

<b>2 June 2020</b>		<b>ITEM: 10</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Pupil Premium Plus Report for the Virtual School</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> All	
<b>Report of:</b> Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is public</b>		

## **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. This grant is allocated for pupils attending schools from Reception through to Year 11. The aim of this document is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of spending linked to this grant for the financial year 2019-2020 and with the proposed strategy plan for spending in the financial year of 2020-2021.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 The Committee notes the budget and spending report for 2019-2020 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 2020-2021.**

### **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.

- 2.1.2 The amount allocated per pupil is £2,300. Thurrock has a clear Pupil Premium Plus 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 services and interventions which support pupils in the Virtual School. Details of this spending are in this report. A top slice has been in place for 4 years and this practice is in line with Virtual Schools around the country and was on the advice of Her Majesties Inspectorate [HMI] for the eastern region.
- 2.1.3 There are clear terms and conditions from the Department for Education [DFE] as to what this money can purchase. 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 [DFE] allocates the Pupil Premium Plus [PP+] funding that Thurrock Local Authority receives. In the financial year 2019-2020, Thurrock Council received funding for 251 pupils which totalled £570,300 this was a reduction on the previous year due to fewer children being in care during the census recording period.
- 3.1.2 From this overall amount £451,800 was immediately allocated to schools to be released on a termly basis. The top slice for the remaining funding was £125,500.
- 3.1.3 The principle aim of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant is to close the attainment gap between vulnerable learners in order that their progress, attainment and achievement is as good as their school peers. 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

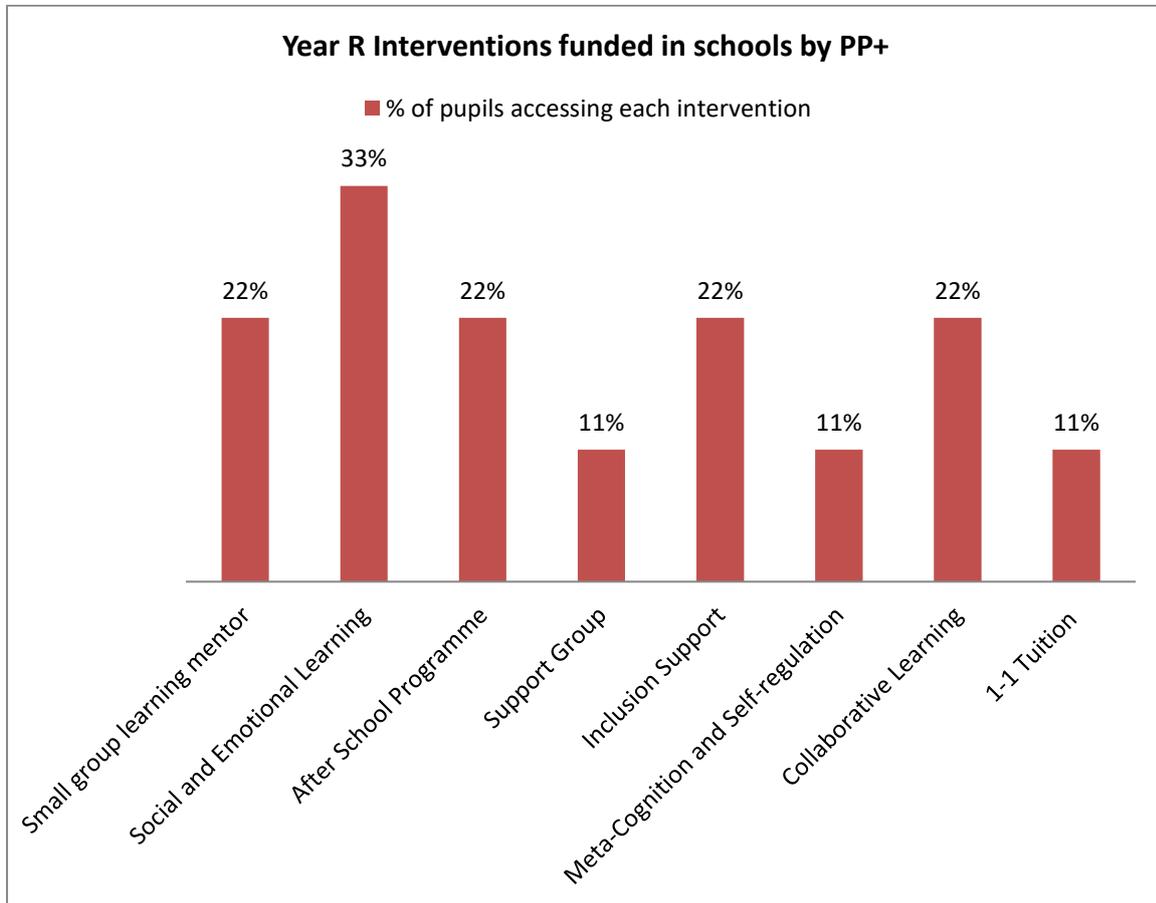
and educational settings must be able to demonstrate that this is being allocated to meet the needs of pupils and that it is making an impact on their educational outcomes. This evidence is found in the Personal Educational Plan [PEP] online document. Every child/young person looked after must have a 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.
- 3.1.5 The analysis and overviews provided below will consider the children and young people who were in the year group at the end of the reporting period March 2020. There will be some pupils who are not reported during the time of this report due to them leaving care over the course of the financial year. For those children/young people who do leave care, the funding is allocated to the relevant school to the full amount of £2,300 so that the funding follows them. This ensures that support can remain in school.

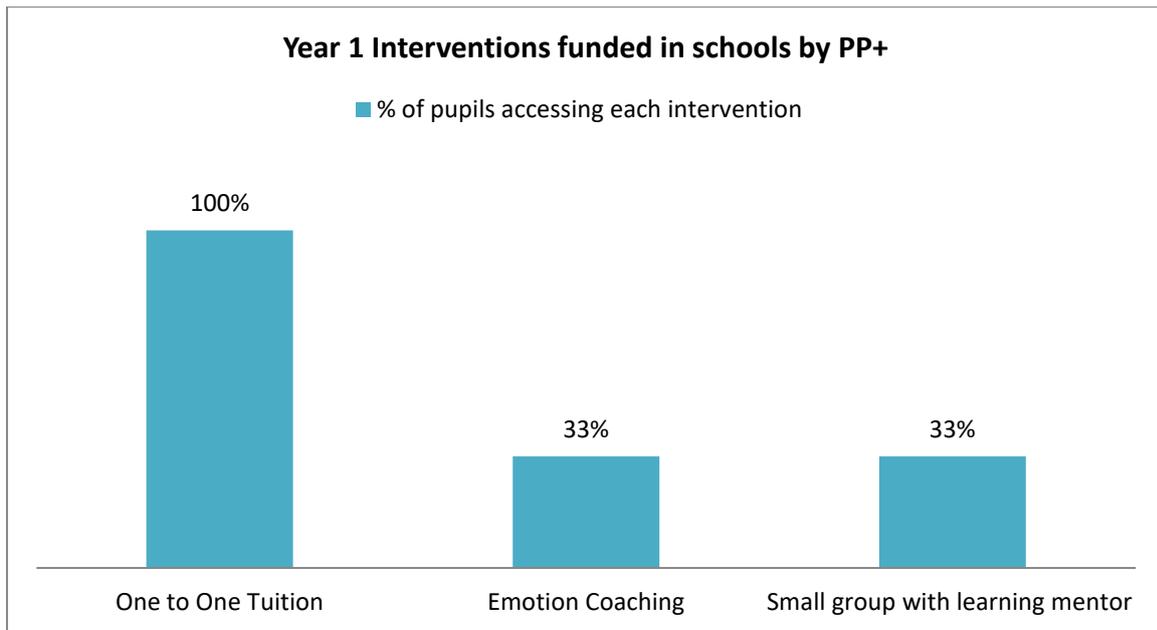
## 3.2 **Overview of Spending by Primary Schools**

- 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. There are broad categories which are reportable using the PEP format. These categories for the targets will be detailed in the graphs provided. The data shows the focus for the funding across the year group using individual target analysis.
- 3.2.2 The Reception year had 9 pupils for this reporting period. The graph below details their intervention needs. Some pupils accessed more than one intervention.

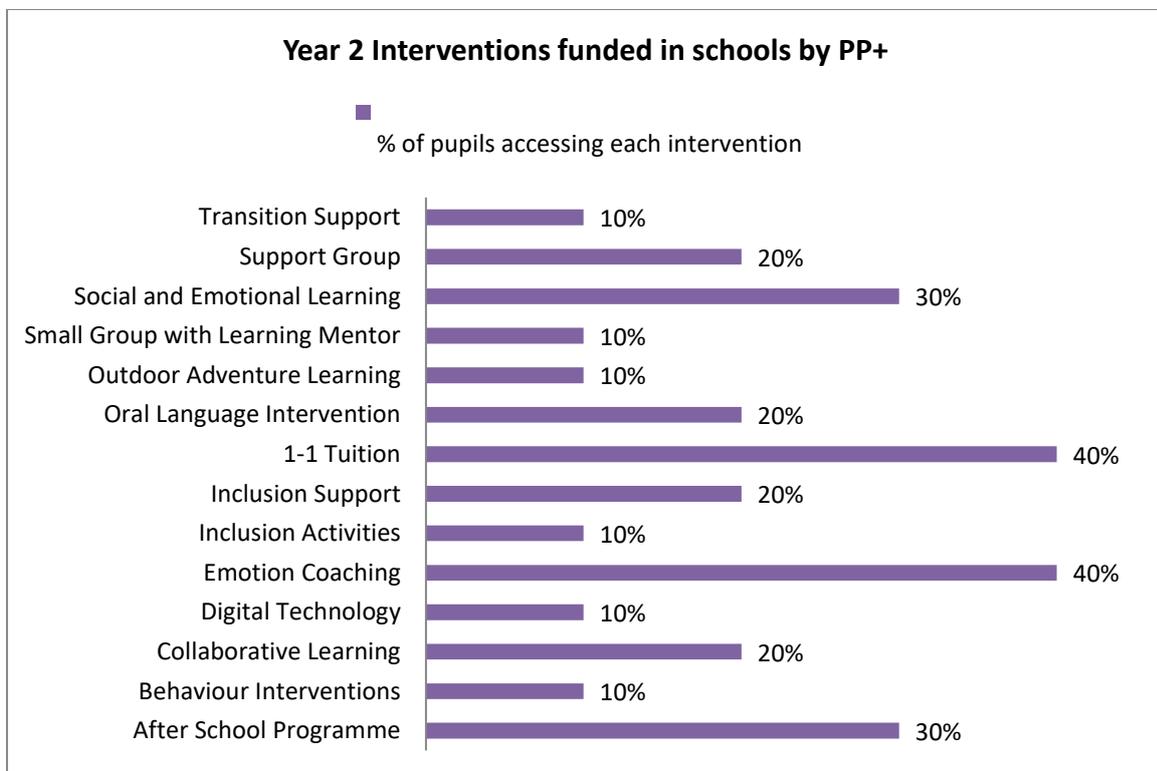
3.2.3 There is a broad range of interventions which focus on the group and social interaction that is needed for this year group and to support the Personal, Social and Emotional areas of development which are essential to facilitate learning behaviours, co-operation and regulation of emotions in the classroom environment. 60% of targets set were focussed on academic achievement and value added and 40% focussing on emotional health.



3.2.4 The Year 1 group had 3 pupils in this reporting period which is a small number for this year group. 100% of targets were focussed on improving academic achievement and value added. The tuition would have been centred on reading and phonological awareness skills.

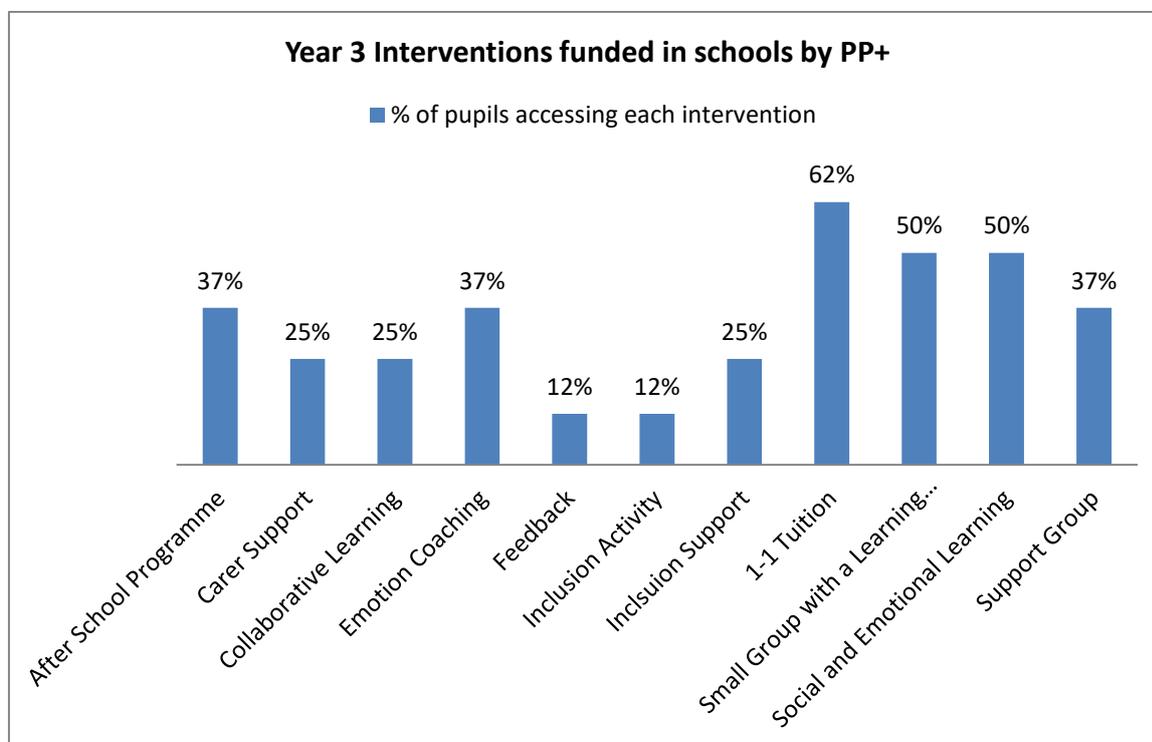


3.2.5 Our Year 2 cohort for this period was 10 pupils. They have multiple interventions which they access. These are illustrated below. 1-1 tuition and emotion coaching was most frequently accessed. In total 66% of targets and interventions were aimed at improving academic attainment and achievement and 34% of targets were supporting emotional health as a focus.

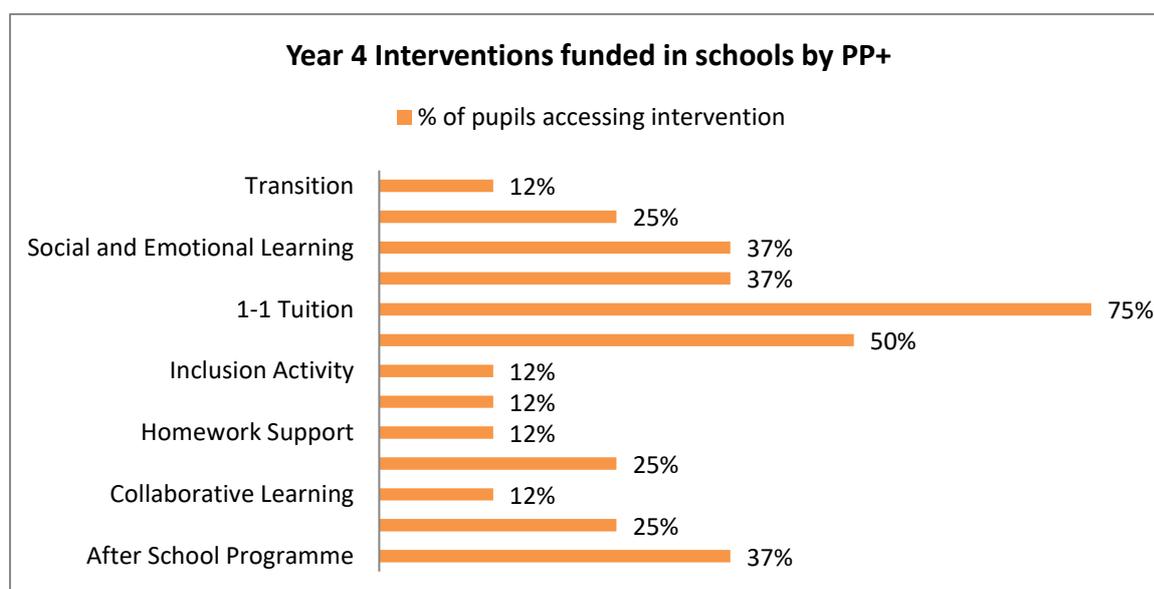


3.2.6 Year 3 had 8 pupils who access individual support from schools during this reporting period. The PP+ funded intervention are outlined below. The majority of interventions is based upon improving the areas of writing and

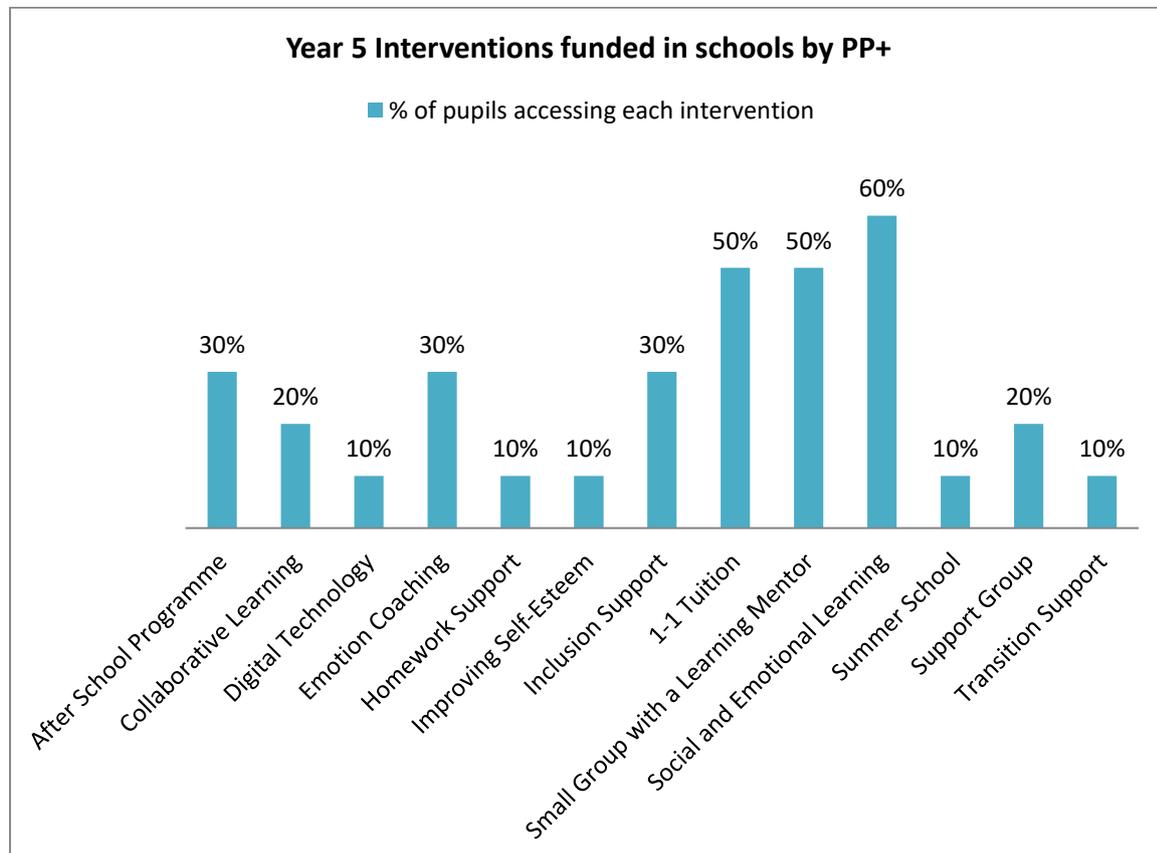
numeracy linked to 1-1 tuition. This would fit in line with their prior attainment in Year 2 to enable the children to work towards age related expectations. Small group and social and emotion learning support is also accessed by half of the year group. 62% of targets were aimed at academic achievement, with 2% improving attendance and 36% supporting emotional health.



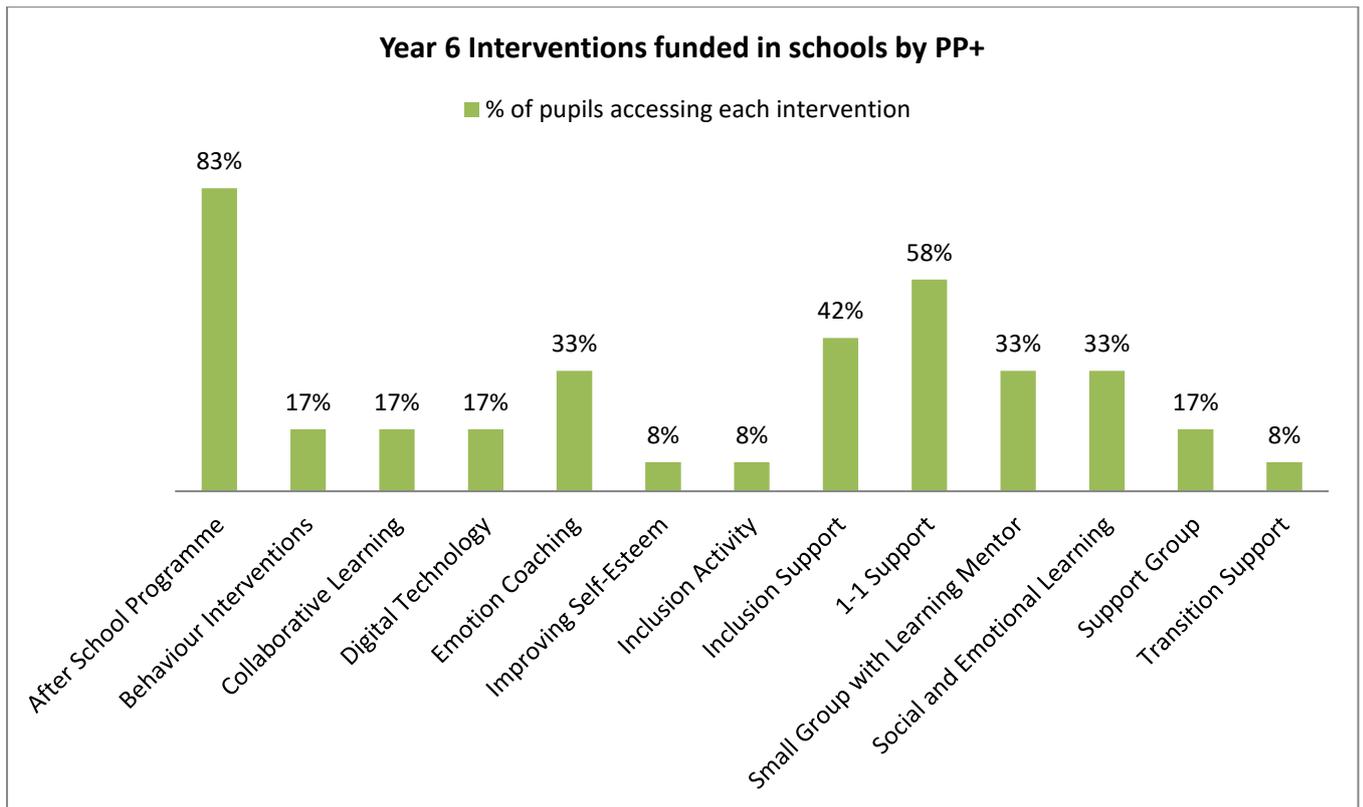
3.2.7 The Year 4 cohort for analysis was 8 pupils. There is a broad range of intervention provided in schools. The most prevalent in this year group being 1-1 tuition. Of the targets set, 63% were focussed at academic achievement and value added, 31% on emotional health, 5% on wider achievement and 1% on transition work.



3.2.8 Our Year 5 had 10 pupils for this report. There is a broad spectrum of intervention supplied for Year 5s. The most prevalent would be social and emotional learning support as an intervention and working in small groups with a learning mentor. 72% of targets focussed on academic achievement and value added, 26% on emotional health and 2% on transition support.



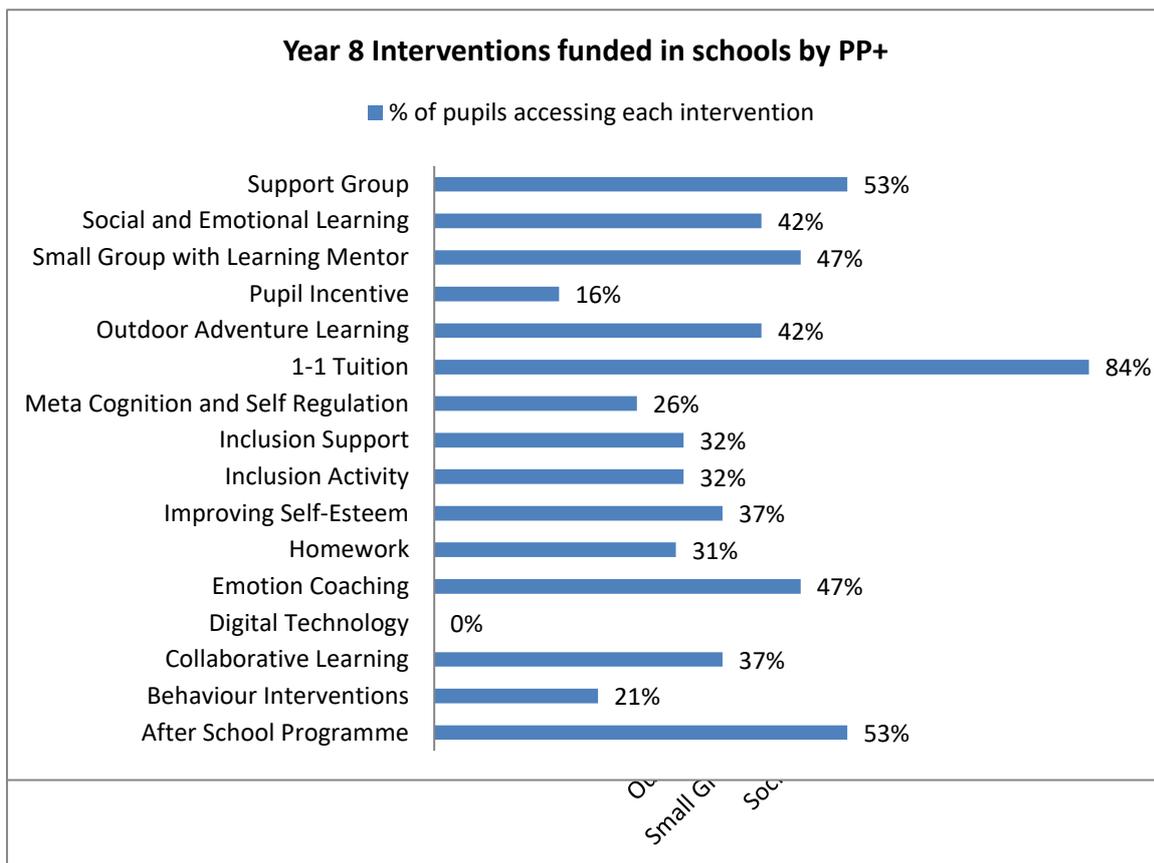
3.2.9 Year 6 has a reporting cohort of 12 pupils. Up until March 2020, their schools would have been preparing them for the Key Stage 2 SATS. However, these have been cancelled as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Virtual School has been using pupil premium plus top slice funding [see further in 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. This is currently continuing for those pupils who have wanted it to continue. The aim of this is to provide our children with extra support to help with transition into year 7. Interestingly, in this year group the highest accessed intervention was through after school programmes which would have been extracurricular learning opportunities. 1-1 tuition support was high too as would be expected for this particular year group. 65% targets focussed on academic achievement and value added, 32% on emotional health, 2% on wider achievement and 1% on transition support.



### 3.3 Overview of Spending by Secondary Schools

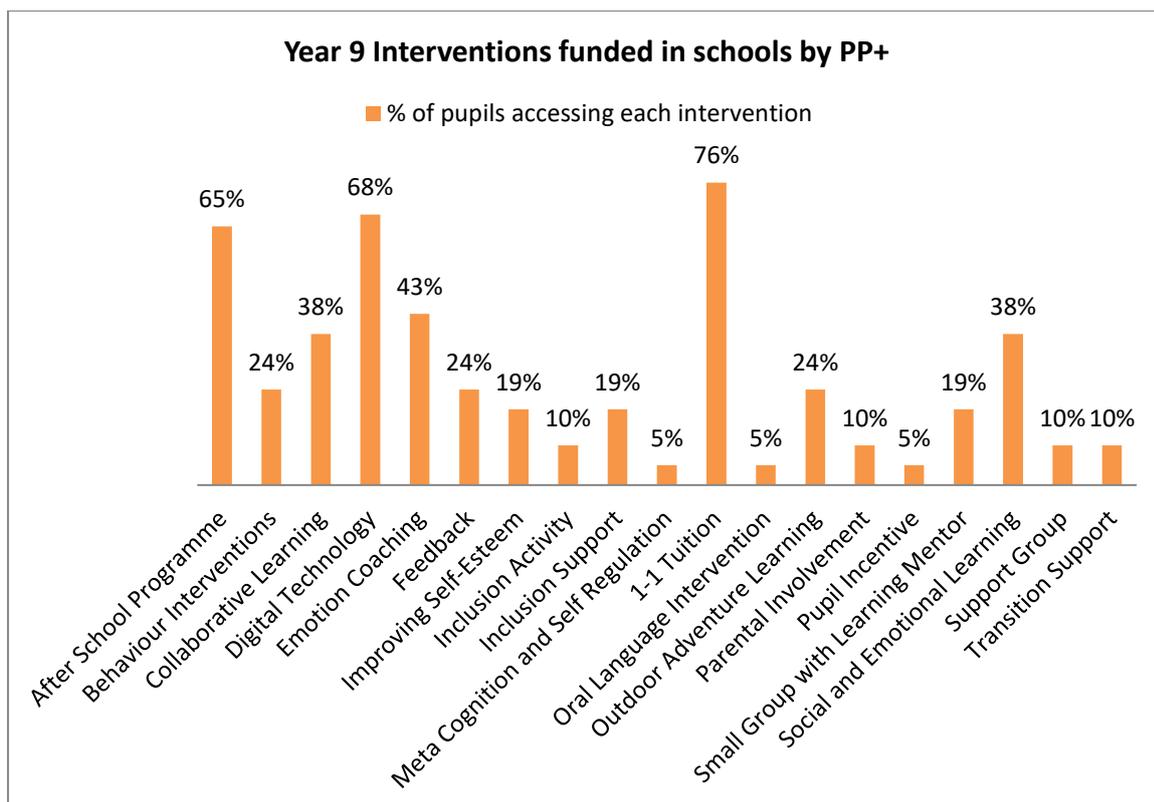
3.3.1 The following graphs show an overview of how each year group is benefiting from the allocation by their educational setting of their Pupil Premium Plus funding. This detail has been obtained by analysis of individual PEP information for each pupil. Some pupils have multiple interventions and the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

3.3.2 Year 7. There were 17 pupils in this year group for this reporting period 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 and after school learning programmes. 71.5% of targets aimed at academic achievement and value added, 22.5% on emotional health and 6% on wider achievement.



3.3.3 Year 8 shows similar types of support with some variation as to the type of interventions used by schools. 1-1 tuition is the most frequently used form of intervention. 67% of targets were based in academic achievement and 21% for emotional health. Other areas covered were attitudes to learning and wider achievement.

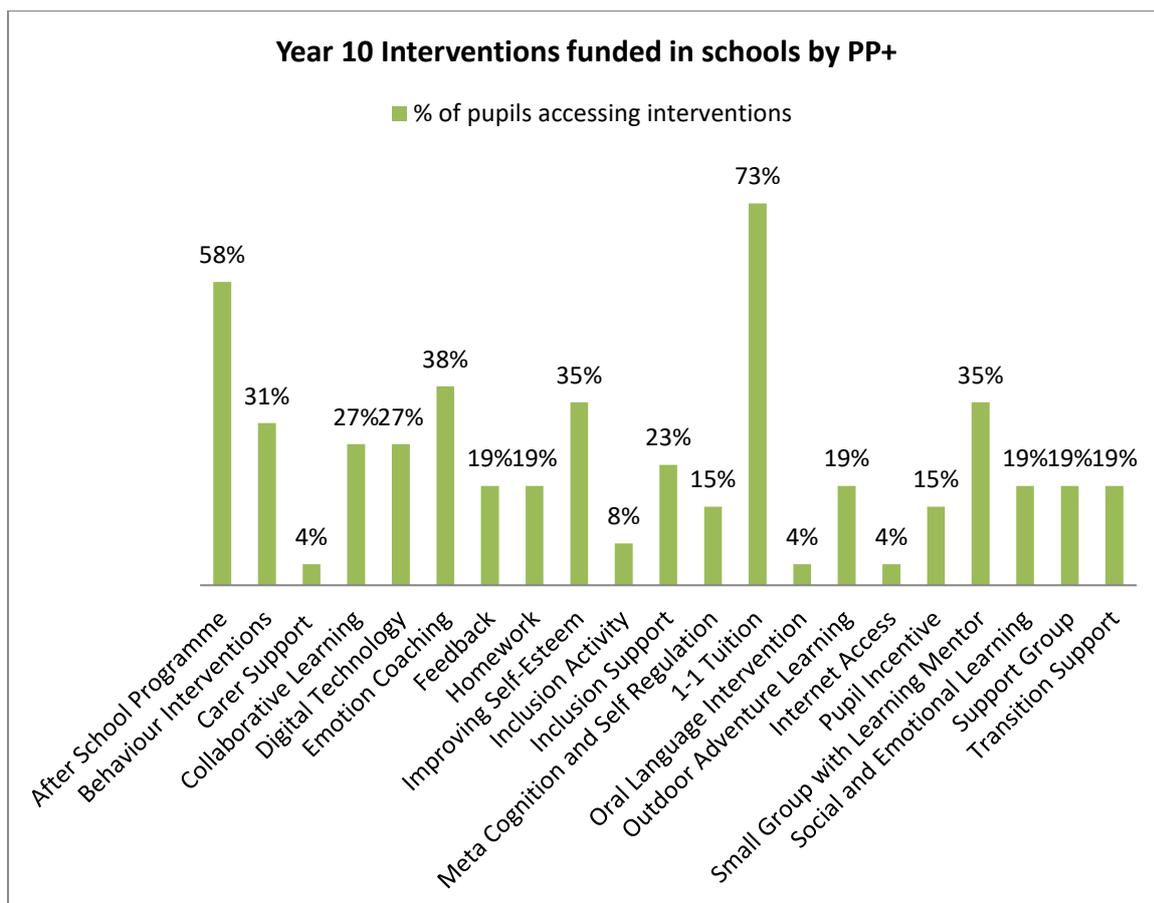
3.3.4 There were 21 children in Year 9. Tuition has the biggest focus in this year group. 73% of targets were based in academic achievement and 21% for emotional health and 6% for wider achievement.



3.3.5 In Year 10 there were 26 pupils. The most frequently used intervention has been 1-1 tuition. The after school programme would have also been additional curriculum intervention. Of the targets set, 72% were aimed at academic achievement and value added, 2% to improve attendance, 15% for emotional health, 2% to reduce exclusion, 2% on transition and 7% on wider achievement.

Additionally tuition for Year 10s begins after the Easter break 2020. This tuition is funded via the top slice of pupil premium plus grant and is provided to all students who wish to access this tuition. It is provided in the care areas of English, math and science. Students can also request additional tuition and learning resources if they so wish. Each tuition session costs £55 per hour and students can have up to 3 hours per week or more if requested.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This tuition will still be provided for this current summer term, it will be online. Students will see their tutor via an online method so it will still be interactive.

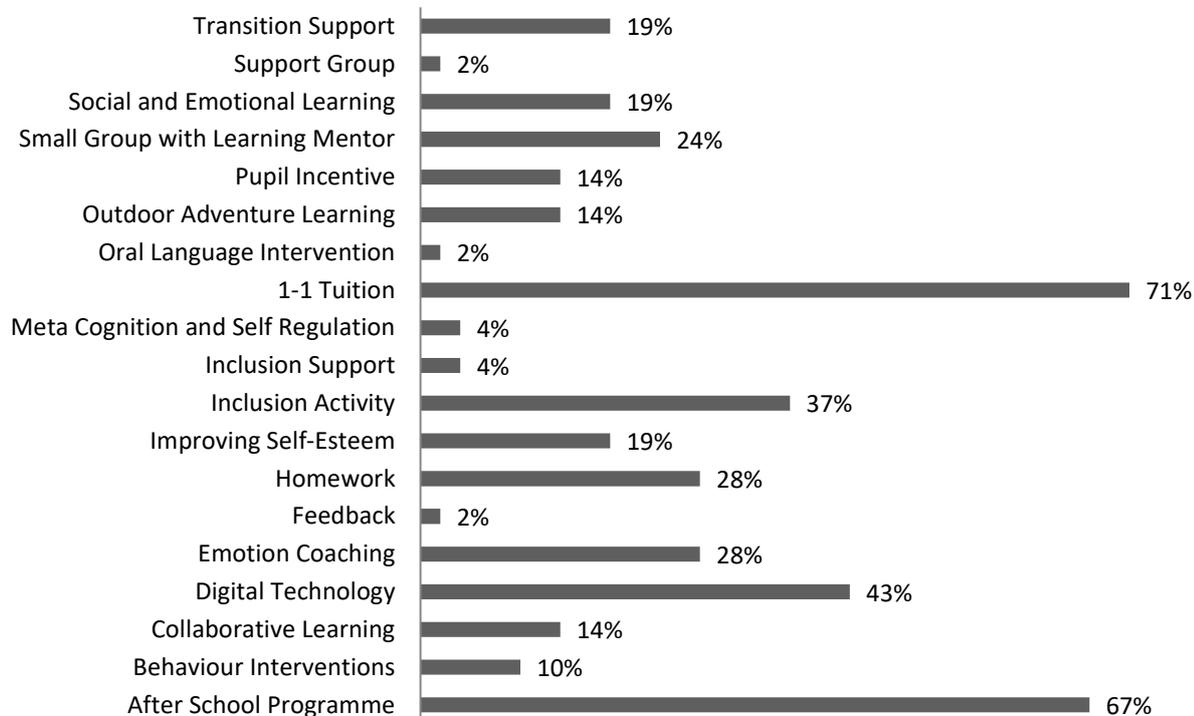


3.3.6 Our Year 11 had 21 pupils for this report. 55% of this group have received extra 1-1 home tutoring to support their GCSE attainment and this started in the summer term of Year 10. Some have declined this tuition as year 11 has progressed due to attending interventions within school.

Due to the cancellation of exams this year, the pupils in Year 11 will have a teacher assessed grade provided by their school. However, the Virtual School has still maintained tuition for this year group to all of those students who have wished for this to continue. This allows for them to be supported for their post 16 choices. The tuition has moved to online methods.

### Year 11 Interventions funded in schools by PP+

■ % of pupils accessing each intervention



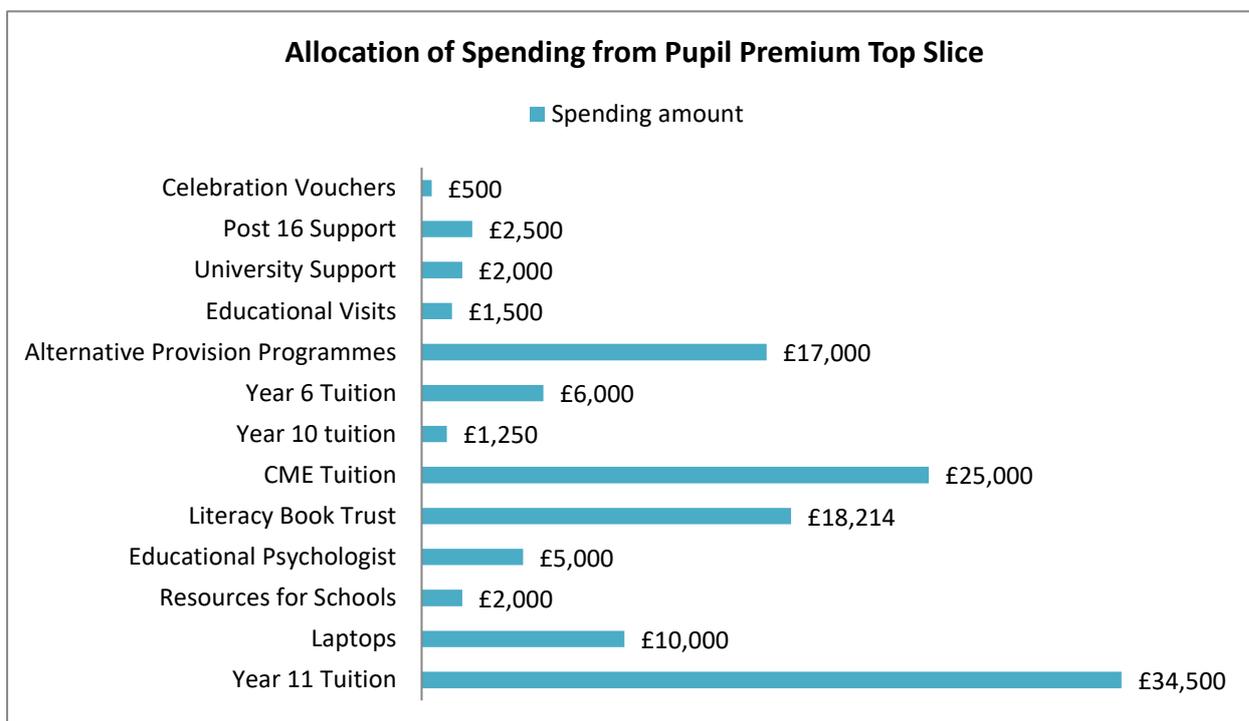
3.3.7 Overall it can be seen that the vast majority of intervention in schools is provided via 1-1 tuition and this increases as the pupils progress through the key stages. This is viewed by Sutton Trust research as being one of the most effective methods of supporting attainment and as such this is 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 2019-2020 this has amounted to £125,500. Of this £125,464 has been spent at the close of the financial year.
- 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 251 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 2020-2021 [Appendix B]



3.4.7 The graph above details spending from the top slice and the allocation of funds for particular projects. The spending for this totals £125,464.

3.4.8 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. 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.

3.4.9 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.

3.4.10 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.

- 3.4.11 The provision of trauma and attachment resources has enabled key information to be provided to schools to support our pupils. 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.
- 3.4.12 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.
- 3.4.13 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.
- 3.4.14 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.
- 3.4.15 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 2020-2021**

- 4.1 The planned spending for the top slice has been provided in Appendix B. This has been discussed with and approved 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. There may be some changes to this plan in light of the Covid 19 pandemic. It is important that a flexible approach is maintained to allow funding to be allocated where there is most need.

#### **5. Additional Information for the Committee**

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

#### **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 and Young People 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 Children's Services,**  
**Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools.**

There are no financial implications within this report.

## 8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**  
**Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)**

The Council has a general duty to promote the education of Looked After Children under Section 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 and to provide advice and assistance to promote educational achievement to former Looked After Children under Section 23 ZZA.

The Secretary of State for Education can provide financial assistance under Section 14 of the Education Act 2002 and can set the terms on which it is provided under Section 16 with which the person receiving the assistance must comply. For 2020 to 2021 located here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>

The Virtual School Headteacher is responsible for the Pupil Premium for Looked After Children (Pupil Premium Plus). This governed by Statutory Guidance on the role of the VSH which is referred to in the attached strategy. The guidance requires the publication of a policy on the use of the Pupil Premium Plus.

## 8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Community Development Officer**

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) – there are no implications as a result of this report

- None

## 9. Conclusion

9.1 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.

**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 1 – Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy 2020-2021
- Appendix 2 – Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Strategy 2020-2021

**Report Author:**

Keeley Pullen

Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

Children's Services