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:	Key Decision:
All	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]
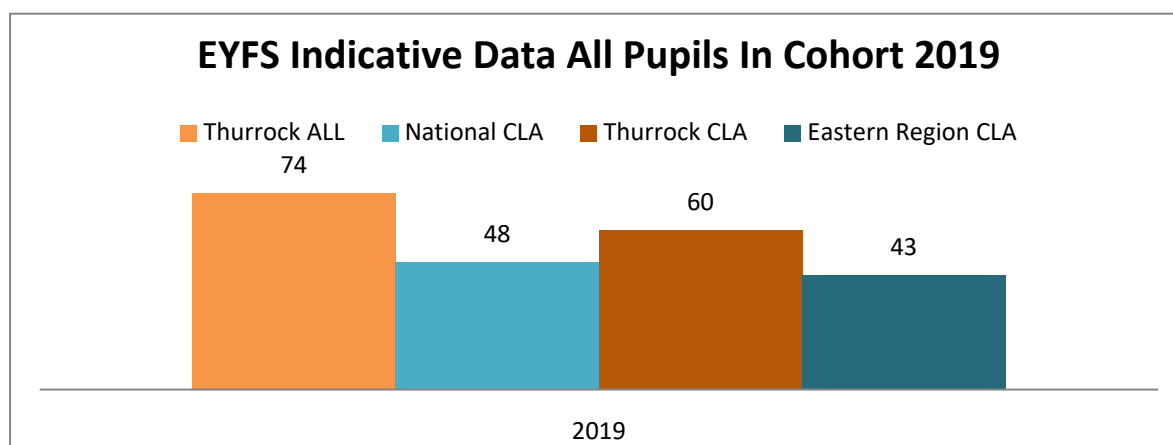Year 1 (5-6 years old)
KS1 (6-7 years old)
KS2 (10-11 years old)
KS4 (15-16 years old)

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)**

EYFS Indicative Data All Pupils In Cohort 2019

■ Thurrock ALL ■ National CLA ■ Thurrock CLA ■ Eastern Region CLA

Thurrock ALL: 74
National CLA: 48
Thurrock CLA: 60
Eastern Region CLA: 43

2019

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**

% pupils assessed as working at or exceeding the Expected Standard KS1 - Indicative 2019
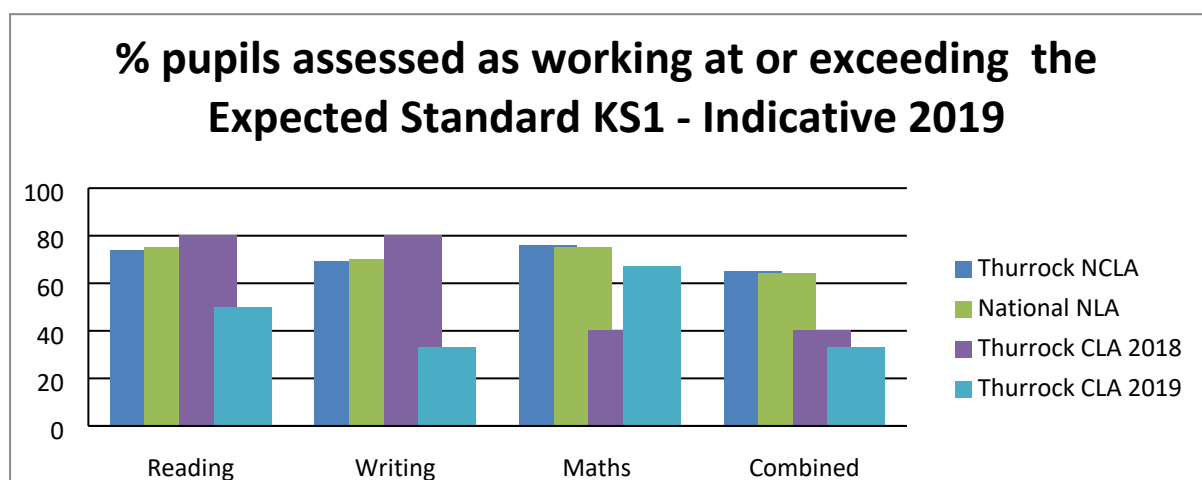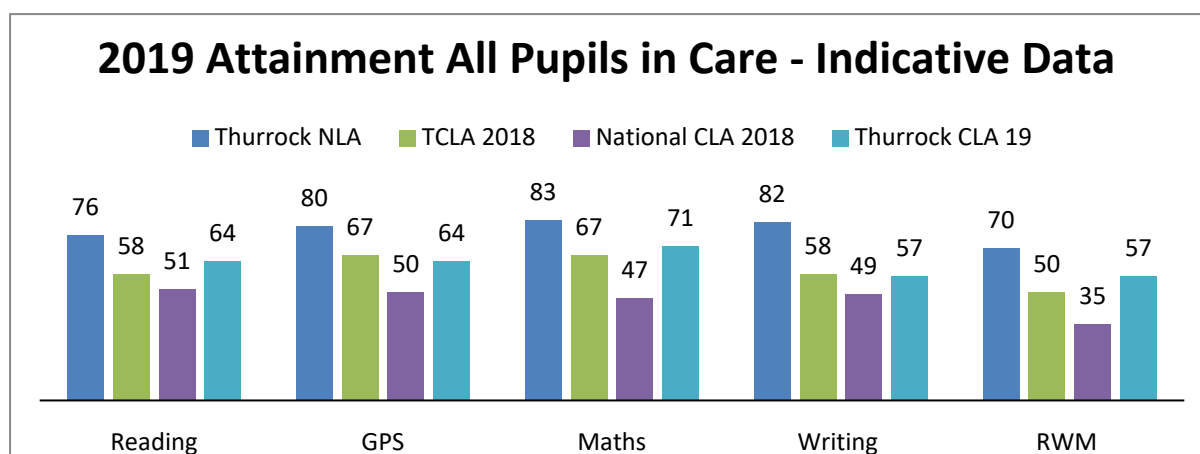
The above data is based upon a cohort size of 6 pupils. Analysis of this data indicates that Thurrock CLA have performed better in maths than the previous year but have performed less well in reading and writing compared to previous year. This is indicative data and includes all 6 pupils in the year group irrespective of the time in care. Challenges for Key Stage 1 included, 1 child was disapplied 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**

2019 Attainment All Pupils in Care - Indicative Data

Legend: ■ Thurrock NLA ■ TCLA 2018 ■ National CLA 2018 ■ Thurrock CLA 19

	Thurrock NLA	TCLA 2018	National CLA 2018	Thurrock CLA 19
Reading	76	58	51	64
GPS	80	67	50	64
Maths	83	67	47	71
Writing	82	58	49	57
RWM	70	50	35	57

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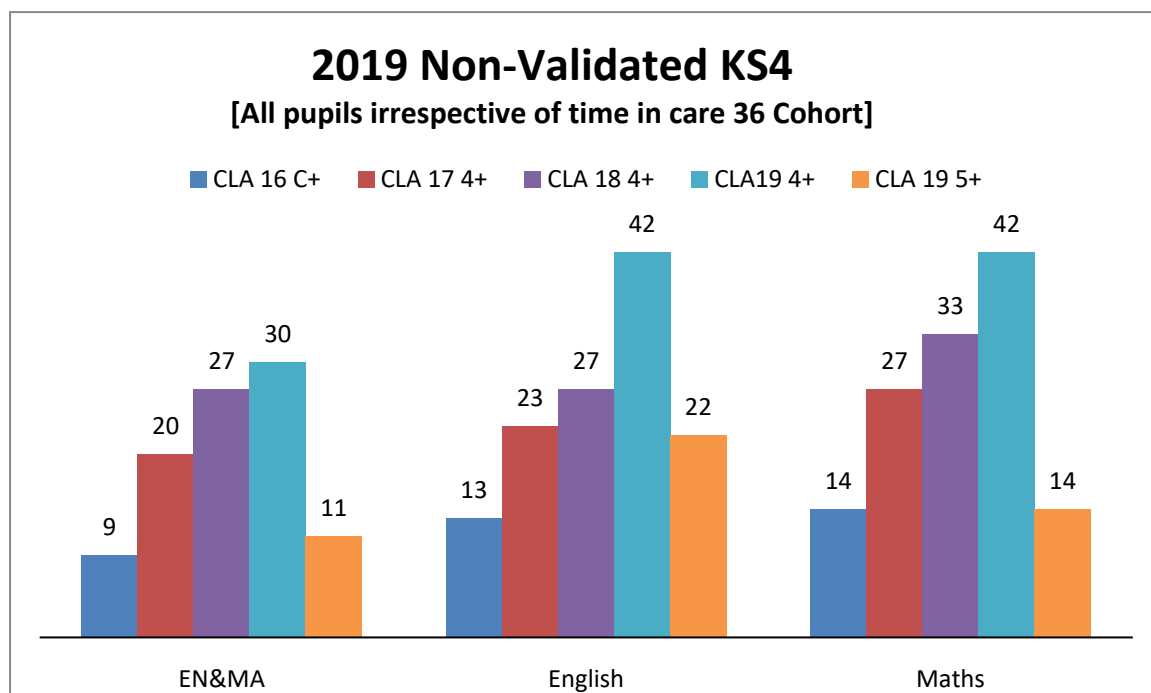
Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2019 data

- 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

2019 Non-Validated KS4

[All pupils irrespective of time in care 36 Cohort]

CLA 16 C+ ■ CLA 17 4+ ■ CLA 18 4+ ■ CLA19 4+ ■ CLA 19 5+ ■

	EN&MA	English	Maths
CLA 16 C+	9	13	14
CLA 17 4+	20	23	27
CLA 18 4+	27	27	33
CLA19 4+	30	42	42
CLA 19 5+	11	22	14

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 year2018-2019. 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