

<b>3 December 2015</b>		<b>ITEM 5</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Education Results for Looked After Children</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non key	
<b>Report of:</b> Keeley Pullen, Head of the Virtual School for Looked After Children		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

The report outlines the educational outcomes for Thurrock Looked after Children (LAC) in 2014/15 and an analysis of the results.

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

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to scrutinise the 2014/15 performance of Looked after Children (LAC) and to provide challenge and support to the Virtual School to further improve outcomes for all of our Looked after Children.**
- 1.2 The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to hold all schools and colleges to account through the Virtual School to ensure that LAC are making the best possible educational progress.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

**2.1** At the core of the Virtual School's mission, 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 will be at its most effective when they succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school. The vision will most likely be realised if the following criteria are met:

- All Thurrock's children have the best possible start in life to enable them to progress successfully in their education.
- Parents and carers engage positively in their children's education

- Children and young people have access to high quality education in schools and settings that are judged 'good' or better and that generate the ambition to be the best they can possibly be.
- An appetite for learning for its own sake throughout life is fostered in all schools and settings.
- Thurrock becomes an attractive and successful place to train and develop teachers and leaders of effective schools and settings, and to retain them.
- The local authority continues to consolidate and refine its role in the brokering and commissioning of excellent school to school and other improvement support.
- Standards in schools and settings exceed national averages across all phases by 2016 .
- Every child and young person in Thurrock has a cultural entitlement, delivered in partnership with the Music Service, the Royal Opera House and the National Skills Academy.
- Young people in every school or alternative provider benefit from expert careers education and guidance that helps them to aspire to the highest possible level of qualification to enable them to succeed in their chosen progression pathway.
- All schools share and develop best practice in teaching and learning.
- Successful local providers are prioritised in sponsoring new or vulnerable institutions.
- Strong and effective governance continues to be developed across all school structures.

2.2 The Virtual School ensures every child and young person really does matter; they have a right to a childhood and the right to a first class education that enhances their life chances as an adult. We believe that Looked after Children 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. These outcomes are that Looked after Children:

- 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 works in partnership with all schools, educational settings and with social care to create a high quality experience for all and provides additional educational support to children, foster carers and schools. These children and young people are among the most disadvantaged. We believe educational achievement and progress are one of the key ways in which the cycle of disadvantage might be broken. National statistics for LAC show that this group significantly underachieves. The Department for Education's recent national figures show only 12% of LAC achieved five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, compared with 55% of all young people nationally (provisional data for 2015).

### 3. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

2014/15 Test Results – End of Key Stages 2 (11 year olds) and 4 (16 year olds).

#### 3.1 End of Key Stage 2 Results

##### Key Stage 2

Key Stage Two tests are taken at the end of year 6 prior to the move to secondary school. The target level of attainment expected for a pupil at the end of Key Stage 2 is level 4. **See Appendix A for Table of KS 2 Results**

##### Analysis and Results and Cohort

#### 3.1.1 Attainment

When making judgements it should be noted that the cohort size is small and has decreased from the previous year and therefore the percentage value of each child increases.

**2015 Thurrock - Reading** – 67% achieved Level 4+. In 2014 the national figure for Level 4+ in reading for LAC was 63%. *Thurrock performed above national.*

**2015 Thurrock - Writing** – 67% achieved Level 4+. In 2014 the national figure for Level 4 in writing for LAC was 59%. *Thurrock LAC performed above the national.*

**2015 Thurrock - Maths** – 78% achieved Level 4+. In 2014 the national figure for Level 4 in Maths for LAC was 61%. *Thurrock performed above the national.*

**2015 Thurrock – Combined** - 67% of the cohort achieved a combination of Reading, Writing and Maths at Level 4 +. National Data for LAC combined Level 4+ was 48%. *Thurrock LAC performed above national.*

### 3.1.2 Progress

The national expectation is that pupils should make at least two levels of progress between KS1 and KS2. Thurrock performed above 2014 national figures, there is currently no national data available for 2015.

- Reading Thurrock - 89%. National 2014 LAC – 81%
- Writing Thurrock - 89%. National 2014 LAC – 82%
- Maths Thurrock - 89%. National 2014 LAC – 75%

### 3.1.3 Contextual Information for this Cohort

In summary, Thurrock children in care performed above national expectations in terms of both attainment and progress. This is from a range of residential, special and mainstream school provision. Three pupils did not sit the tests due to their attendance at residential and/or alternative placements.

Overall there was 61% of this cohort with SEND – including 23% with statements of Special Educational Needs

### 3.1.4 Commentary on Analysis and Impact for Results of KS2

These results were a significant improvement on the previous year's results. Early predictions had indicated that only 40% of the cohort would achieve Level 4+. The Virtual School ensured that a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting was held early in the autumn term 2014 for each Year 5 and Year 6 pupil and that a member of the Virtual School attended. Good contact between the Head teacher of the Virtual school and the educational placement is essential to ensure schools are held to account for progress for their LAC pupils.

The contact is through face to face visits, over the telephone and via the submission process of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) application. PP+ funding is allocated to the school to provide additional tuition/booster classes etc. Schools are required to evaluate the impact the additional provision. By having increased the interaction between the Virtual School and the provider, it has promoted greater transparency and enabled improved accountability.

The engagement of the Foster Carers in promoting the education of the children in their care is also a contributory factor. During the PEP meetings, the Virtual School raised the profile of the importance of progress, homework, attendance at booster sessions during discussions and emphasised the role that carers play in supporting the children academically as well as socially and emotionally. The Virtual School Headteacher also believes that there is a link between the improved performance and the amount of pupils who attended in borough schools. 89% of the KS2 cohort attended a Thurrock school. This

enabled improved working relationships, more face to face contact and greater challenge and accountability between the local authority Virtual School Head, the School Improvement Team and the Thurrock schools.

### 3.2 Key Stage 4 Results

Children complete Key Stage 4 in year 11 at the end of their secondary schooling. They are 15/16 years of age at this point - **See Appendix B**

#### **5A\* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Mathematics**

This is the target level of attainment for a pupil at the end of Key Stage 4. From April 2009 local authorities report on the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A\*-C at GCSE (or equivalent) including English and mathematics. The number of looked after children who were in care for at least one year who were in year 11 and achieved the equivalent of at least 5 A\*-C GCSEs, including English and mathematics (or equivalent) as a percentage of the total number of looked after children who were in care for at least one year who were in Year 11.

#### 3.2.1 Analysis of GCSE Results and Cohort 2014/15

Whilst the percentage of LAC nationally who achieved 5 A\* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) including Maths and English in 2013/14 was 12%, the percentage of Thurrock LAC who achieved 5 A\* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) including Maths and English in 2014/15 was 5%. The two students who achieved 5+ A\*-C grades attended Thurrock schools.

#### 3.2.2 Contextual Information

- 69% of this cohort attended a Special School, PRU, Alternative Education or specialist residential care unit with an educational facility. This is a significant increase on the 39% from the previous year's cohort, reflecting the complex nature and needs of the individuals in this year. The proportion of LAC who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAS) in Year 11 has remained consistent over the last 2 years following the initial 10% increase in numbers from the year before. Nearly a third of the total cohort being UAS. 75% of these pupils were not entered for any GCSE exams due to varying factors such as needing to access ESOL.
- The number of LAC who attended local Thurrock schools in 2014/15 was 37% and although this is a 7% increase on the previous year, this figure reflects the needs of this particular cohort and their placements being out of borough.
- 34% of the cohort had been in care for less than a year. This potentially had a significant impact on their educational attainment as the role of the corporate parent was potentially limited during the crucial build up to achieving positive outcomes.
- Of the 61% who took GCSEs, some were only entered for between 1-4 exams and so would not have been able to obtain the standard 5 A\*-Cs. These students took additional vocational qualifications.

### 3.2.3 Outcomes and Impact

The overall 5% A\*-C result does not reflect the unique pathway of every individual in the cohort, as every pupil [except for 2 exceptional circumstances] were engaged in some form of qualifications, education and training. Every pupil has a unique individual story which details the varying strengths and difficulties that s/he experienced during their Key Stage 4 education. Some pupils did exceed expectations. Others experienced particular trauma during their Year 11 academic year which affected their performance. Some pupils experienced changes of foster placement or school due to a range of circumstances. These stories demonstrate the particular set of challenges that children in care, or those who have recently been placed into care, experience.

As planned, the Virtual School delivered a set of actions for the academic year 14/15 which aimed at improving the educational outcomes for the Year 11 LAC and to support the Year 10 pupils – who will be year 11 in 15/16. This included:

- Attendance at Personal Education Plan meetings for in and out of borough students.
- Ensuring that funds were supporting students and challenging schools to account for Pupil Premium Plus spending.
- The provision of home tuition for students, which was in addition to support received at school.
- Targeting pupils who were vulnerable to exam stress and establishing a home counselling service which they could access for support.
- Setting up an ESOL mini-school based in Grays which provides weekly ESOL tuition for those students who were without an ESOL college place so that they could start education as soon as possible from becoming LAC.
- Working with South Essex College for them to create a ESOL accredited course for Year 11 students who were not in school and to create ESOL provision in the area.
- Provision of IT equipment to support students' studies.
- Established LAC accountability surgeries where Thurrock schools were asked to attend to discuss progress of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils.
- Termly tracking with schools the amount of progress the student was making and checking they were on track to meet predictions.

Despite this intensive and proactive set of measures, challenge and support; it did not improve the overall GCSE performance. 29% of the cohort had been predicted by their schools to achieve 5 A\*-C grades, including English and mathematics. Monitoring through PEPs and Pupil Premium indicated that this outcome was achievable. However, there was a disparity between predictions and results. The evidence suggests too many students missed their grade C targets in either or both core subjects whilst also reflecting some

movement in the examination board's grade boundary particularly between grades C/D.

This academic year, the Virtual School is triangulating the evidence which extends beyond data and is asking schools to provide examples of work to ensure that their future predictions are accurately reflecting the pupil's level. The Virtual School is also contacting the schools and foster carers on a monthly basis for those students who are completing GCSEs this year to ensure that the students continue to remain on track and to ensure that we can provide support where needed.

The VSHT is currently in consultation with the LSCB Executive Committee to provide greater gravitas and accountability measures for schools in and out of borough reminding Head teachers and Governing Bodies of their responsibilities to support the academic outcomes of LAC in their schools. The Year 11 students have all been supported to help them secure Post 16 provision. This process always starts before they leave Year 11 and continues throughout their Post 16 career. If a student has not achieved the desired grades needed for their chosen course they are supported to secure an alternative. At the beginning of the autumn term 2015 early indications showed that only 2 pupils (6%) were NEET and these students were being supported by social care and the Virtual School. Personal Education Plan meetings are held as the student starts Year 12 to ensure that they are supported in their new environment whether this is college, 6<sup>th</sup> Form, apprenticeships and/or work based training. PEPs also continue through to Year 13 and as a transition into aftercare Post 18. These PEP meetings also monitor how the college bursary is being used to support the student's further education.

#### **3.2.4 Planned interventions as a result of 2014/15 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 every Year 6, Year 10 and Year 11 PEP meeting
- Provide Letterbox Parcels monthly for 6 months for pupils from Year 2 to Year 7. These contain books, games and activities to support English and maths
- 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 and IT equipment when necessary
- Contact schools and foster carers monthly to check progress (Currently Year 11 only)
- Triangulate data predictions with further evidence such as work sampling
- Access exam stress counselling where necessary
- Provide support for Post 16 pathways
- 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.

In addition we are:

- Providing half termly Designated Teacher Forums, monthly 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.
- Working with the LSCB Executive Committee to contact all our schools reminding them of their duties to promote the best educational outcomes for LAC.
- Supporting social care to minimise the change of school or college when there are placement changes.
- Actively seeking to expand our team with professionals to build capacity and improve impact on outcomes for LAC.
- Meeting with Her Majesty's Inspectorate on a termly basis to discuss effective practice for the Local Authority.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 This information is required to update members in their role as Corporate Parents and to provide greater challenge and accountability to all those who support the education of LAC.

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

- 5.1 Not Applicable.

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community Impact**

- 6.1 There are several Key Education Priorities which the Virtual School is currently addressing in the academic year 2014/2015:

- Continuing to embed the Electronic-PEP system which can be accessed by all professionals and the children involved in the PEP process. Schools will be required to update this every term so that there is always a current live PEP for the pupils. The impact of this will be: more involvement from schools, foster carers, the pupil voice, social care and the virtual schools team to ensure that the best provision is in place for the child/young person.
- Raise the profile of the PEP meeting and PEP documentation as a key driver for improving pupil academic outcomes by supporting needs and raising expectations.
- Further develop methods of challenge and accountability for schools and colleges by raising the expectations for the achievement of their pupils. This will be through the PEP process, the pupil premium funding and provision of training. This will also be through the LSCB Executive



Committee supporting the Virtual School Head Teacher by holding Head teachers and Governing Bodies to account.

- The role of the corporate parent is enhanced through greater challenge to schools and colleges to ensure that they are providing the best possible education for our pupils. This will be through the Virtual School working with and training a range of professionals who support our LAC.
- Ensuring that the information on pupil progress is shared amongst the team working for the LAC to promote better outcomes and enable greater challenge and support.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Corporate Finance, Quality Assurance Team**

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Lawyer**

The Local Authority is Corporate Parent to those children it looks after (LAC). It benefits from the rights and responsibilities for the LACs in its care. The committee is asked to use the information provided in this report to support and challenge the Virtual School and to hold schools to account in educating its LACs. It is not asked to make any decisions. The Department for Education Guidance, Promoting the education of looked after children, July 2014, is issued under the section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, and therefore MUST be followed UNLESS there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. Section 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 requires that the Local Authority promotes the educational achievement of LACs and was amended by the Children and Families Act 2014 to require every Local Authority to appoint an officer (Head of the Virtual School), to make sure that that duty is properly discharged.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

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

The council seeks to ensure that every looked after child is given the best opportunity to develop their full potential. The Children and Young People's Plan highlights plans to remove gaps between educational attainment and potential and a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards for all children in Thurrock.

A range of measures are now in place to secure these outcomes (e.g. Virtual Schools model) with interventions to support looked after children to achieve high attainment and progress across the borough. In 2014, this series of local approaches helped to ensure looked after children in Thurrock performed above national averages in terms of educational attainment and progress at Key Stage 2. With an increase in the gap between local and national average attainments noted for Looked after Children at Key Stage 4, an improvement plan has now been developed for the 2015/16 academic year.

**7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None

**8. Background Papers Used in preparing the Report** (includes their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- DfE: National Tables 2014
- Pupil Premium Conditions of Grant DfE March 2014
- Promoting the education of looked after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities DfE July 2014

**9. Appendices to the Report**

Appendix A - Table for Key Stage 2 Results  
Appendix B - Table for Key Stage 4 Results

**Report Author:**

Keeley Pullen

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