School are very supportive and understanding. X is very diligent with her work and strives to do her best. Academically X is where she needs to be, school are keen to extend her levels exceeding where she needs to be. X does rise to a challenge and will want to do her best and be the top at everything. X is beginning to recognise when she is feeling a certain way. She is able to talk about her differences and difficulties when she is calm and regulated.

Examples of Positive Feedback

Direct Comments in an email from a foster carer.

Thought you might like an update on I know he is now 18 and no longer "looked after" but I wanted you to know I've been informed he has passed his functioning skills level 2 maths and English (written and speaking). We are so proud of how far he has come, I'm confident the pass was aided by the additional tuition VS put in place, his tutor was brilliant. He has also passed the level 2 carpentry course. These grades mean he has secured the place on his motor mechanic course. We are so proud of him and he is a much loved member of our family. Thanks for all your support over the years.

Direct Comments in an email from a Headteacher regarding support for a Previously Looked After Child.

I just wanted to thank you for the support that you have offered me with regards to I was really impressed with how helpful the VSHT was when I initially rang through to the Thurrock Virtual School Team. She was so warm and willing to go out of her way to offer some support. She then contacted you almost immediately and your response was quick too - a really impressive response, one which is sadly not often seen! It was then a pleasure to meet with you earlier this week to discuss the EHCP application for..... You are obviously very knowledgeable about the process and about how to gather the evidence needed. I really felt that you were working alongside me and would continue to support us with the application until we were successful in accessing additional support and funding for I really appreciate it. Thank you for then sending through the paperwork that we'd discussed which will strengthen our application. Please pass this email on to Keeley with my thanks.

14. School Improvement Priorities

These are detailed in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is updated at the start of every academic year. Priorities are identified and actions are detailed related to SMART targets which form the basis of the Virtual School's work across the academic year. The aim of this document is to promote the raising of educational outcomes for all of our Children Looked After. This is reviewed every half term and reports to the Governing Body detail progress towards each priority. These can be found in additional documents which are produced termly for the Governing Body.

Key Priorities for 2018/2019 were

To improve achievement of all pupils by:

[KP 1] Improving the attainment and progress of Children Looked After (CLA) to be in line with or above the national average outcomes for CLA for all Key Stages

Please refer to attainment and progress of year groups in sections above.

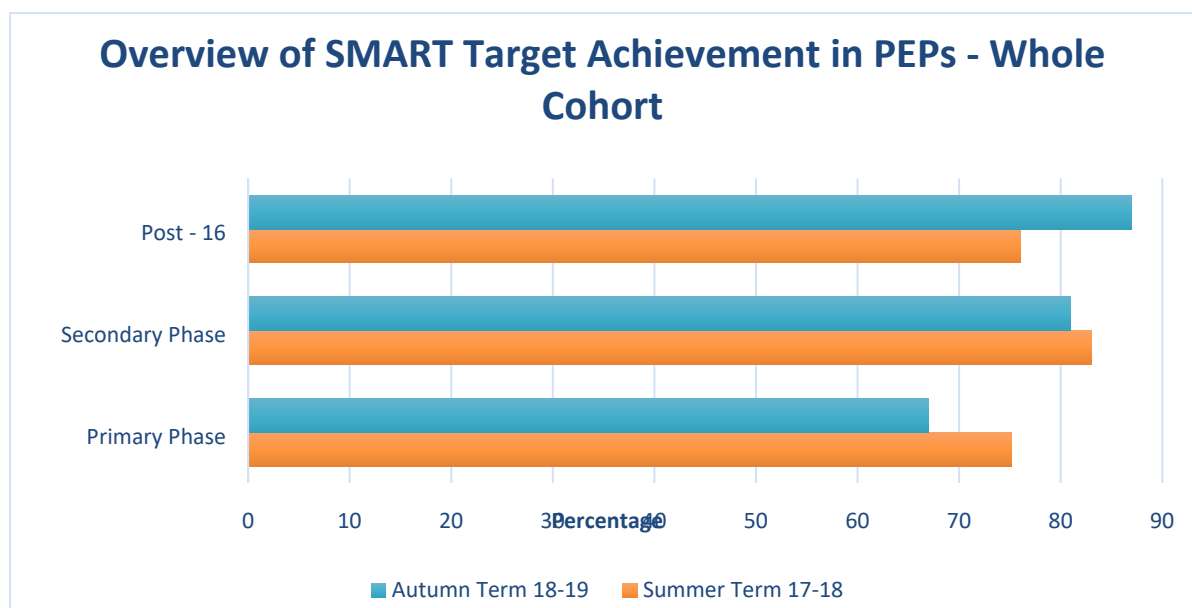
[KP 2] Improving the attendance of CLA to maximise educational outcomes

Attendance rates have improved this academic year compared to the previous year. Unauthorised absence has reduced. Please see data in above sections.

[KP 3] Improving the progress of CLA pupils in each cohort as evidenced through quantitative data and soft outcomes

The team have worked extensively on this target to evidence data which focuses on the production of measurable outcomes. An example of this tracking can be seen below. The attainment of individual goals can then be

compared for each child and each year group. The impact of this is that interventions can be matched to meet need and accelerate progress.



Impact:

- Provisions are assessing needs and interventions are matching these needs
- Targets are supporting achievement of children and young people
- Poor progress can be challenged
- Effective deployment of the pupil premium is in place

What Next?

- Continue to embed this process and use this for data analysis across the year. Smaller measurable steps should enable better progress longer term
- Challenge pupil progress during school based visits
- Continue to support schools and colleges with the development of highly effective targets.

[KP 4] Raising the profile of mental health and interventions to support the outcomes of CLA

During the academic year the team have successfully embedded the Strengths Difficulties Questionnaire [SDQ] process into every child/young person's Personal Education Plan [PEP]. It is now an expectation that the teacher completes the SDQ section every term in line with our PEP review process. The SDQ is a system used whereby certain questions are answered by professional and the young person. A score is created which is intended to highlight those children/young people at risk of developing social, emotional or mental health difficulties. A score above 17 should provide professionals with the indication that intervention is needed from the appropriate service. There is an SDQ Policy which is in place and being used by the Virtual School. This is shared with schools, colleges and social workers.

There is now a greater focus on discussing mental health and emotional well-being during the PEP process and this leading to swifter action in terms of sourcing the appropriate support for children and young people.

Virtual School staff have attended the Mental Health First Aid training so that they are able to provide information, advice and guidance to schools and identify support pathways for the children.

The Trauma and Attachment course delivered by the VS team, covered key aspects of mental health and how this impacts on behaviour. Phase leaders are tracking SDQ scores for pupils in their phase and comparing scores across the year. This will enable triangulation of scores alongside that of social care and this can be addressed at SDQ panel which is held every fortnight.

Examples of impact can be seen below with specific pupils: **details have been anonymised**

Name	School Year	SDQ score	Comments/ Discussion	Impact/ Outcomes
XY	4	22 (AUTUMN term score)- Spring Term 19 – score decreased by 3 points.	School identified pupil as a huge concern as part of PEP meeting. Detailed discussion about behaviours at anxiety at home and at school. XY is at risk of being permanently excluded. Discussions about support in place at school- SEN funding to support an adult in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ EP went into school to assess XY. ➤ ABC Behaviour (from Havering) coming into work with child. ➤ 1:1 targeted and intensive support (Zones of Regulation). ➤ School applied for interim funding to pay for an adult to support pupil during the day. ➤ Access to the schools Nurture Provision. ➤ Social care to refer to Pediatrician and re-refer to EMWHS (as last referral unsuccessful). ➤ School collecting evidence to support a future EHCP application.
1234	Y1	16 in autumn – score reduced to 13 following term assessment	Very traumatic early life, has been settled in school now for over a year and with FC for the last 6 mths. Came into school well below average but is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adult in place to support pupil in the mornings. ➤ Discussions about reducing or changing contact at PEP.

			<p>closing the gap. Behaviours tend to be seen after contact. Discussion about how best to support child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Play Therapy to begin as a way to support. ➤ Intensive SALT has been commissioned. ➤ Specialist school place had been sought however, school would like to meet needs in school with specialist help coming in rather than child attending a special school. ➤ Inclusive practice. ➤ EHCP obtained
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Impact:

- Provisions are assessing needs and interventions are matching these needs

What Next?

- **Continue to work with social care and health for triangulation of scores and setting of interventions based on need.**

[KP 5] Provision of duties relating to Previously Looked After Children [PLAC]

The Virtual School have developed a system of supporting Previously Looked After Children [PLAC] within the everyday work of the team. The team have been tracking the level of demand and input required.

A PLAC policy has been written which is a signpost for those who may need clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.

Designated teachers have been provided with advice and training to support their role for PLAC.

Impact

- Greater awareness of roles and duties has been shared to enable better support.
- Successful application for EHCP for PLAC
- PLAC pupil has remained in school when previously at risk of permanent exclusion
- Parents have been empowered to seek advice regarding their child

What Next?

- Need to develop ways of sharing information to a broader audience
- VS team need to attend specific PLAC training e.g. with adoption agencies or BAAF
- Development of a PLAC plan on a page
- Commission an independent consultant to assist the team in supporting PLAC.

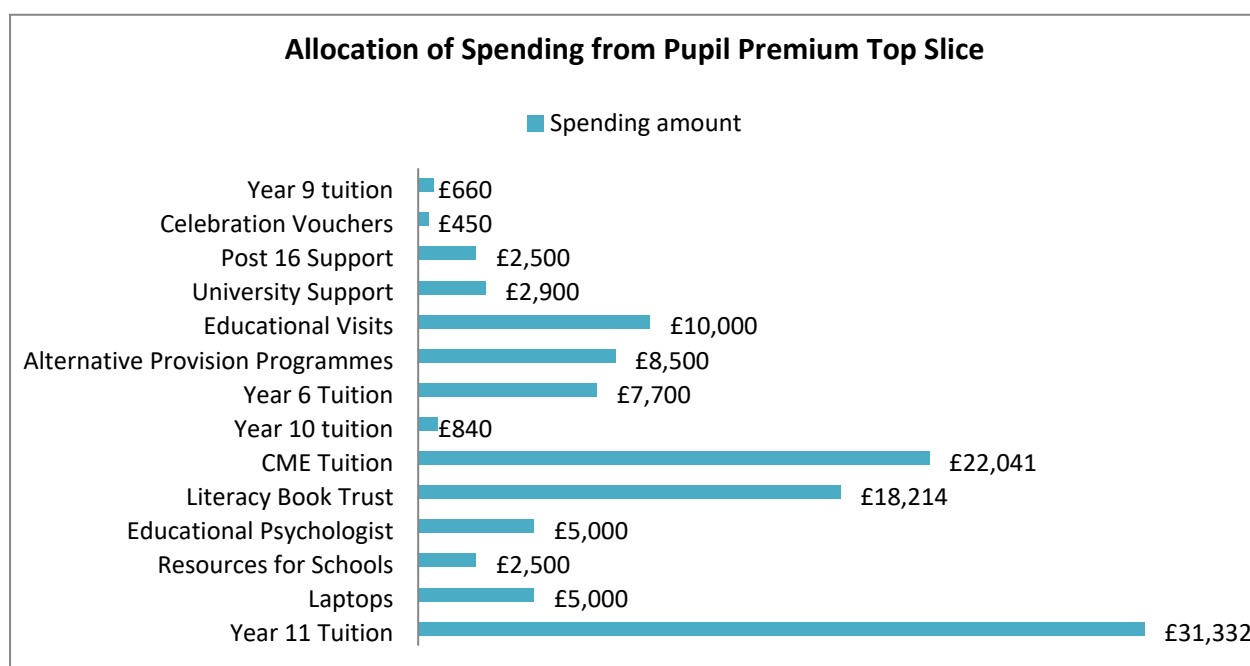
16. Allocation and Impact of the Pupil Premium

The management of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children Looked After is detailed in the DFE guidance [Pupil premium grant 2014 to 2015: conditions of grant](#) and [Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities](#).

The Pupil Premium Plus Policy details the ideology and method behind the allocation of this funding.

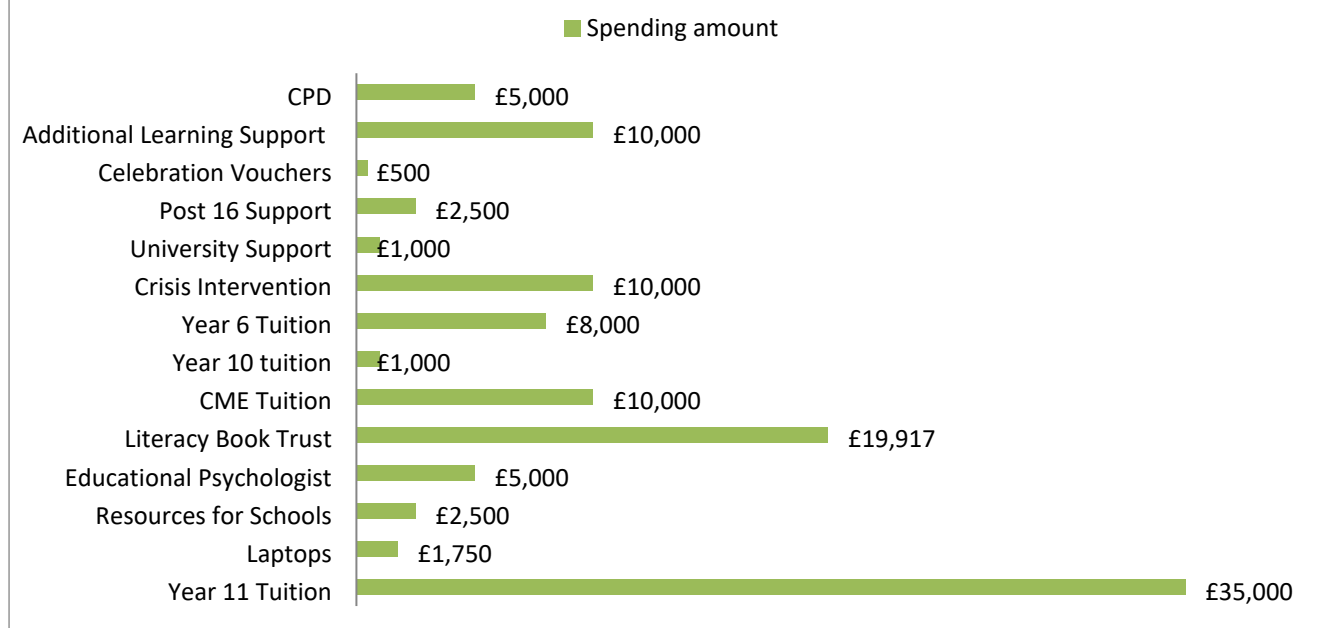
Settings receive £1,800 which is released in three equal installments of £600 every term. The Virtual School Headteacher tracks spending on a termly basis in line with the quality assurance process of PEPS. This tracking centres on how this money is raising the achievement of the child/young person and assesses if funds are being used appropriately. This process, alongside the PEP process is supporting the pupil to have targeted support and intervention which directly affects and plans for his/her academic and overall school achievement with a personalised approach. It is enabling the Virtual School to be updated on progress data and enables discussion with the school to centre on appropriate intervention. This system promotes accountability and improved dialogue in how to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the gap. [Separate Pupil Premium documentation is available on request]. In March 2019 the Virtual School Head Teacher presented a detailed Corporate Parenting report which showed the individual spending for each year group. It also shared the detailed spending of the pupils premium plus top slice and provided a strategy for the spending 2019/2020.

The Virtual School top sliced £500 per pupil for the academic year and used this to provide centralised resources to support the most vulnerable in the cohort.



A detailed report is available as part of the Corporate Parenting documentation from the 6th March 2019. This report will be repeated next year. There is a separate Pupil Premium Plus Strategy Document 2019/2020 which is available upon request. The forecast for top slice spending for financial year 2019/2020 based upon a funding allocation of 262 pupils is: £131,000. This figure may change when the annual census is completed and the DFE provides the final funding in December 2019.

Planned Allocation of Spending from Pupil Premium Top Slice 2019/2020

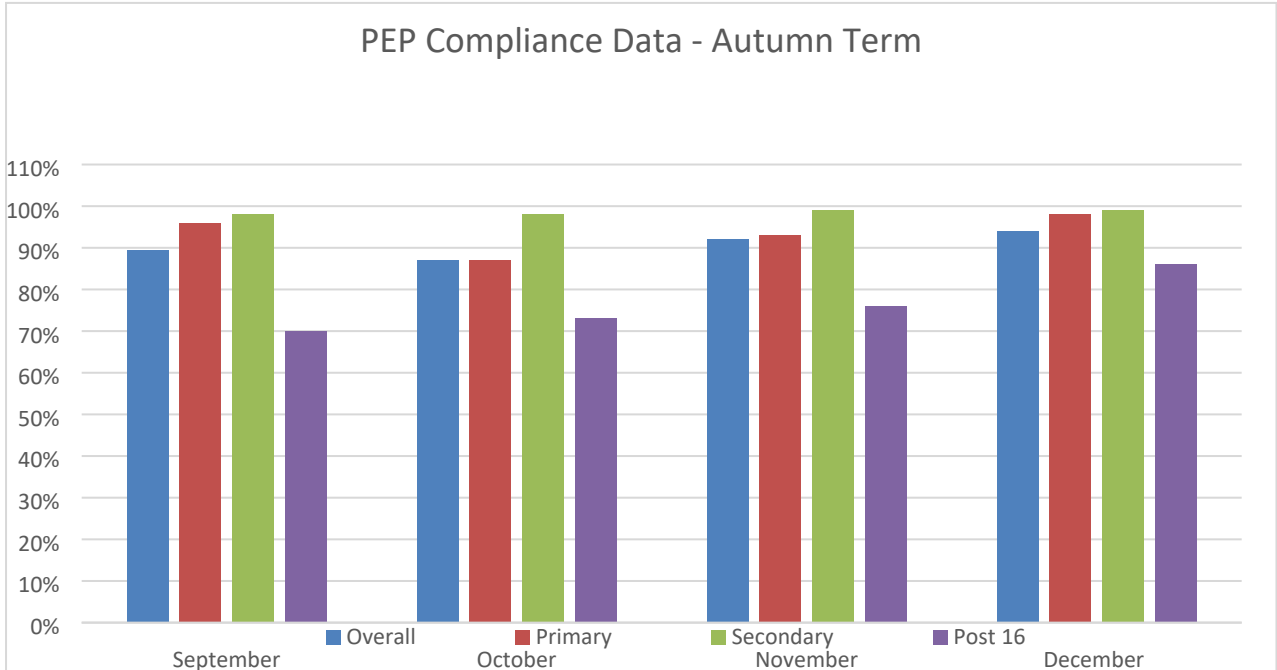


17. Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans

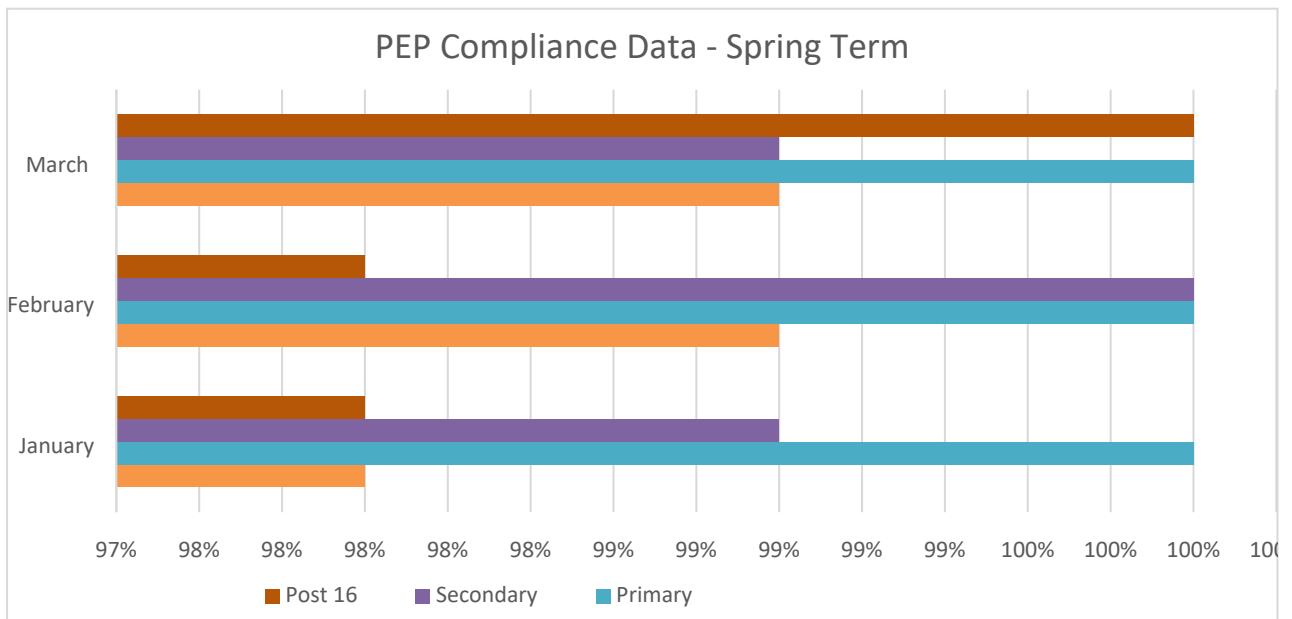
The Personal Education Plan [PEP] is a key document to support the child's/young person's education. Where possible the Virtual School attends specific PEP meetings and particular emphasis has been made on key year groups for the academic year 2018/19 and those who are new into care. This is further detailed in the Roles and Functions of the Virtual School document. It is also important that the Virtual School attends PEP meetings for particularly vulnerable students or when a potential issue has been identified. For example, concern with progress. The Virtual School team is responsible for Quality Assuring [QA] every PEP. We have introduced a specific protocol around PEP quality assurance and this has been shared with those who have joint responsibility for the PEP. PEP compliance rates have improved and now are consistently operating at 95% and above compliance for every child aged 3 to 18 years. A range of documents have been produced to aid the completion of high quality paperwork and the robust procedures have enabled to quality of PEP to improve.

PEP Compliance Data – Autumn Term

Month	Overall	Early Years - N1/2	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Sep-18	89.40%		96%	98%	70%
Oct-18	87%		87%	98%	73%
Nov-18	92%		93%	99%	76%
Dec-18	94%	0%	98%	99%	86%

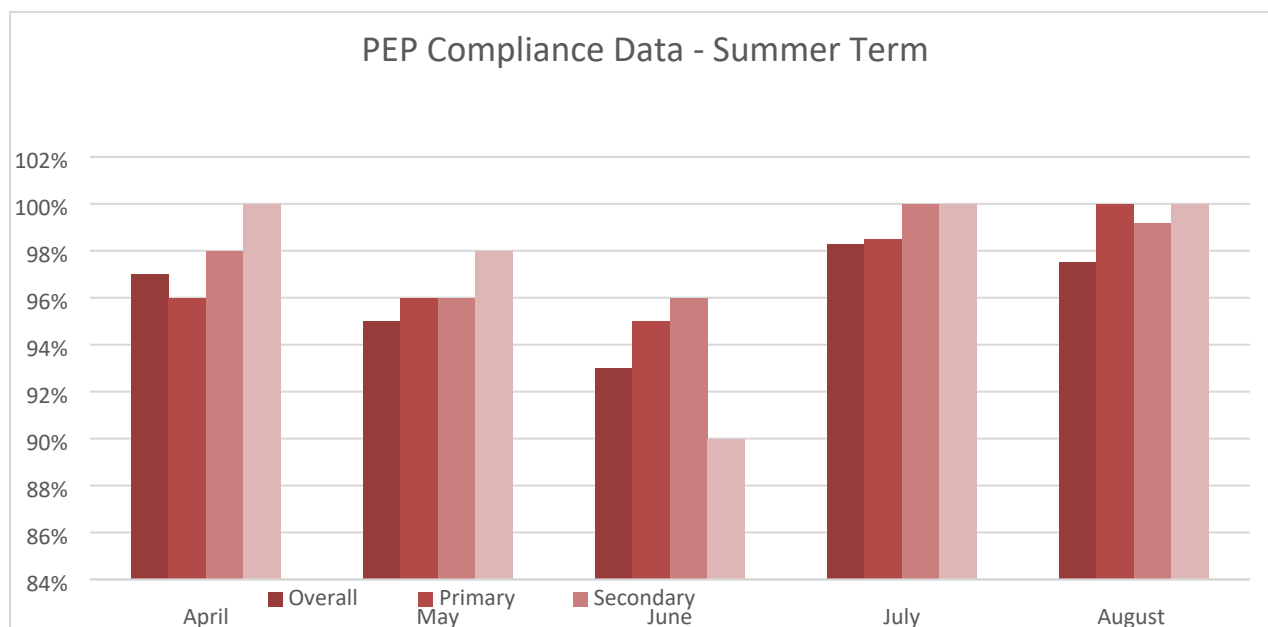


PEP Compliance Data – Spring Term



Month	Overall	Early Years - N1/2	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
January 2019	98%	67%	100%	99%	98%
February 2019	99%	89%	100%	100%	98%
March 2019	99%	67%	100%	99%	100%

PEP Compliance Data – Summer Term



Month	Overall	Early Years - N1/2	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
April 2019	97%	67%	97%	98%	100%
May 2019	95%	0%	96%	96%	98%
June 2019	98%	57%	98.50%	100%	100%
July 2019	98%	57%	98.50%	100%	100%
August 2019	97.50%	57%	100%	99.20%	100%

PEP Quality

Time of Year	% Overall Good Quality	% AMBER	% RED	% NOT YET RAGGED
February 2019	86%	9%	3%	2.5%
May 2019	81%	9%	9%	1%
August 2019	74.10%	10.80%	12.90%	2%

At the end of August 2019, there were 31 children/young people who had a poorly graded PEP. The reason for this is due to not meeting the criteria standards that are in our Quality Assurance Guidelines. A PEP is rated as red if there are no minutes or if the PEP lacks the child's views. This is an issue which needs to be addressed in the forthcoming academic year.

What Next?

- Quality of PEPs remains a focal point for improvement. In the forthcoming year the VS will continue to provide PEP training and support to social workers, schools and colleges.
- PEP Surgery meetings will continue and social care managers will hold their teams to account for the social worker responsibilities of the PEP.

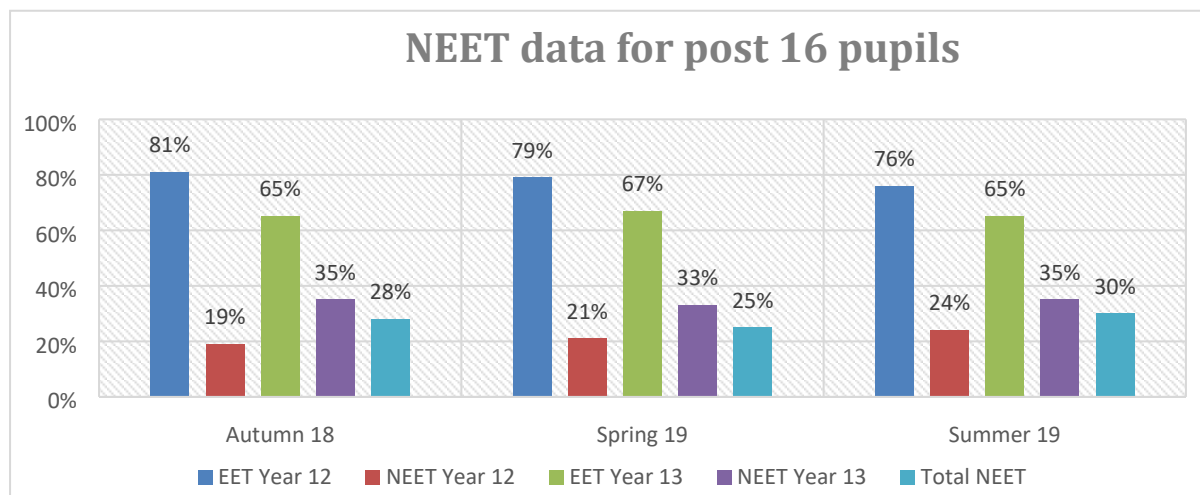
18. **Post 16 Update**

The Virtual School supports pupils who have left Year 11 and are moving onto the next stage of their education. Pupils take a variety of paths either through level 1, 2 or 3, FE or HE qualifications. Others combine apprenticeships with obtaining qualifications. Every pupil is supported appropriately to create the next step that is suitable for them. Conversations regarding post 16 pathways are discussed in Year 10. Transition is discussed before the student leaves Year 11 and students are supported with applying for college positions and courses. After the students receive their qualifications they are further supported to apply for places again if they were unsuccessful with their original choice and all can access support from the Virtual School 16+ Education Adviser if necessary with activities such as applying for a bursary, receiving additional tuition, interventions and attendance at disruption meeting with colleges and employers. Further Education Personal Education Plans are put in place for every student, even those without an educational placement. The Virtual School works closely with the aftercare team to support pupils in Year 13 and beyond. In the Year 2018/19, 12 pupils are currently in university with a further 5 starting in 2019/2020.

19. **Not in Education Employment or Training [NEET]**

The Virtual School closely monitors any post 16 young person who has CLA status and who is NEET. They are monitored fortnightly and the Post 16+ Education Adviser works with the young person, social care, personal advisors and local colleges and businesses to create the best possible opportunity for the young person to be placed in education, employment or training. Thurrock Council's aim is to have no NEET Looked after Children. NEET data is provided to the Virtual School Governing Body every term as part of the Headteacher's report. The NEET and EET figures supplied in the graph below are specifically only for the children in the Virtual

School cohort and would therefore see high in comparison with the national figures. In the summer term, data for those who are NEET but taking part in engagement activities, as defined by the DFE, have been included.



What Next?

- For the forthcoming academic year, the Post 16 Educational Adviser will be individually case working with the NEET young people to actively reduce the amount of NEETs there are. This will be coordinated with the Inspire Youth Hub services as a resource.

20. Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

This year has seen a decreased demand for the Virtual School team to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. The Eastern Region sharing protocol arrangements have enabled young people to be transferred to boroughs with fewer numbers than Thurrock. The number of UASC coming into Thurrock has not reduced, however, they now move to other boroughs. Our existing UASC pupils continue to do so well in their colleges and schools and those who have been with us for over 12 months are making good progress with their English. The impact of this has been substantial as it enabled UASC to access education and ultimately progress onto more academic Level 1 and 2 courses. One of our UASC students has just achieved A*, A, A in his A 'levels.

20. Virtual School Governing Body

The Virtual School Governing Body [GB] was formed in the autumn term 2016. Meetings are held once per term. The Governing Body is used to hold the Virtual School to account and ensure that the team are maximising positive outcomes for CLA.

The members of this GB 2018/19 were:

Chair: R Patterson [Director of Children's Services]

Vice Chair: M Lucas [Assistant Director of Learning, Skills and Inclusion]

Headteacher: K Pullen [Virtual School]

In Borough School Representative Secondary: Dr S Asong [CEO The Stanford and Corringham Schools Trust]

In Borough School Representative Primary: N Shadbolt [HT Aveley Primary School]

Out of Borough School Representative: B Read [HT R J Mitchell Primary School]

Out of Borough School Representative: D McKeown [HT The Deanes School]

Post 16 Education Representative: K Kozlova-Boran – Service Manager Learning and Careers

Social Care Representative: L Froment – Service Manager Children Looked After Services

Staff Governor: G Page [Operations Co-Ordinator for the Virtual School]

The purpose of the Governing Body is to hold the VSHT to account and to ensure that clear and regular lines of reporting are in place. The VSHT prepares a range of documentation for the GB to approve and to question the strategy and decisions made by the VSHT. For example: attendance policy, PEP protocol, Pupil Premium Plus Policy, safeguarding policy, Quality Assurance of Provision process.

In addition the VSHT reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee on a regular basis.

21. **Additional Strategies to support the educational progress of Thurrock Children in Care**

Working in Partnership with other Teams in Thurrock Council and out of borough councils

The Virtual School works with a range of teams within Thurrock to enable the best possible outcomes for our CLA. These include School Improvement and Inclusion, Social Care, Special Educational Needs including Educational Psychologists, Fostering, Health, Admissions and Education Welfare. This cohesive approach works together around the child/young person to create a supportive, knowledgeable level of service aimed at serving the best interest of the CLA.

The Virtual School also works with the relevant teams in other boroughs for our CLA who are placed out of borough.

Foster Carer Forums

These provide opportunities to share good practice, provide key messages and obtain valuable feedback and insight into the factors affecting the CLA. The VSHT has been meeting at Foster Carer support groups to provide key information about Pupil Premium Plus and Electronic Personal Education Plans. Foster carer forum meetings started in Spring Term 16 and will continue to happen once per term. These covered a range of topics including using EPEP. In addition the VSHT attends new foster carer forums and provides induction training.

Additionally this year, as part of action research, the VSHT conducted a series of intensive training sessions for a group of volunteer foster carers. This provided 16 hours of training on educational matters. This course of action is planned for the forthcoming academic year and the VSHT has written a Corporate Parenting report to be presented in September 2019 detailing the impact of this training approach.

Designated Teacher Forums

As with the Foster Carer forums, the aim of this is to disseminate key messages, improve lines of communication, foster good partnership working and discuss issues affecting our CLA in schools. These are held every half term by the Virtual School Head.

This year the VS team provided a day of free training to all designated teachers on trauma and attachment. Each participant received a resource bank of books providing them with strategies to support trauma and attachment within their schools. This action is planned again for the forthcoming academic year and a large conference is planned inviting professional guest speakers.

General Support for Foster Carers and Designated Teachers

The Virtual School provides a range of telephone and face to face advice and support and prides itself on being able to deliver a good level of service. Our approachable manner enables us to have good relationships with these key professionals to enable us to work together for the best outcomes of our pupils.

Social Worker Training and Support

The Virtual School adopts a flexible and responsive approach to the support and training needs of our social workers. The Virtual School Head attends briefings and team meetings with social care to disseminate good practice.

Liaison with Schools

This is a vital part in supporting the CLA as the Virtual School works closely with in and out of borough schools to ensure that pupils are supported within their educational placement. We offer support and advice on a range of areas such as behaviour, raising attainment and narrowing the gap. The Virtual School provides

challenge and makes schools accountable to their statutory duties to ensure that pupils are treated and supported appropriately to meet their varying needs. Part of this also includes providing training to school governors.

Book Trust Letterbox

In order to promote enjoyment and pleasure in reading and improve reading outcomes the Virtual School works in partnership with the Letterbox Club. The Letterbox Club is an award-winning programme managed by Book Trust, in partnership with the University of Leicester, which aims to provide enjoyable educational support for Looked After Children aged 5-13. Children and young people in care to Thurrock are enrolled onto the programme which entitles them to a colourful parcel of books, maths activities, stationery and other complementary materials once every month for six months, from May to October. All of the books in the parcels have been carefully selected by the panel at Book Trust for the children in the programme. Over the six-month period the parcels will also include other items such as a library joining card or information about how to join a library, name plates, bookmarks and letters from a selection of children's authors.

Thurrock Virtual School Book Trust Co-ordinator, Mrs Tina McGuinness, holds an Open Forum once a month for the Foster carers and CLA to collect the parcels in person and build a relationship with the Virtual School promoting reading and the use of library facilities.

Advice and Guidance for previously looked after children

The Virtual School also provides advice and guidance for those pupils who were previously looked after. This would be particularly relevant for adopted children and their schools and families to ensure that their needs are appropriately supported. In line with the statutory guidance, the team have met with schools and parents to support the needs of their child/young person.

Attendance at PEP Meetings

Wherever possible and if appropriate, the Virtual School attends PEP meetings to model good practice, raise accountability, monitor the pupils' education and provision and ensure that the PEP process is thorough in supporting the CLA's education. We endeavour to attend the first PEP for every new CLA pupil and attend PEP meetings for those pupils who may be experiencing difficulties in their learning.

Tuition Services

Many schools use tuition as part of their pupil premium spend. There are occasions when additional tuition is needed. The Virtual School commissions the services of Fleet Tuition, Equal Education and Prospero. The One to One Tuition Programme for CLA was created to provide additional academic support for children who are not currently reaching their potential or may be missing school. Generally one-one tuition

is used to help pupils who face academic barriers in any subject and the Virtual School works closely with schools, foster carers, social workers and the pupil to ensure that the right tuition is matched to needs. It is not possible to provide one-one tuition for every pupil and so this resource is targeted to suit needs and support requirements.

Attendance Monitoring

Thurrock Virtual School commissions the services of an external provider called Looked After Call to monitor the attendance of all of our Children Looked After in and out of borough attending schools and colleges. All pupils are monitored on a daily basis. If pupils are not attending school an alert is created to ascertain where the pupil is and why they are not at school. This promotes the safeguarding of our pupils and promotes good attendance. It also enables the Virtual School to monitor any exclusions, attendance or punctuality issues. The Virtual School has a clear Attendance Policy which provides a rationale behind why attendance is given high priority and this can be read in conjunction with this report.

22. **Professional Development of VS Staff**

As a Virtual School we take professional development very seriously as it enables us to reflect on our practice and improve our service. The VSHT has been working with the National Association of Virtual School Heads and Bath/Spa University to complete Post Graduate Certificate of Professional Practice linked to Care Experienced Children. This course has been extremely beneficial for developing knowledge and theory which has been put into practice within the service. The VS team have attended conferences or training about matters such as: County Lines, Gang Related Violence; Radicalisation, Trauma and Attachment, Special Educational Needs and the Children in Need review. Course attendance is closely monitored and evaluated as part of the Continuing Professional Development approach and Performance Management processes of Thurrock Council.

23. **Author of this report**

Keeley Pullen BA [Hons] PGCE NPQH

Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Thurrock Children Looked After

Submission date for Governors Thursday 14th November 2019

Submission date to Corporate Parenting Committee Tuesday 7th January 2020

Work Programme

Committee: Corporate Parenting

Year: 2019/2020

Dates of Meetings: 4 June 2019, 10 September 2019, 7 January 2020 & 3 March 2020

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
4 June 2019		
Children's Social Care Performance	Janet Simon/Mandy Moore	Officers
Overview of Academic Year 2018/19	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Fostering and Adoption Statements of Purpose	Dan Jones	Officers
Fostering/Adoption Panel Reports	Dan Jones	Officers
Private fostering Annual report	Julia Sutton	Officers
Care Leavers Presentation	Michele Lucas	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
10 September 2019		
Sufficiency Placement	Sheila Murphy/Sue Green	Officers
Intensive Foster Carer Training Action Research	Keeley Pullen	Officers This item was deferred to the January meeting.
Looked After Children Pledge	Sheila Murphy	Officers
Local Offer for Care Leavers	Michele Lucas	Officers

Case Study's regarding how/why children come into our care	Janet Simon	Officers
Annual Report – IRO	Ruth Murdock	Officers
Corporate Parenting Committee – Annual Report 18/19	Shelia Murphy/Democratic Services Officer	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
7 January 2020		
Children's Social Care Performance	Jackie Groom	Officers
Ofsted Report Verbal Update or To Follow Report	Sheila Murphy	Officers
Annual Report of the Virtual Schools	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Intensive Foster Carer Training Action Research	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Head Start Housing	Michele Lucas	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
3 March 2020		
Children's Social Care Performance	Sheila Murphy	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

Clerk: Kenna-Victoria Healey

Last Updated: 15 November 2019