

6 March 2019		ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Pupil Premium Plus Report for the Virtual School		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Keeley Pullen, Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Interim Assistant Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director for Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Raising achievement in all areas of education for our Children Looked After [CLA] remains 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 following report details the use of Department for Education Pupil Premium Plus Grant for Children Looked After. The aim of this document is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of spending linked to this grant for 2018-2019 and with the proposed strategy plan for spending in 2019-2020.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee notes the budget and spending report for 2018-2019 for Pupil Premium Plus Grant for Children Looked After.

1.2 That the Committee notes the overall spending by schools of the grant.

1.3 That the Committee approves the proposed strategy plan for the Pupil Premium Plus Grant for 2019-2020.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Pupil Premium Plus Grant is allocated from the Department for Education to promote the educational outcomes and attainment for children looked after.

This responsibility for the allocation and implementation lies with the Virtual School Head [VSH] for every local authority. This fund is allocated every year at the beginning of the financial year. The VSH must allocate this funding across a school academic year for every pupil from Reception year to year 11.

- 2.2 The amount allocated per pupil is £2,300. This has increased in the financial year 2018-2019 from £1,900 in previous years. Thurrock has a clear policy [please refer to Appendix A] which is shared with Head Teachers of looked after pupils placed in and out of the borough at the beginning of the financial and academic year. Thurrock Virtual School allocates £600 per academic term for every looked after child. The remaining £500 is top sliced to pay for central services which support pupils in the Virtual School. Details of this spending are in this report. A top slice has been in place for 3 years and this practice is in line with Virtual Schools around the country and was on the advice of Her Majesty's Inspectorate [HMI] for the eastern region.
- 2.3 There are clear terms and conditions from the Department for Education [DFE] as to what this money can be spent on. These are found in the Conditions of Grant which are published online annually. Additionally Virtual School Heads must abide by details in statutory documents such as Promoting the Educational Outcomes of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children. [DFE February 2018] The Virtual School Head Teacher adheres to these guidelines when allocating the funding. For example: that it is not used to pay for statutory core services that the Local Authority should provide, or that it is used to double fund pupils statutory services which are part of their funding in schools, i.e. those with an Educational Health Care Plan.

3. Allocation of Spending by the Virtual School

3.1 Details of School Allocation

- 3.1.1 The Local Authority census return details the number of children who are looked after to Thurrock during the time of this census in March of every year. This is the basis by which the Department for Education allocates the Pupil Premium Plus [PP+] funding that Thurrock Local Authority receives. In the financial year 2018-2019, Thurrock received funding for 262 pupils which totalled £602,600.
- 3.1.2 From this overall amount £471,600 was immediately allocated to schools to be released on a termly basis.
- 3.1.3 In line with the Thurrock Pupil Premium Policy, schools are responsible for evidencing how they are spending this money per term on the looked after child/young person. Schools and educational settings must be able to demonstrate that this is being allocated to meet the needs of pupils and that it is making an impact on their educational outcomes. This evidence is found in the Personal Educational Plan [PEP] online document. Every child/young person looked after must have a PEP every term. This must contain detail

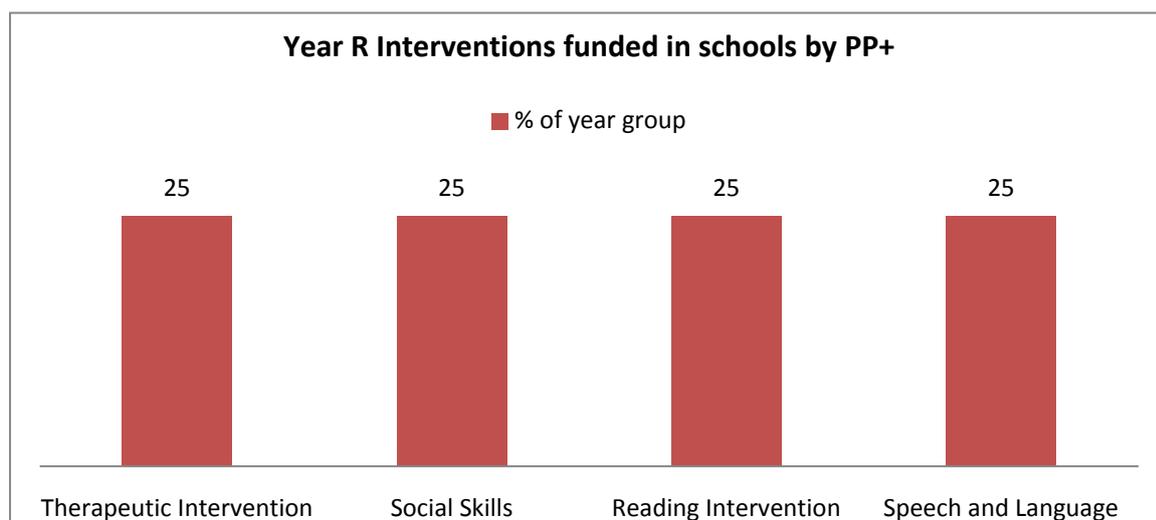
relating to the educational experiences and progress of the child/young person and must evidence clear targets to improve outcomes. The PEP evidences any support and interventions that are in place to meet needs. Every PEP document is scrutinised by a member of the Virtual School team and targets are audited by the Virtual School Head Teacher before funding is released. Individual PEPs detail school spending for every pupil.

3.1.4 The impact of these measures has ensured that there is a level of challenge and accountability. Educational settings have been encouraged to review their spending and to use it effectively to focus on the impact for improving educational attainment. The grant is not to be used as a personal budget and it should not be used to fund activities which are paid for through foster carer allowances. It has enabled there to be a clear dialogue of expectations between the Virtual School and settings to promote educational outcomes, improve progress and close the attainment gap in comparison with non-looked after peers. The robustness of this process has been further improved through the increased staffing for the Virtual School as there are more staff to directly challenge and hold other professionals to account.

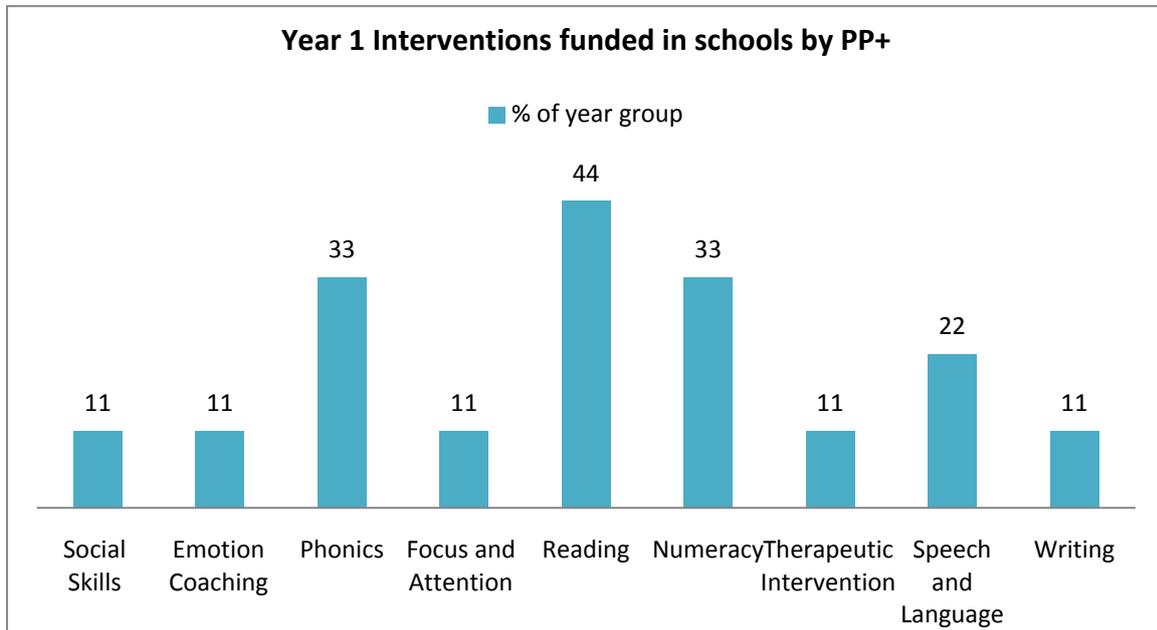
3.2 Overview of Spending by Primary Schools

3.2.1 The following graphs show an overview of how each year group is benefiting from the allocation by their educational setting of their Pupil Premium Plus funding. This detail has been obtained by analysis of individual PEP information for each pupil. Some pupils have multiple interventions and the money is allocated across a range of activities and support. Other pupils may only have one type of intervention.

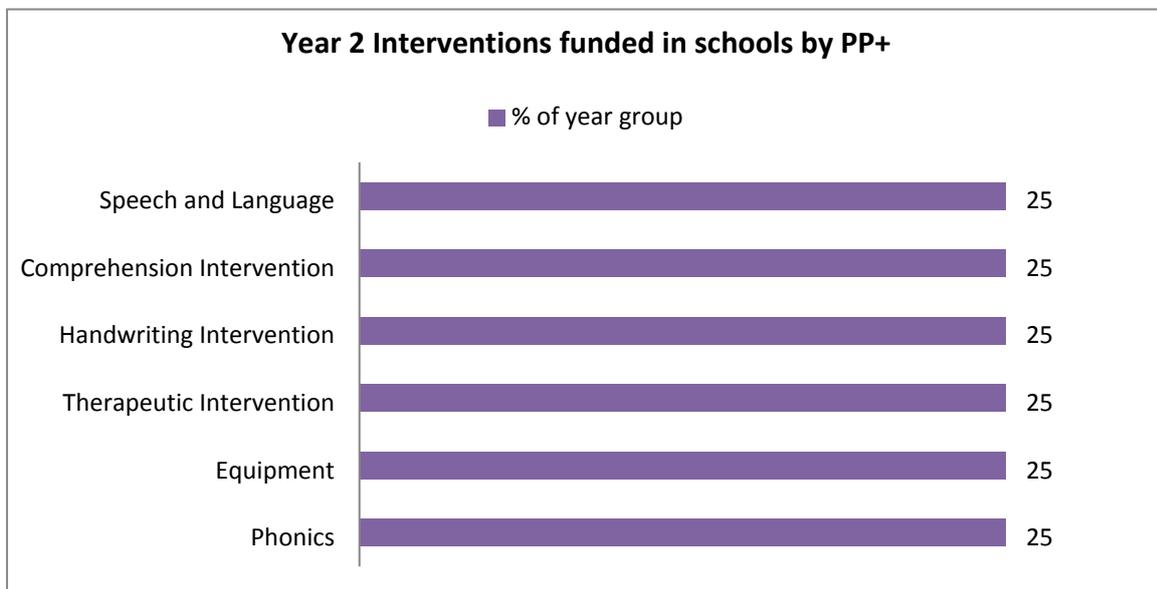
3.2.2 The Reception year has a very small year group with only 4 pupils. The graph below details their intervention needs. The range of support is evenly spread with 1 child receiving 1 intervention each.



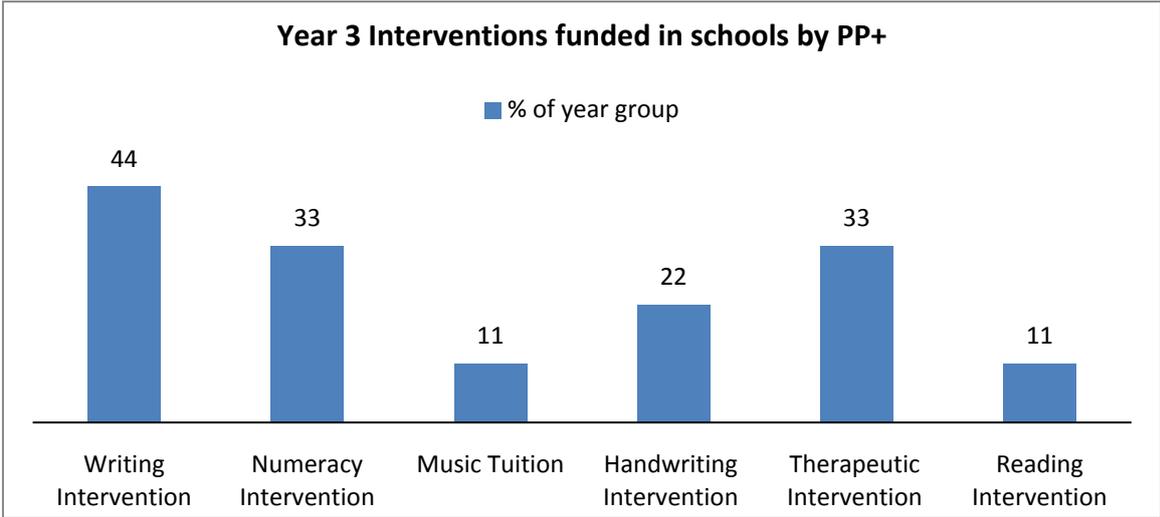
3.2.3 The Year 1 group has 9 pupils and the number of interventions provided by schools has increased to meet the varying needs of this group. These are detailed below. As expected, focus is on developing reading, numeracy and phonics skills.



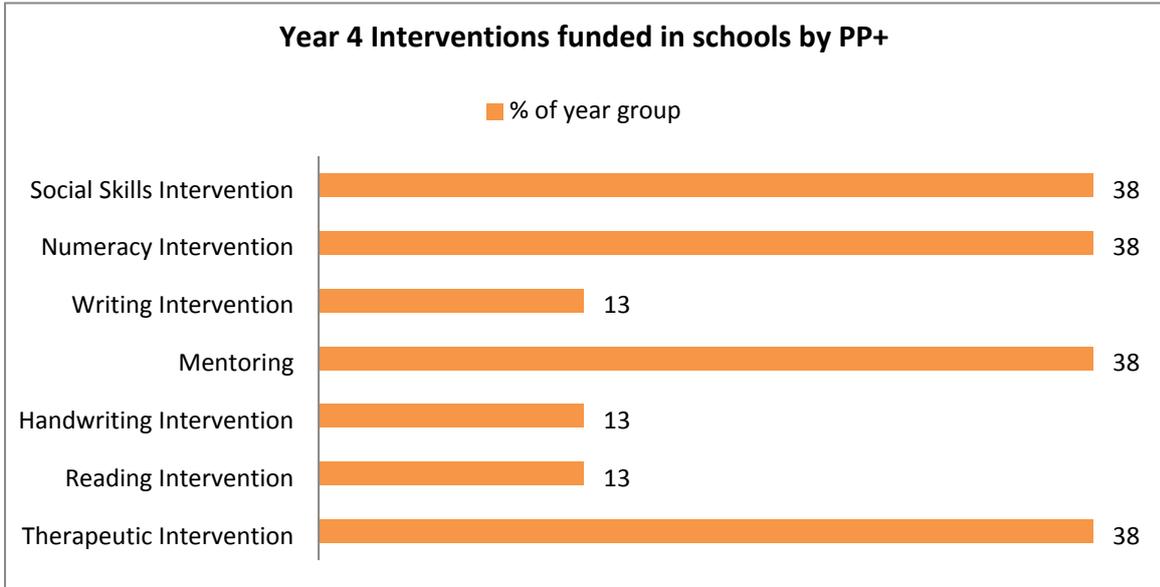
3.2.4 Our Year 2 is a very small cohort of only 4 pupils. They have multiple interventions which they access. These are illustrated below. There is an even spread of support based upon individual need.



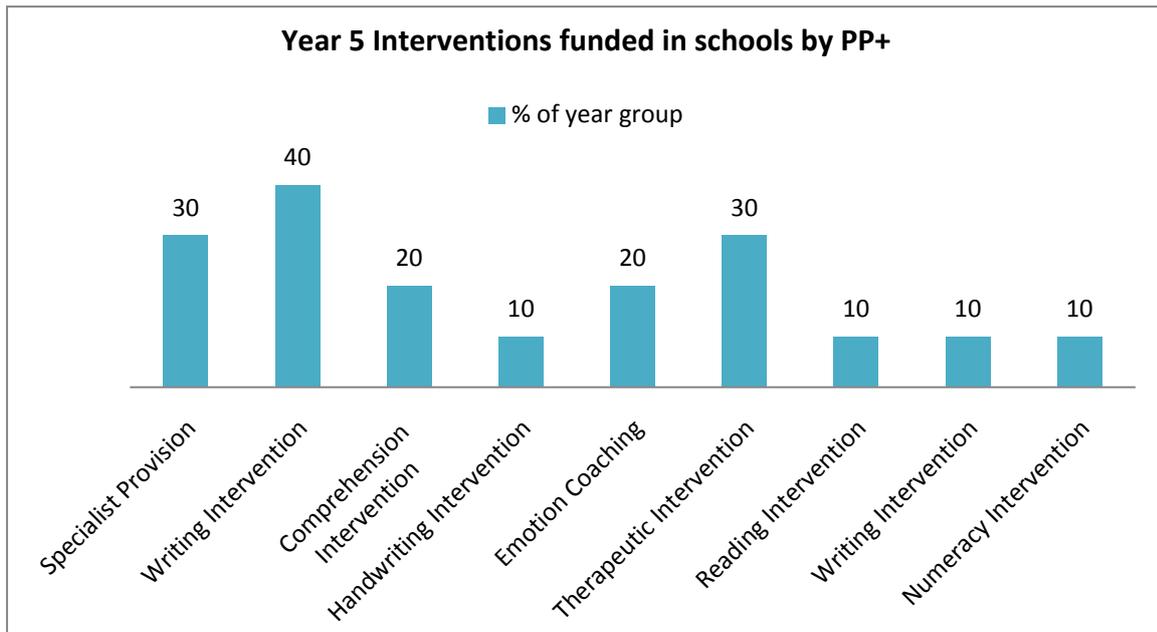
3.2.5 Year 3 has 9 pupils who access individual support from schools. The PP+ funded intervention are outlined below. The majority of interventions is based upon improving the areas of writing and numeracy. Therapeutic support is also quite high for this year group.



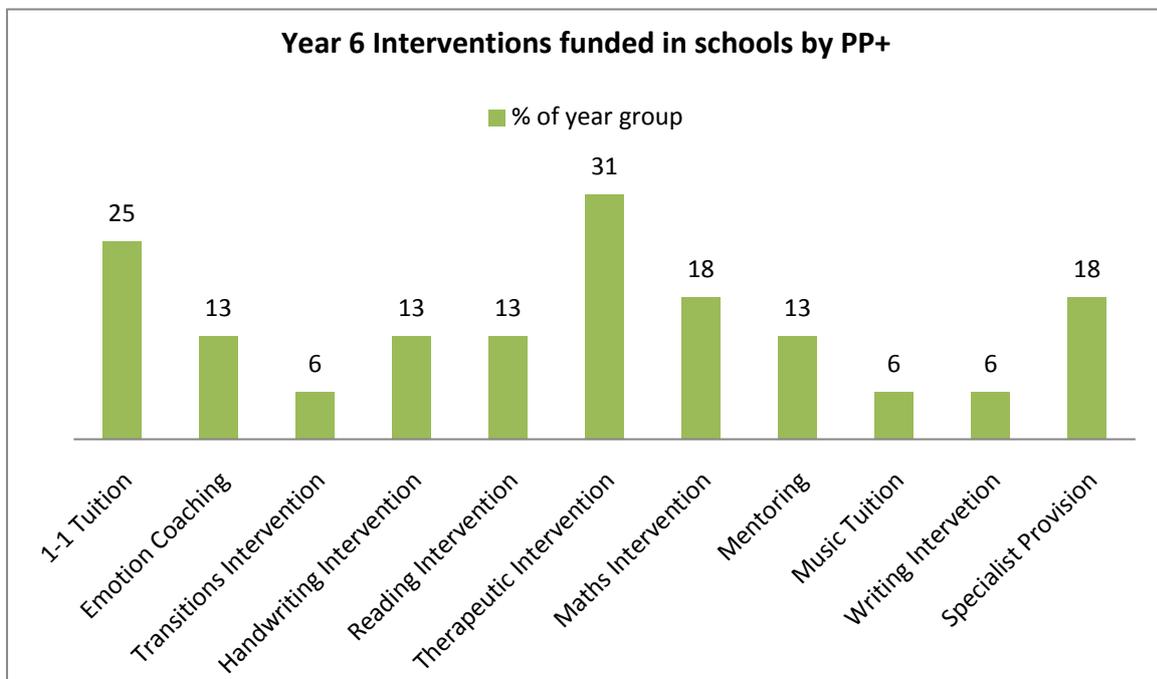
3.2.6 Year 4 currently contains 8 pupils. There is a broad range of intervention provided in schools. The most prevalent in this year group being Therapeutic Mentoring and Numeracy interventions. This is illustrated below.



3.2.7 Our Year 5 currently has 10 pupils. 3 of which [30%] attend specialist provision. Those attending specialist residential or SEN provision do not apply for pupil premium due to double funding. However, settings are able to claim for additional funds if required and each application is considered on its individual merit and proposed impact. There is a broad spectrum of intervention supplied for Year 5s. This is illustrated below.



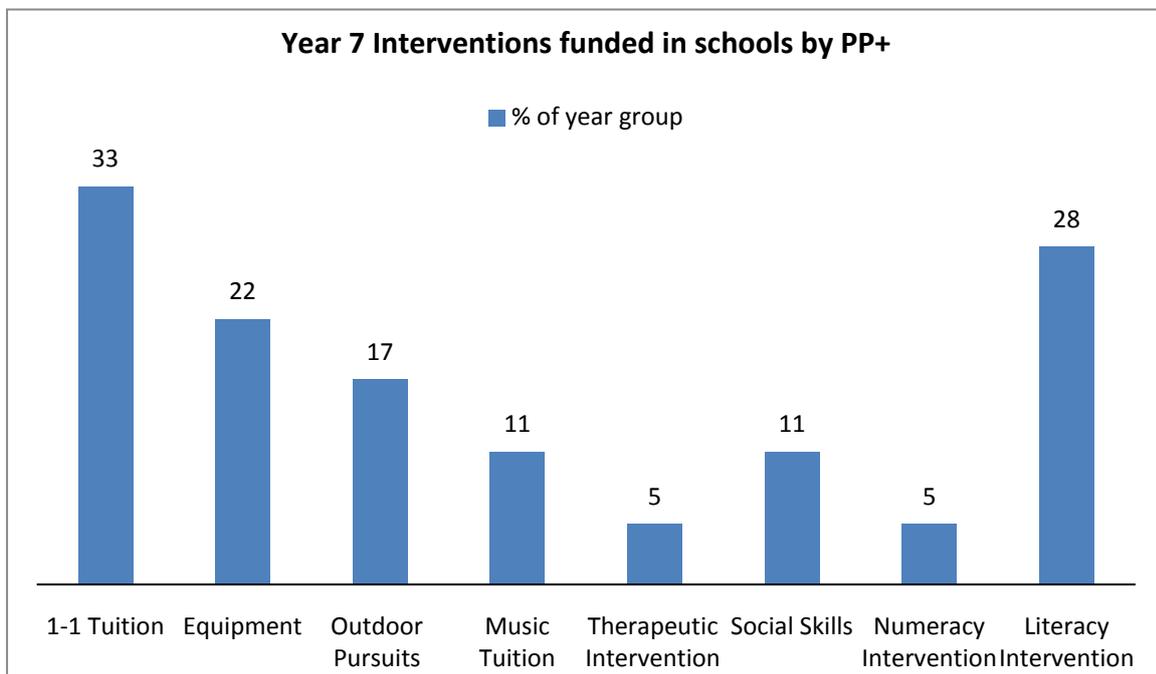
3.2.8 Year 6 is our largest of the year groups in the Primary Phase with 16 pupils. Schools are preparing their pupils for SATs in May. The Virtual School is using pupil premium plus top slice funding [see further in this report] to provide additional maths and English tuition in the home to promote better outcomes for these tests and enable more pupils to meet expected standards of development. As our pupils get older the number of interventions provided by schools tends to increase. This is detailed in the graph below. Therapeutic intervention is quite high for this year group.



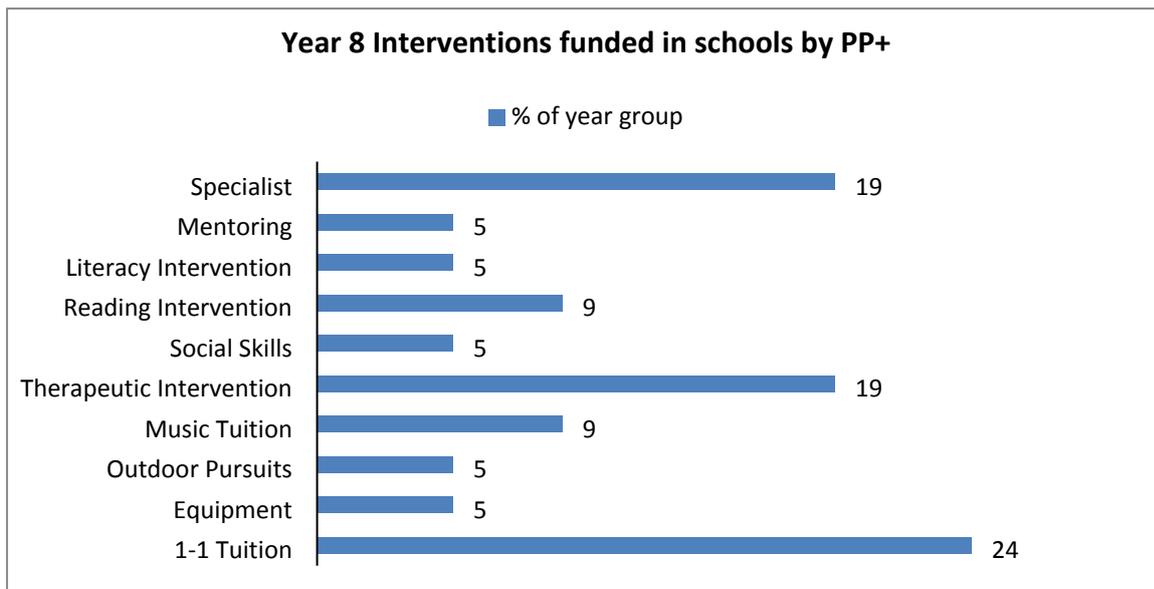
3.3 Overview of Spending by Secondary Schools

3.3.1 The following graphs show an overview of how each year group is benefiting from the allocation by their educational setting of their Pupil Premium Plus funding. This detail has been obtained by analysis of individual PEP information for each pupil. Some pupils have multiple interventions and the money is allocated across a range of activities and support. Other pupils may only have one type of intervention.

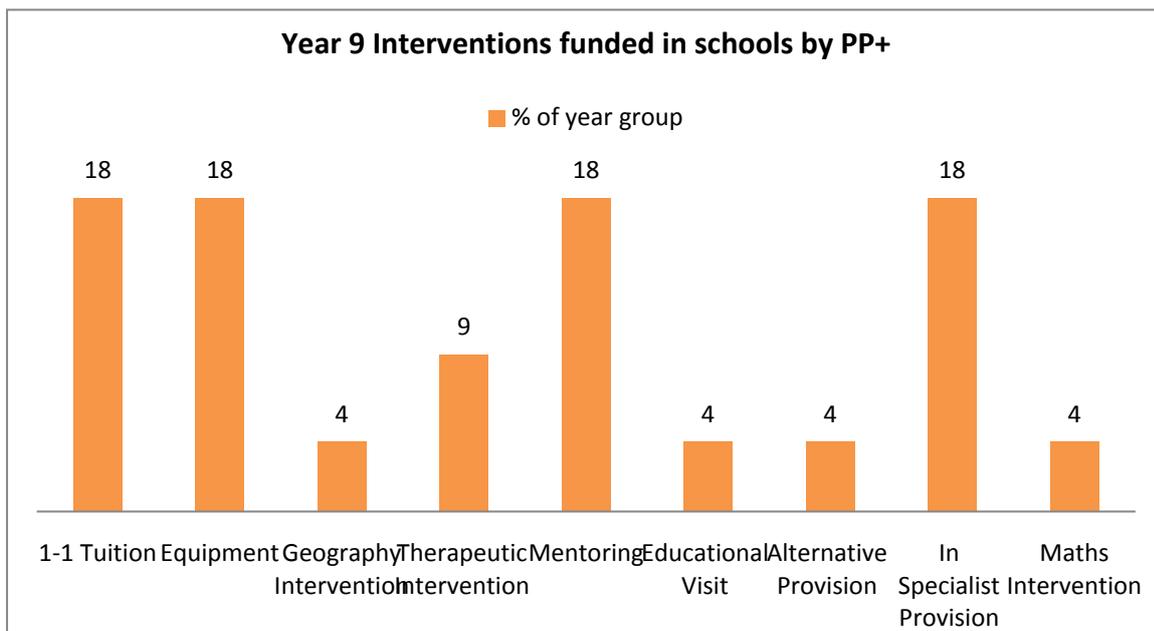
3.3.2 Year 7 – The following graph details the range of interventions/support supplied. There are 18 pupils in this year group and the data is represented as a percentage of that year group. It can be seen that there is a wide variety of interventions taking place and some pupils are experiencing multiple interventions. The most used method for support is through 1-1 tuition with literacy interventions being the second.



3.3.3 Year 8 shows similar types of support with some variation as to the type of interventions used by schools. For example the use of mentoring. There are currently 21 pupils in Year 8. The graph below details their support. There are 4 pupils who are accessing SEND funding and have their educational placement funded directly, this is shown as specialist in the graph below. They have not applied to use the funding as this would be considered as double funding. However, should the setting require additional funding, the pupil allocation is available. In addition to 1-1 tuition being highest the next is Therapeutic intervention. This is usually provided by school based external councillors who are commissioned directly by the school.

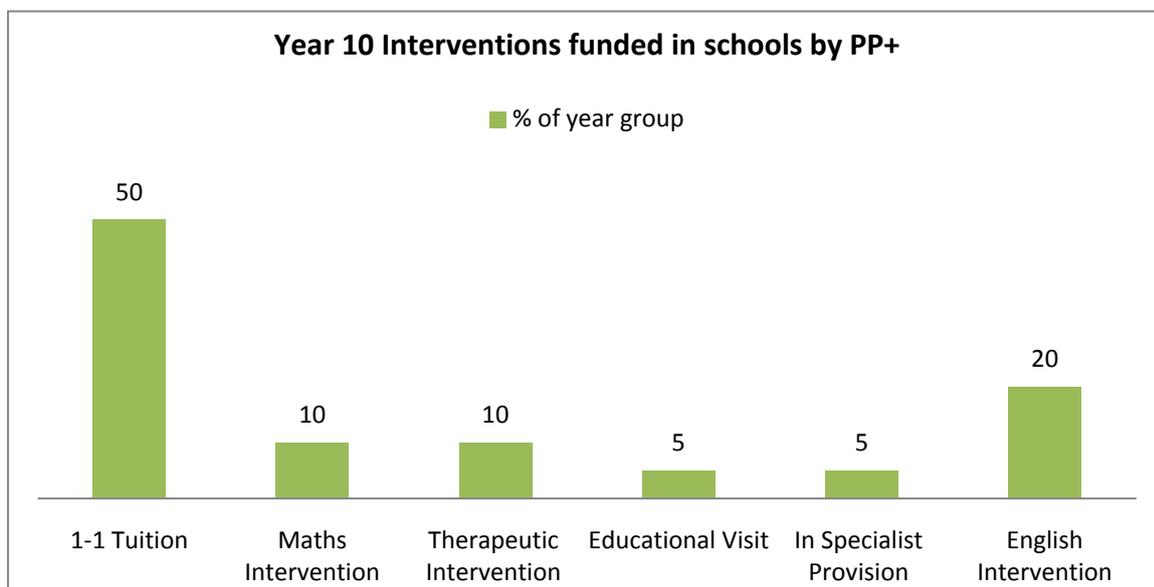


3.3.4 There are currently 22 children in Year 9. There are 4 pupils accessing specialist settings who are not applying for PP+. As with year 8 these can be provided with funding if needed.

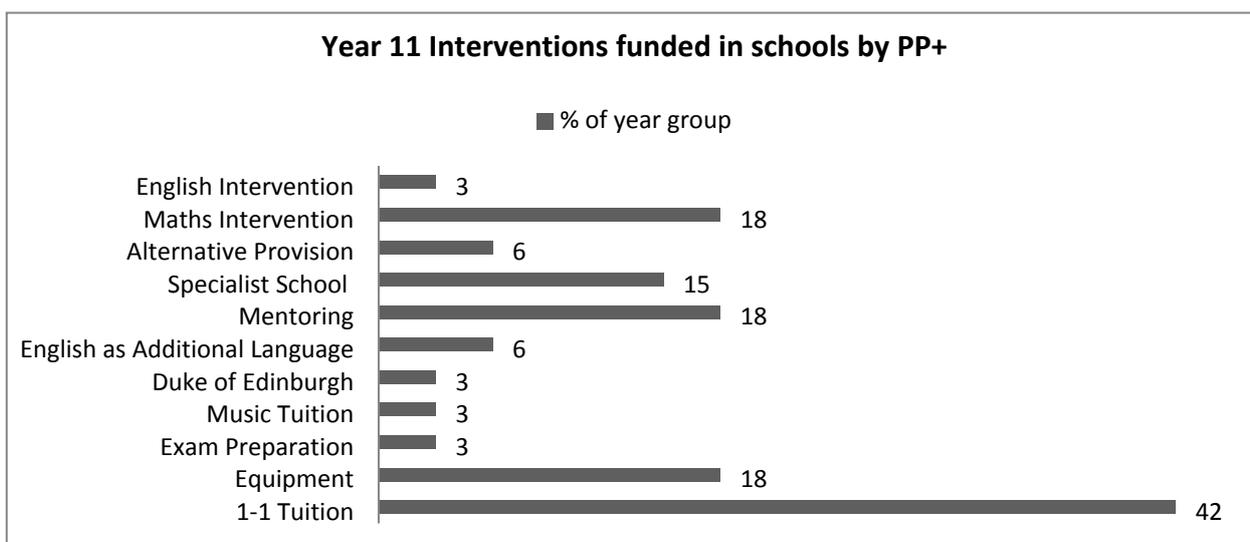


3.3.5 In Year 10 there are 20 pupils. This cohort will additionally start to receive 1-1 tuition in the home supplied using additional pupil premium resources with some of the top slice funding. They will continue to receive their school based interventions. The tuition will be provided in the core subject areas of maths, English and science. Some students may wish to have additional non-core subjects if they wish. The main bulk of schools are supplying 1-1 tuition with pupil premium and this continues to be one of the most effective methods of reducing the differences compared to non-looked after peers. The graph below details the range of interventions supplied. There are currently 2 pupils who are missing an educational placement in school due to specific needs

and the lack of educational provision to meet their needs. They are being supplied with 15 hours per week of 1-1 tuition until a specialist school placement is found. Both of these pupils have an Education Health Care Plan [EHCP]. Tuition is costing £900 per week per pupil. This is being funded through the pupil premium top slice and some of the Designated Schools Grant [DSG]. The graph illustrates that 1-1 tuition in school is being used with 50% of the year group engaging with this activity.



3.3.6 Our Year 11 has the largest number of pupils in the year groups with 33 young people. A proportion of this group have received 1-1 home tutoring to support their GCSE attainment and this started in the summer term of Year 10. Some have declined this tuition as year 11 has progressed due to attending interventions within school. We have encouraged those who can maintain this commitment to continue with the tuition until they take their exams.

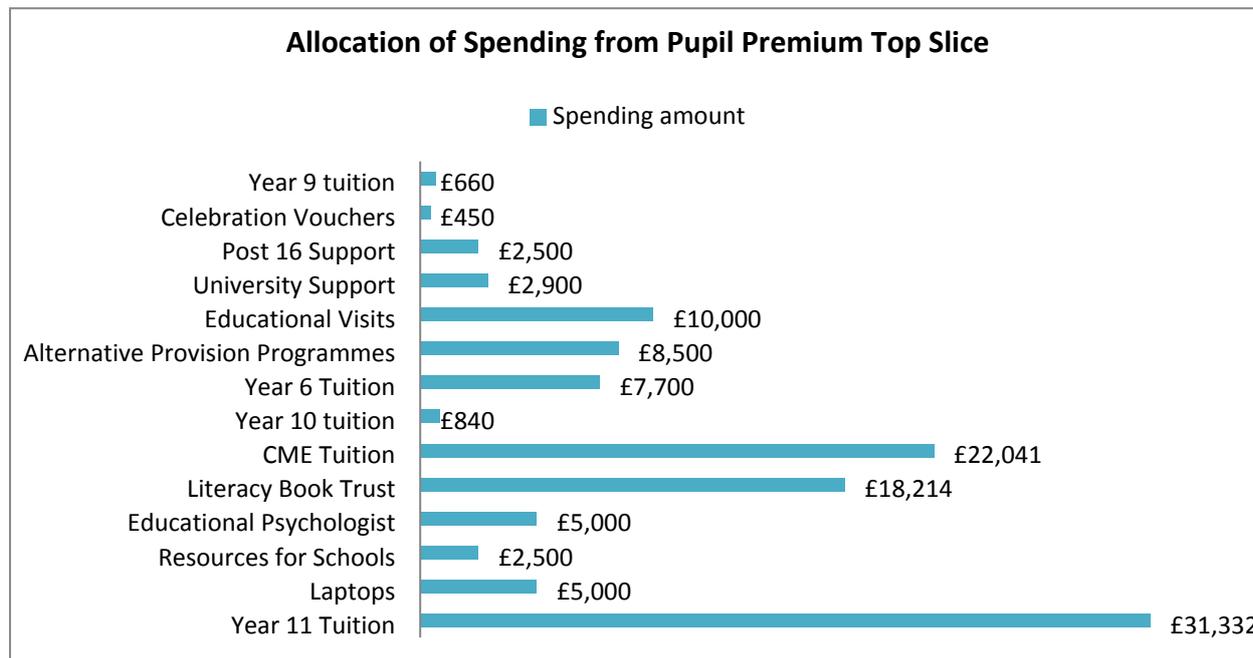


- 3.3.7 Overall it can be seen that the vast majority of intervention in schools is provided via 1-1 tuition and this increases as the pupils progress through the key stages. This is viewed by Sutton Trust research as being one of the most effective methods of supporting attainment and as such this is why the Virtual School commissions additional tuition for particular year groups.
- 3.3.8 In cases where schools do not use the pupil premium spending to support the pupil, the Virtual School intervenes with the social worker, the designated teacher and the foster carer to produce a specific spending plan. This is usually where the Virtual School will commission extra equipment or tuition to support learning. However, the vast majority of schools do apply for funding and it is very rare for a school to not apply for the PP+.

3.4 **Overview of Spending by the Virtual School**

- 3.4.1 As mentioned earlier in this report, the Virtual School top slices £500 per pupil. In the financial year 2018-2019 this has amounted to £131,000.
- 3.4.2 It is important to note that the allocations from the DFE are based upon the number of looked after children during the period of the census. It does not take into consideration the number of pupils who leave care during a year, or who come into care. All of these pupils are eligible for PP+, even if they are in care for 1 day. As mentioned above we were allocated funding for 262 pupils. This figure was based upon the census return.
- 3.4.3 When a pupil enters care at any point in the academic year, the educational setting immediately starts to receive PP+ funding for the term the pupil entered care. In some cases, the pupil may require additional funding for specific needs and to support the transition into care. This is allocated from the top slice. When a pupil moves school, the PP+ funding follows that child/young person to ensure that needs are met in their new setting.
- 3.4.4 When a pupil leaves care during an academic year the school/educational placement receives the remaining amount of PP+ up to the sum of £2,300. This is to cover any shortfall in funding in the interim between leaving care and being eligible for PP+ funding for being Previously Looked After [PLAC]
- 3.4.5 Schools are able to claim for additional funding to meet the needs of the pupil in excess of the allocated £1,800. This is used to support those pupils who have high needs and need significant intervention to remain in school. This has proved to be a very successful use of the top slice as this has ensured that we have had zero permanent exclusions.
- 3.4.6 Additional funding from the PP+ top slice has also been used to provide a range of specific interventions detailed in the next section and further plans for this are shown in the spending strategy plan for 2019-2020 [Appendix B]
- 3.4.7 The graph below details spending from the top slice and the allocation of funds for particular projects. The spending for this totals £117,637.

3.4.8 Details of the spending will be discussed after the graph.



3.4.9 Post 16 and University support has been provided to support those more able students as they embark in the next stage of their education. Laptops were provided to these students to help them with their degree work. Some laptops were specific types and cost £1,000 each to support computing and engineering degrees. Students were also provided with vouchers to enable them to buy the essential they needed for moving away. For example: cooking sets, duvets and additional items they may choose to support that settling in period. This is what any good parent would do when their young person leaves for university. Other students have needed specialist equipment when studying certain post 16 courses. For example: safety clothing equipment for construction, catering equipment. We have even helped one young lady obtain her forklift truck licence and she is now in employment as a result of this.

3.4.10 Some young people have been able to attend educational visits with their which would otherwise be too expensive for them to access using PP+ alone. This has enabled our children looked after to experience enriched cultural and educational experiences.

3.4.11 The commissioning of Educational Psychologists [EP] has been crucial for identifying needs and supporting the Education Health Care Plan process. When it is not a statutory piece of work, schools have to commission extra time. Without the additional funds from the top slice, this would have had to be delayed until other funding was sourced. This delay is unreasonable when the needs of our children looked after are so high and complex.

- 3.4.12 The provision of trauma and attachment resources for every Thurrock school has enabled key information to be provided to schools. This is in addition to the termly training that we provide for Designated Teachers. The Virtual School also provides training in trauma and attachment free to schools to enable their staff to better support our children and young people in their school. The impact and demand for this is increasing. One designated teacher commented that his school has halved the number of episodes that all students are missing as a result of poor behaviour. This is because they have adopted a trauma informed approach. This was as a direct result from reading the books that the Virtual School provided. It is an excellent outcome for all pupils attending this Thurrock school.
- 3.4.13 Children Missing Education [CME] is usually caused by an emergency placement move. This can result in a pupil having to move school. There is sometimes a delay in sourcing another educational placement. This is particularly the case if the pupil has an Education Health Care Plan [EHCP] due to the need to Special Educational Need services in the area having to consult with appropriate provision. Whenever, a pupil is missing education, the Virtual School commissions 15 hours per week of 1-1 tuition to prevent the young person from falling behind or becoming disengaged. Wherever possible CME must be avoided, however, when this is unavoidable the top slice funding can be used to support the educational needs for this period.
- 3.4.14 The Literacy Book Trust is a nationwide scheme which provides literacy and home learning resource packs. We use the top slice to fund this for all children and young people aged from nursery to Year 9. This enables them to receive a personal package in the post for 7 months of the year to support learning in their foster home and promote positive relationships with carers. Feedback from the carers and children is always positive.
- 3.4.15 The provision of additional tuition in the form of 1-1 in the home is an initiative which has developed over a number of academic years. Our aim from this is to provide extra learning and support for pupils in key year groups to promote the closing of the gap between them and their non-looked after peers. Although this is a significant amount of the funding obtained from the top slice, it is evident from the improvement in educational attainment data that this is having an impact. The more tuition that can be provided by qualified teachers, the better the outcomes. For this reason, we are always trying to increase the amount of funding that we devolve to this. It can also be seen by the schools' spending outlined above, that many schools employ this as a method of supporting increased academic achievement.
- 3.4.16 Laptops are purchased by the Virtual School to be provided to pupils who do not have access to this resource in their home. As our pupils progress through the key stages, the requirement for homework to be completed online and using digital technology increases. With this in mind, we provide laptops to those pupils based on need. A laptop agreement is signed by the pupil and guidance is provided to promote online safety and supervised use.

3.5 Previously Looked After Children [PLAC]

- 3.5.1 Previously Looked After Children are those who are no longer in care. They may have returned home, have been adopted or be subject to a Special Guardianship Order [SGO], or be subject to a child arrangement order. The schools who educate these pupils receive £2,300 per year to support the educational outcomes of these children and to meet individual needs. Arrangements for children leaving care during an academic year are noted above in this report. For those who have left care and are recorded as such by the school census mechanisms, the DFE directly pays this money to schools. The Virtual School Head does not hold responsibility for allocating or monitoring the use of this grant.

4. Overview of Spending Strategy for 2019-2020

- 4.1 The planned spending for the top slice has been provided in Appendix B. This will be discussed for approval by the Virtual School Governing Body. This details our aims for the forthcoming financial and academic year and is in line with the School Improvement Plan. The core focus for this plan is to identify potential barriers to learning and achievement and implement interventions to overcome these barriers. The impact of the spending will be reviewed each term and noted in an evaluation document produced alongside the plan.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In summary, the above Pupil Premium Plus Grant report provides an overview of external spending of the grant. Additionally it provides details of the top slice spending and how the Virtual School Head allocates this grant and monitors the spending for every child/young person looked after. It is essential that we recognise the hard work of educational settings to support the varied needs of our pupils and we as a Council will continue to support them in the next stages of their academic journey.

6. Additional Information for the Committee

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

7. Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1 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 and Young People Looked After.

8. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

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

9. IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Management Accountant

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 this 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. The pupil premium top slice has enabled demand to be met. The Pupil Premium Plus Grant has been agreed to be funded by the central government until 2020. The withdrawal of this funding will potentially have a significant impact on schools and the Virtual School.

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal

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" that must be followed in meeting this duty. The Pupil Premium Conditions of Grant must also be considered when discharging the duty to provide a Virtual School Head to allocate and monitor the spending of the grant.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead – Community Development

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.

9.4 Other implications (where significant)

There are no implications as a result of this report.

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):

- 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>
- 'Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities' – published July 2014 and revised March 2015 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities>
- 'Pupil Premium: funding and accountability for schools - How much pupil premium funding schools and non-mainstream schools receive, how they should spend it, and how we hold them to account – published March 2014 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>

11. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A – Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Policy for Thurrock Children Looked After 2018-2019
- Appendix B – Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Strategy 2019-2020

Report Author:

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