CYPS Scrutiny

**Virtual School Head
Annual Report 2019 / 20**

25 February 2021

Lead director: Martin Samuels

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
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- Report version number: v 2

1. Summary

1.1 The Virtual School aims to support our looked after children to achieve their full learning potential, narrowing the achievement gap between looked after children and their school peers, whilst improving outcomes at all Key Stages of learning, with a focus on Maths and English. The Team supports and commissions a range of additional activities aimed at enriching the learning experience for our looked after children, whilst raising their aspirations and accelerating progress.

1.2 The Virtual Head report highlights the achievements of Leicester City's looked after children in the school year 2019/2020. The report coincides with the period of national lockdown arising from the Covid 19 resulting in most of our looked after children accessing their learning remotely from home during the summer term this year.

1.3 The report shows that we have maintained a year on year improvement in school attendance by our looked after children with over two thirds of children attending schools that are rated good or better by Ofsted. There were no permanent exclusions of children in the last academic year, and the rate of fixed term exclusions was down on the previous year at the point that schools closed in the Spring Term.

1.4 The proportion of our looked after children achieving 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths, has risen slightly compared with last year for all young people in care. It was significant, however, that several young people who achieved a Grade 4 in English (Language or Literature) did not achieve Grade 4 in Maths.

1.5   Many looked after children have experienced neglect and abuse prior to their entry into care which in some cases will have had a negative impact on their education and learning. Over one third of our looked after children are assessed as having an additional learning need, and 17% have an Education and Health Care Plan.

1.6   Although the impact of the pandemic has meant that many of the enrichment activities planned by the Virtual School have been postponed, we did celebrate the achievements of the 2018/19 cohort as part of the Virtual School's successful 'Aim Higher Reach Further' Celebration Evening in October 2019.

1.7   The Transition project continued this year, following and supporting Year 6 young people as they begin their journey into secondary school. Most of the young people participating made progress in at least one core area with 75% assessing that they have made progress in at least two core areas. One of the stated aims of this project was to reduce the number of and incidences of fixed term exclusion for young people in Year 7 which was successfully achieved.

1.8   The Virtual School Team quickly adapted to the Covid 19 situation and ensured that all our young people had access to appropriate learning opportunities and were able to access them efficiently. A Virtual School touch down web page was established https://schools.leicester.gov.uk/services/virtual-school with resources to support learners and carers created in first couple of weeks of lockdown updated or added to weekly.

1.9   The Virtual Head worked with Virtual Heads from other Local Authorities and the Personal Education Plan (PEP) provider to develop an alternative PEP document to capture the activity of lockdown and to enable all PEPs to be completed virtually.

1.10   During this year, we have implemented Personal Education Plan meetings for children in the Early Years phase and for young people who are 16+ and remaining in education. These are new pieces of work which complement the service and enable us to follow young people for almost the entirety of their learning journey.

1.11   During the first period of national lockdown one to one tuition was quickly adapted to an online platform and continued virtually for all the young people who needed this input. A Virtual School touchdown page was created as part of the Local Authority's web page, containing links to the team and a range of work and resources that could be accessed by both schools and carers.

1.12   The Virtual Head was part of the team who managed the Government's Digital Devices scheme that targeted vulnerable learners and ensured they had access to a device in order to do their schoolwork. Virtual School Officers converted all PEP meetings to online, virtual events and were able to attend a greater proportion of them whilst working online from home. Virtual School mentors quickly contacted all the young people in Key Stage 4 delivering online mentoring as necessary.

1.13   During the early part of the lockdown, 17% of our young people attended school either part time or full time when places were being arranged at schools for children of key workers and children with a Social Worker. In June when schools re-opened to pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and then to Year 10, analysis shows that the number of young people accessing their school place increased week on week as schools opened for more time and young people.

1.14   There were a small number of children whose care placements were impacted negatively by the pressure of being at home during this time, and the Virtual School was able to provide a response or a bespoke resource to assist with placements. This included physical resources, such as books, or a placement at an outdoor alternative provision, such as Brolay Care Farm, who worked for most of the time schools were closed. This has served to minimise the number of placement breakdowns that could have occurred at this time.

1.15   Many of the young people in Year 6 and Year 11 missed key points of transition and the opportunity to say their goodbyes to peers and to schools that had supported them. Additionally, pupils were unable to sit SATS and GCSE or A Level Examinations they had been preparing so hard for. Although so much was transferred online, such large celebrations did not translate, and it is hoped that perhaps this can be re-visited at some point in the future for those who will benefit from it.

1.16 Due to the cancellation of Key Stage assessments by the DfE there will be no attainment information produced this year to enable us to formally evaluate the progress and achievements of most of our young people. As no formal assessment of children's educational progress was undertaken in 2020, and GCSE, A level and BTEC results were based on teacher assessment, no results will be published at either a school or at a local authority level, therefore any comparison or review of education outcomes cannot include 2020 results.

1.17 The full annual report from the Virtual School Head Teacher is attached to this Executive Summary.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 To note and approve the Virtual School Head Annual Report for 2019-20.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1 The report has been prepared by the Virtual School Head Teacher in consultation with the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and the Virtual School Team. The report will be shared with the Corporate Parenting Board.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 N/A

5. Detailed report

5.1 Please refer to the attached main report by the Virtual School Head.

6.   Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1   Financial implications

6.1.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The service cost £1.5m in 2019/20, funded from £1.1m of pupil premium plus grant and £0.4m of High Needs Block DSG.
Martin Judson, Head of Finance, 0116 4544101

6.2   Legal implications

6.2.1   There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
Pretty Patel, Head of Law, 0116 4541457

6.3   Equalities implications

6.3.1   Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

6.3.2   Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

6.3.3   Looked after children have long been recognised to be at a disadvantage in terms of their educational experiences and outcomes.

6.3.4   Virtual Schools have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential. They work alongside schools, social care professionals and carers to make sure that children can access the education they deserve and identify the different areas of support needed for each child to stay engaged with their learning.

6.3.5 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report recommendations as the report is for noting, rather than decision.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, 0116 4544148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

6.4.1 There are limited climate change implications associated with this report. However, the move to provision of some support services digitally has the potential to reduce carbon emissions from travel and could be continued in the future where it is judged to be both practical and appropriate.
Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 0116 4542284

7. Background information and other papers:

7.1 None

8. Summary of appendices:

8.1 None

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9.1 No

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

10.1 No

5. Main Report

5.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of our Looked After Children during the academic year 2019/20. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes for our Looked After Children.

5.2. The Virtual School contributes to increasing the educational performance of our looked after children in order to:

- Raise attainment & accelerate progress for children in all key stages;
- Improve school attendance and reduce exclusion;
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans and;
- provide and support a range of opportunities to widen horizons & raise achievement

5.3 Our aspiration is that all our looked after children and young people:
- attend a good or outstanding school and learn
- have accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support when it is needed to help them to make good progress in their learning and development, wherever they live
- where they do not attend school, they have access to 25 hours per week of good quality, registered provision appropriate to their level of ability and aspirations. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress
- where they are missing from education, work with other professionals to take action to improve their attendance
- have social workers, residential staff, carers and schools who support them to enjoy what they do and to access a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities
- have access to a range of cultural opportunities
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive
- have stability in care and education placements
- receive recognition for their achievements and have their successes celebrated
- engage with the Aim Higher Reach Further programme to encourage all to achieve their potential and for our most able to present them with

opportunities to progress into higher education or another appropriate pathway

- for those who are leaving care, provide with appropriate support and guidance to ensure they can progress to further education, higher education, training or employment as appropriate to their aspirations.

5.4. Summary of Key Priorities for 2019 / 2020

- To narrow the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers

- Improve proportion of looked after children achieving a Good Level of Development in the early year's foundation stage

- Improve proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 and KS2

- Continue to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE, with a focus on English and Maths

- Improve outcomes at Key Stage 4

- Improve outcomes and reduce drop-out for young people pursuing Level 3 courses in schools or Sixth Form Colleges

- Improve attendance

- Aim Higher Reach Further Programme to enthuse learners and accelerate their progress and raise aspirations

- Improve quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs and PEP meetings), including student voice

- Maintain high level of PEP compliance

- Develop systems to ensure secure and accurate information is shared between the Virtual School and associated teams within the council

- Support foster carers and Designated Teachers to better support our looked after children with their learning

- Create a web presence for Leicester's Virtual School

5.5. Pupil Characteristics

The cohort of looked after children in the Virtual School continues to increase. The table below shows the key characteristics of the cohort in terms of care status.

Characteristic	Number of children in care at any point 2015/16	Number of children in care at any point 2016/17	Number of children in care at any point 2017/18	Number of children in care at any point 2018/19	Number of children in care at any point 2019/20	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31st	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31st	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31st	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31st	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31st
Number of school aged children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council	629	660	543	549	572	359	460	375	405	431
Children with a plan for adoption	22	39	83		49	14	45	53	35	38
Children in foster care	209	472	558	413	552	201	328	335	334	329
Children in residential settings	62	71	70	52	113	36	52	48	37	59
Children with a plan to return home	120		205	123	110	1		75	93	104
Children with disabilities	45	52	102	80	110	32	46	65	70	70
Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children and Young People	6	14	20	0	10	2	3	7	18	2
Care leavers	116	207	218	220	283	88		N/A		N/A

5.6 Whilst numbers continue to increase, the areas of note here concern the increases in the number of young people moving into foster care settings and the increase in the number of young people placed in residential settings.

SEN CODE	Mar-17	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20
N (no SEN)	38%	45%	38%	48%	35%	31%
K (SEN Support)	37%	38.50%	35%	36%	34.53%	35%
E (EHCP)	15%	17%	13%	17%	14.00%	17%
AWAITING INFORMATION	10%	0.20%	13%	0	16.30%	17%

Information correct at 28th September 2020

5.7 Number of children with SEN in each year group (Correct at 01/08/2020)

SEN Status	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL
E	0	1	1	3	8	4	5	6	10	8	18	15	79
K	2	5	11	16	16	15	13	16	14	14	13	20	155
TOTAL SEN	2	6	12	19	24	19	18	22	24	22	31	35	**234**

5.8 This data indicates that just over 50% of our children looked after are indicated as having some level of special need. This is a high proportion compared with both all children (locally and nationally), and with cohorts of Looked After Children, although the prevalence of SEN in CLA is in general higher than for the total population.

5.9 This information tells us that there has been an increase in the number of our young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Some of this is attributable to improved assessment and recognition but demonstrates a wider awareness of the impact of pre-care experiences on our young people and the effect this has on their presentation and on their learning. The increase is particularly related to young people with challenges in the area of their social and emotional health.

5.10 It is clear from this breakdown that there is a concentration of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans in secondary education. 75% of these young people are placed in Special School settings where their needs can best be met.

5.11 Young people categorised as 'K' receive additional support with their learning, but this is managed within the normal bounds of a mainstream school and may include some 1 to 1 support or a learning intervention to address a short term or specific issue.

Ethnicity	Leicester all pupils June 2017	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20
ABAN	2.30%	0.25%	0.25%	0.23%	0	0.25%
AIND	30.30%	5.90%	6.40%	6.44%	5.64%	4.42%
AOT – any other Asian background	5.30%	3.19%	2.96%	2.76%	2.71%	3.19%
AAF					0.45%	0.49%
APKN	3.80%	2.70%	2.71%	3.22%	2.71%	2.70%
BAOF	3.90%	0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.49%
BLB – Black/Black British Caribbean	1.00%	1.97%	1.97%	1.61%	0.90%	1.23%
BLF – Black/Black British African		0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.74%
BLG – Black/Black British Other	1.50%	1.97%	1.97%	1.84%	1.58%	0.74%
BSOM	3.70%	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	1.35%	0.25%
CHE	0.30%	0.49%	0.49%	0	0	0
MWBA – Mixed White/Black African	1.00%	2.46%	2.46%	5.98%	1.58%	0
MBA	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.72%
MBO	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%
MOTH	1.90%	2.70%	2.22%	2.30%	3.39%	3.44%
MWAS	1.80%	3.44%	3.45%	3.45%	4.06%	5.65%
MWBC	2.20%	2.70%	6.16%	5.98%	5.64%	4.91%
OEO – Other Ethnic Origin	2.20%	3.44%	0.49%	0.46%	0.68%	1.23%
NOT – Information not obtained	0.60%	1.47%	0.74%	1.61%	3.84%	4.42%
REF – Refused	0.40%	0	0	0	0.23%	0
WBRI	27.50%	57.74%	58.13%	58.16%	58.69%	58.23%
WEUR	5.80%	3.44%	3.45%	3.68%	2.93%	2.95%
WIRI	0.10%	1.47%	1.48%	1.61%	0.45%	0.49%
WOW – Whit other	1.20%	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	0.23%	0.25%
WOB - White other British	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%	0
WEN	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%
WROM	0.60%	1.23%	0.99%	0.23%	1.13%	0.98%

Gender	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	**Jul-20**
Male	56%	56%	56%	53%	54%
Female	44%	44%	44%	47%	46%

Achievements and Outcomes

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

5.12   During Summer 2020 no formal assessments of children's education were undertaken due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Improving Level at Early Years Foundation & Improving KS1 & KS2

5.13   Normally there would by Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for those at the end of Reception Year, Year 1 phonics, Year 2 phonics and Key Stage 1 results in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. These assessments were cancelled by the DFE. Schools did not assess children in these year groups as the children had not been in school since March and not all were in school in June.

5.14   Key Stage 2 tests in Reading and Mathematics were cancelled and writing teacher assessments were not collected in line with the DFE announcements. Therefore, there are no results for children who completed primary school in summer 2020. The new multiplication tables tests for Year 4 children were also cancelled.

Increasing Yr 11 GCSE especially Maths & English

5.15   GCSE, A level and BTEC results were based on teacher assessment and were provided to the students by the schools. These have not been shared with the Local Authority, but GCSE and other results achieved by our Year 11 learners were collected by the Virtual School Team.

5.16   This means that there will be no Primary or Secondary school performance tables and Ofsted will only use 2019 and previous data to understand the performance of children. No results will be published at either a school or at a local authority level therefore any comparison or review of education outcomes cannot include 2020 results because there was no assessment.

Case Study – Pupil A

Background

5.17   Student C is an 11-year-old male who is relatively new into care and subject to an Interim Care Order. He is in a placement with one of his siblings and has supervised contact with his biological parents. During his time living with parents he attended two primary schools and is now in a third mainstream setting. Although he is in Year 6, he is working at Year 4 expectations in maths and requested support in the run up to SATs.

Challenges

- Limited information in respect of Student A's background or the reasons for being taken into care and therefore limited understanding of the emotional or psychological pressures he may face.

- Behaviour is not an issue but more so his obvious frustration at his own limitations, which was leading to his fear of failure.

- Through discussion with A, it has become evident that he suffers from a lack of confidence and is inclined to panic when he meets perceived challenges; for example, being presented with SATs papers.

- His negative reaction to questions he finds challenging saying he cannot do something.

- Being asked to teach using the butterfly method when dealing with fractions to ensure methods are the same as those employed in school.

- To encourage him to interact more with the Virtual School Tutor as someone supportive and approachable and to overcome his initial reticence.

- He proved very quiet and, whilst he engaged, he did not respond to interaction.

Approach

- A Year 6 gap skills analysis was initially used to assess areas for learning and then supported using SATs-themed topic booklets.

- As times tables were a stumbling block to many tasks, practising these has been fundamental.

- General maths questions are used as a starter to revise skills and to encourage A to differentiate between questions solved mentally and problems that require written methods.

- Through discussion it became clear that he is aware of his difficulties, therefore this informed the way of working with him to encourage building self-confidence and esteem.
- Ensuring positive affirmation of his ability to do tasks he was faced with.
- Establishing a relationship to encourage trust and confidence.
- Using learning games and online activities for times tables or rounding for example enabled more enjoyment of learning.

Summary

5.18   Student A is much more confident in his interactions and will now engage in general conversation and initiate it, often talking about what he has done over the weekend or by talking about his sibling. His self-confidence is more evident; he is more willing to try, and he realises getting things wrong is not failure but an important part of learning.

A showed more willingness to learn his times tables although there is a need for ongoing work to ensure he meets age-related expectations.
It has been pleasing to receive positive feedback from his class teacher about the impact tuition has had:

I'd just like to start off with the biggest thank you!
Student A is my student and I ought to tell you that Maths was the only subject he did not like at the beginning of the year.
However, over the last few months working with you I have seen this child flourish not only academically but emotionally within this subject. His self-belief and confidence have soared under your wing and I believe this will be a fundamental element towards his SATs.
This confidence has enabled him to independently explore and try tasks in class without hesitation. Overall, this new-found attitude has had a real impact on his schoolwork, achieving far more than he has before. His number bonds and strategies for certain methods are stronger. He has also started to practise his times table… I am so shocked and happy at the same time with the amount of progress he is showing!
I hope he doesn't panic (in the SATs) too, but I am confident he will get better.

Key Stage 4

5.19 Key Stage 4 qualifications changed in 2017 with GCSE English and Maths scored numerically from 1 (low) to 9 (high). Course content was also expanded and increased. Whilst there is no direct correlation with previous grades, a 4 is considered a 'pass' and a 5 a 'good pass'. All GCSEs are now marked on the 9 – 1 scale and revised courses have been reported as more challenging for all learners, placing increased pressure on schools and learners.

5.20 **GCSE Results Analysis 2020 (based on teacher assessments)**

GCSE Outcomes	All Leicester LAC 2018	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2018	Leicester City All 2018	National all LAC 2018	All Leicester LAC 2019	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2019	Leicester City All 2019	National all LAC 2019	All Leicester LAC 2020	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2020	Leicester City All 2020	National all LAC 2020
Cohort	50	42			46	45			60	47		
English 4+	20%	24%	69.90%	15%	35%	35%			32%	32%		
Maths 4+	10%	12%	60.10%	11%	22%	22%			24%	13%		
5 GCSEs at 4+ (inc Eng and Ma)	6.70%	9%		13%	13%	13%			15%	11%		
Basics (Eng and Ma at 4+)	8.90%	12%	56.10%	7%	17%	17%	55%	65%	15%	13%		

5.21 2020 has been a difficult year for our Key Stage 4 young people. The closure of schools in March and the subsequent cancellation of formal examinations means that our learners were awarded grades based on their teacher assessments, called the Centre Assessed Grade (CAG). Virtual Headteachers worked together through the National Association of Virtual School Head Teachers (NAVSH) to alleviate the risk of our learners being subject to unconscious bias in the awarding of grades. Perhaps inevitably, there have been some young people who would not have achieved results at all if the examinations had gone ahead, who achieved grades, and others who would have accelerated their attainment in the final months and weeks who were denied the opportunity to do so. Nonetheless, we are very proud of this cohort and their achievements and their resilience in challenging circumstances.

5.22   It is noticeable that in this year, there has been a small reduction in the number of the young people who achieved outcomes who had been in the care of the local authority for more than 12 months at 31/03/2020. However, the proportion achieving 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths, has risen slightly compared with last year for all young people in care. It was significant, however, that several young people who achieved a Grade 4 in English (Language or Literature) missed the 4 in Maths. This will require close monitoring in 2020/21 to seek to avoid this but might in part be attributable to the way that learners Key Stage 4 was terminated in March.

2020 Key Stage 4 Outcomes

■ English 4+   ■ Maths 4+   ■ 5GCSEs @ 4+
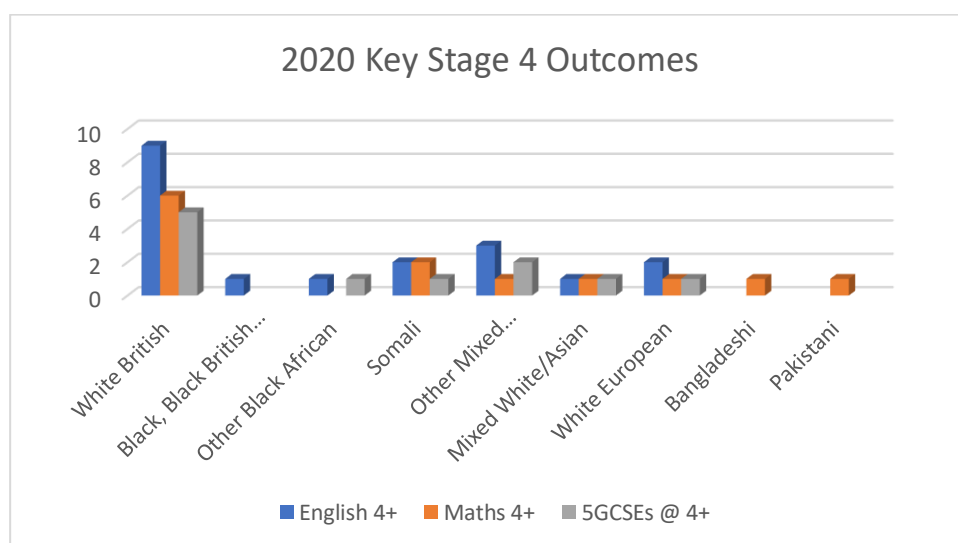
2020	% of total cohort	English 4+	Maths 4+	5GCSEs @ 4+
White British	58.23%	47%	46%	45%
Black, Black British Other	0.74%	5%		
Other Black African	0.49%	5%		9%
Somali	0.25%	11%	14%	9%
Other Mixed Background	3.44%	16%	8%	19%
Mixed White/Asian	5.65%	5%	8%	9%
White European	2.95%	11%	8%	9%
Bangladeshi	0.25%		8%	
Pakistani	2.70%		8%	

These figures tell us that the proportion of young people gaining Grade 4 or higher in GCSE English or Maths or gaining 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above is significantly lower for White British learners than the cohort proportion. There is a small negative disparity for young people of mixed white/Asian heritage but for all other groups, the proportion gaining the higher grades is significantly higher than their proportion of the whole cohort. 81% of this cohort have been in care for more than 12 months at 31/03/2010 and should therefore have been more stable in their education placements, which may account for this level of success.

5.23 22% of this cohort have an Education Health and Care Plan. Of those 13 young people, 9 (15%) attend specialist provisions where they would not have sat public examinations in 2020. 35% of this cohort are recognised as having additional need, but the young person's needs could be met within their mainstream school. 42% of this cohort have no identified additional learning need.

5.24 Of the young people who achieved Grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, all bar one have no additional learning need; 40% are identified as White British and 20% as Black Somalian, with 10% in each of White and Asian, White European, African Asian and Other Mixed Background.

5.25 Of the young people who achieved 5 passes at grade 4 or above, 31% have an additional learning need that can be met in school. 54% identify as White British, 15% of this group identify as Other Mixed and then 8% each of Other Black African, Black Somalian, White and Black African and White European.

Example of intervention work by the Virtual School to support attainment at KS4

<u>Student B</u>
Background

5.26 Student A is a 16-year-old female with a history of mental health issues. Parents removed her from mainstream education in Year 6 and then home-schooled her up to the age of 15. During this period of home-schooling, she spent a period of months in hospital following serious self-harm. She received the usual hospital education at this time.

She was released into a residential care home, the point at which Virtual School began one to one tuition. In September she re-entered mainstream education into Year 11.

Family relationships continue to be an area of difficulty that impact on her mental health and confidence.

Challenges

- Lack of access to the National Curriculum has led to fragmented learning, knowledge and understanding.
- No previous experience of exam preparation and controlled assessment situations.
- Lack of previous ongoing educational assessments.

- In English, has had limited access to set texts and exam practice.
- Social interactions can be challenging, for example her perspective of peer relationships and behaviours
- Ongoing anxiety regarding coping with the volume and breadth of academic study in time available.

Approach

- Interactive activities such as icebreakers have been used to build a working relationship.
- A Functional Skills approach was initially used to engage her interest and allow assessment of her Reading, Writing and oral skills.
- A close study of literary devices employed by writers to achieve their effects, has been useful in developing understanding of writers' techniques.
- Setting tasks requiring working with a thesaurus and dictionary has helped extend B's vocabulary and so informed her own writing.
- Close analysis of literary texts including comparison of texts as exam practice.
- Exam texts studied to extend knowledge and understanding.

At the start of a session, I listen and engage in her anxiety about external events and reassure her that I will act on her concerns. This usually has a calming effect and she then engages with the lesson.

I encourage her interest in literature by enabling her to explore texts independently, valuing her viewpoint, which reduces her anxiety.

Summary

5.27 The Virtual School has successfully supported B's transition into school, for example her attendance is excellent, and she has formed good relationships with staff.

Initially her oral interaction was limited to her situation, but she now can argue, discuss and debate on a range of texts and the issues that arise from studying them. B is beginning to develop a maturity of approach to reading for understanding. With prompting, B now has a more extended vocabulary in written response to textual analysis. In addition, B now has the confidence to approach tasks independently and express her views explaining her ideas.

B has stated clearly that she "loves English now but used to hate it" and has indicated that this is as a result of the delivery and approach to the subject by her class teacher and myself.

It has been gratifying to observe B's increasing self-confidence in her study of English and to witness her growing self-esteem.

It is my estimation that the Virtual School has used approaches to B's circumstances which have been successful. We should continue this support to ensure a good outcome both educationally in her coming exams and personally in helping her in her pathways towards adulthood.

5.28 **Destinations for Post 16 young people**

**Improve outcomes for L3 & Reduce drop-out**

Post 16 Destinations 2020	
Level 3 course	8
Level 2 course	17
Level 1 course	11
Remain at Special School	6
Apprenticeship	3
Job	0
Traineeship	0
NEET	11
Secure/Health setting	4

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Information provided by
Connexions, October 2020
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5.29 **Attendance and Exclusions**

Improve Attendance

LCC CLA Attendance Summary

LCC CLA Attendance 2019/2020
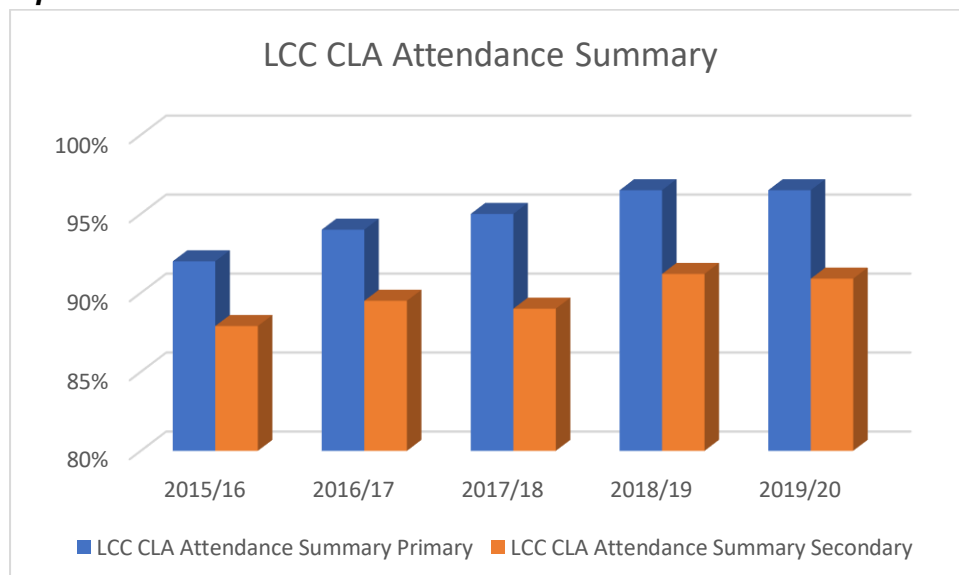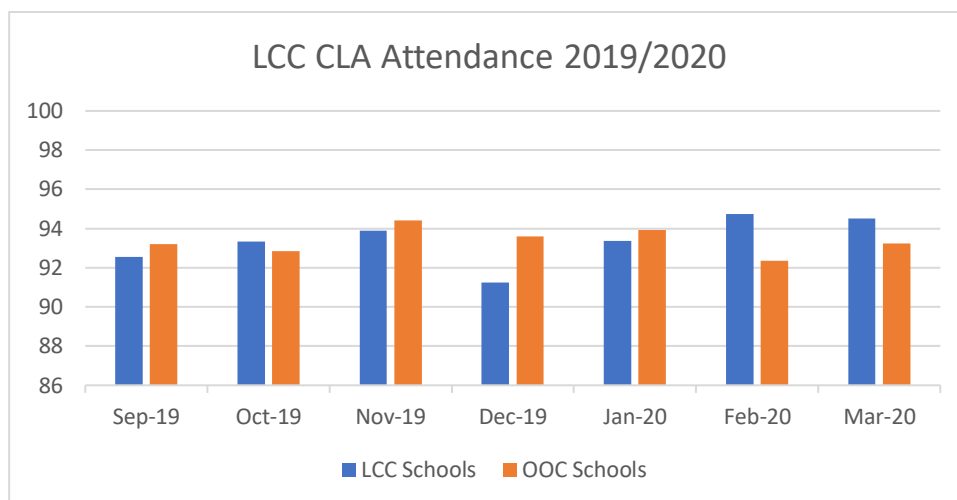
5.30 It is clear from these graphs that attendance in Primary schools remains better than in Secondary schools across the year. It is important to note, however, that attendance has risen steadily over the last 5 years and is being maintained at its increased level in both phases.

5.31 There are some differences between schools in the City and schools attended by our young people placed outside the City. In the first term of the year, attendance was slightly higher in out of area schools, but the trend reversed early in 2020 when the impact of the global pandemic began to affect school attendance differently in different parts of the country.

5.32 Overall, the attendance pattern over the last 5 school years shows a rising trend in all phases. This may be attributed to increased monitoring and early response by the Virtual School Team when young people are not in school.

Attendance 2019-20

5.33 There are many reasons why our young people may miss school. We always aim for and encourage 100% attendance and in 2019/20, 29 young people maintained this during the whole-time school was open to them.

Reason for non-attendance 2019/20	% Missed CLA	% Missed ALL Leicester	ALL CLA (Days)	ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS1&2 CLA (Days)	KS1&2 ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS3 CLA (Days)	KS3 ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS4 CLA (Days)	KS4 ALL LEICESTER (Days)
Holiday (days)	0.25%	0.04%	204	39	180	31.5	20	1.5	4	6
Authorised Absence (days)	4.58%	4.82%	3751	5916	1144.5	2691.5	965	2122.5	1641.5	1102
Unauthorised absence (days)	2.74%	1.21%	2249.5	1488.5	420	168	715.5	342.5	1114	978
Exclusion (days)	0.18%	0.15%	145	188.5	19	20.5	93	82.5	33	85.5
Total	7.75%	6.22%	6349.5	7632	1763.5	2911.5	1793.5	2549	2792.5	2171.5

5.34   This data tells us that the most common reason for absence from school in 2019/20 was authorised absence, meaning that it was considered as absence for a legitimate reason. Authorised absence for Leicester's looked after children is lower than for all children and young people in Leicester. The proportion of these authorised absences for young people in Key Stage 4 (Year 10 and Year 11) is significantly higher than expected whilst at Key Stages 1,2 and 3 (Years Reception to Year 9), the authorised absence for our LAC is less than half the amount as it is for all of Leicester's children and young people. Unauthorised absence, which is considered absence that has not been agreed as legitimate in cause, is much higher for looked after children and young people than for all children and young people in Leicester. Unauthorised absence in Key Stage is significantly higher from reception to Year 9 but only a little higher at Key Stage 4.

5.35   Absence caused by fixed term exclusions is a little higher for our LAC than for all children and young people in Leicester but the greatest difference is at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) and this is due to 8 young people who were subject to multiple fixed term exclusions. One young person accrued 5 fixed term exclusions and has since moved on to specialised provision better able to meet need.

5.36   Absence due to holidays is higher for our LAC than for all pupils in Leicester. Holidays are not usually agreed during term time by Social Care except in exceptional circumstances, whilst unauthorised holiday absences are monitored and reported through the Target 25 meeting process.

Exclusions 2019/2020

Reduce Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2019/20.

5.37 The Virtual School Team was able to support pupils at risk of exclusion. Team members attended PEPs, worked with pupils, their carer's and schools to seek solutions which avoided exclusion. These included increased support in school, managed moves and time spent in alternative provision settings to address the reasons the exclusion may have occurred.

5.38 The VST Learning Mentors provided support to pupils at risk of exclusion. They successfully worked alongside school mentors, residential staff, carers and other support staff to establish pastoral support systems and personalised programmes to enable everyone to remain on track. In some cases, Pupil Premium Plus funding was used to appoint 1:1 support staff to enable a young person to remain in school, settle and make progress. In schools where numbers of CLA are high, the Virtual School has funded or part-funded a mentor to work specifically with our children to ensure they have appropriate support to keep them in school and learning.

5.39 33 pupils received a fixed term exclusion during 2019/2020. Of these 33 young people, 16 of them were excluded for a fixed term on more than one occasion. 2 young people were each subject to 5 separate fixed term exclusions. Both young people have since moved on to a specialised setting better able to meet need.

5.40 The total number of days lost to fixed term exclusion was 142. This figure represents a decrease from the previous year; however, this figure only reflects a part of the school year until schools closed in March in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Year	Number of pupils excluded	Total number of pupils in cohort	%
2009/10*	52	309	16.80%
2010/11*	45	281	15.70%
2011/12*	25	248	10.10%
2012/13*	28	244	11.40%
2013/14*	27	208	13%
2014/15*	18	283	6.30%
2015/16*	27	403	6.70%
2016/17	46	410	11%
2017/18	34	446	7.60%
2018/19	44	448	9.80%
2019/20	33	464	7%

*note – these figures are for CLA in Leicester City schools only

Fixed Term Exclusions by pupil year group
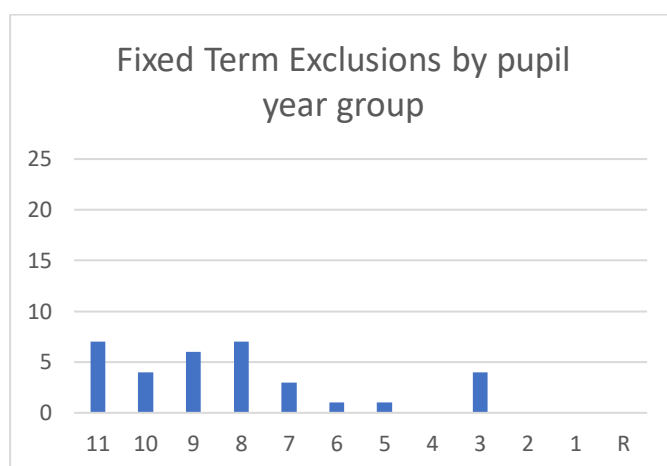
This graph shows that there are key year groups where exclusions are higher – Years 8,9 and 11 are the areas with the highest percentages of fixed term exclusions. It is not unexpected, generally, that young people in secondary education present more significant challenges than their younger peers and this results in a

Fixed Term Exclusions by gender
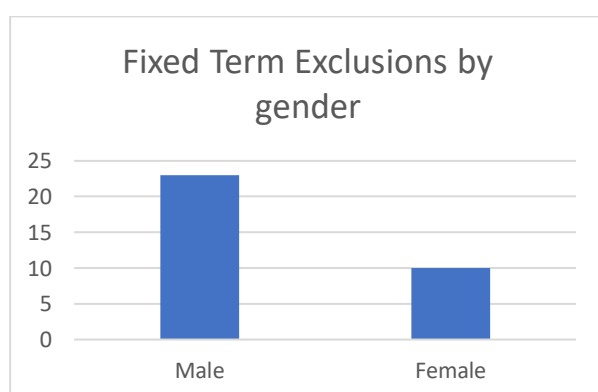
This shows quite clearly that boys are more likely to be excluded than girls. The balance between the two in the overall population is almost even.

Fixed Term Exclusions by heritage
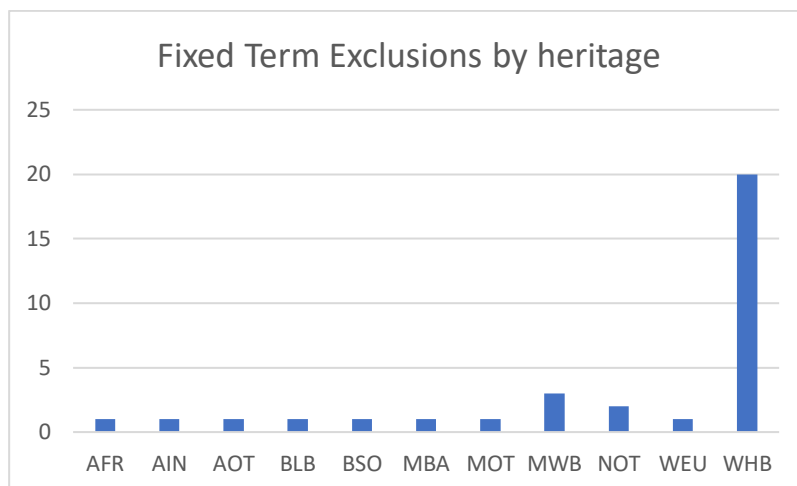
This shows quite clearly that young people of White British heritage are much more likely to be subject to a fixed term exclusion than any other group. This imbalance exceeds the proportion of White British young people in the actional at

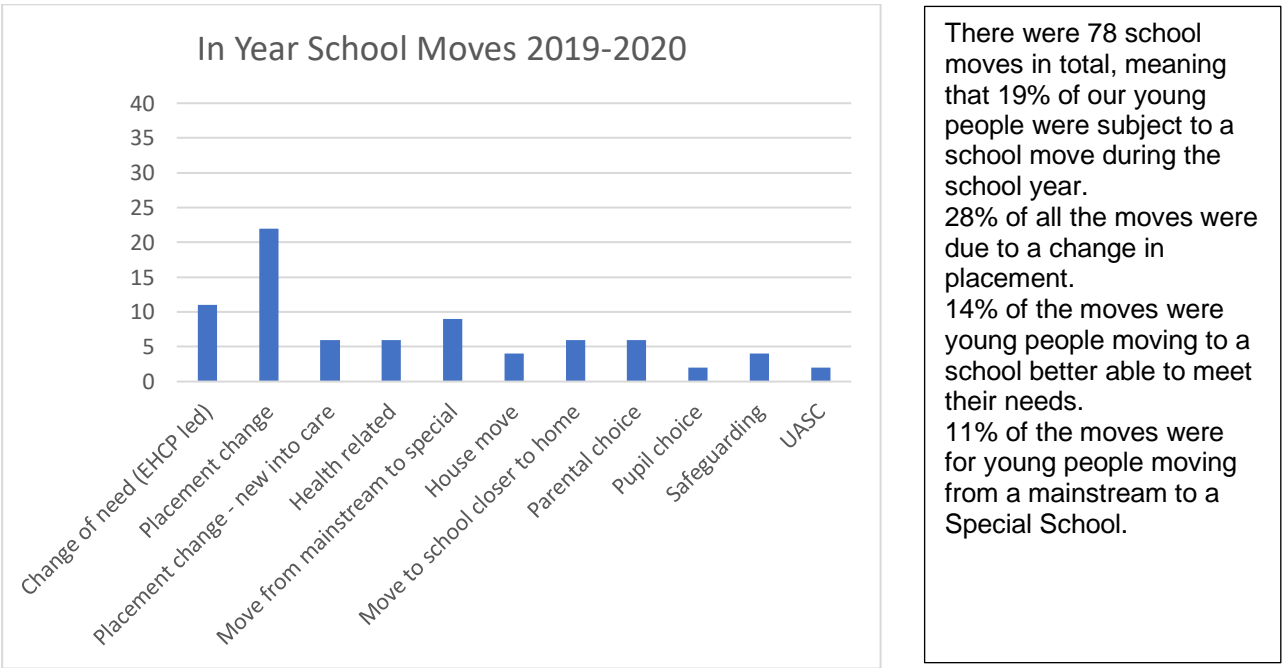## Reasons for Fixed Term Exclusions 2019/20
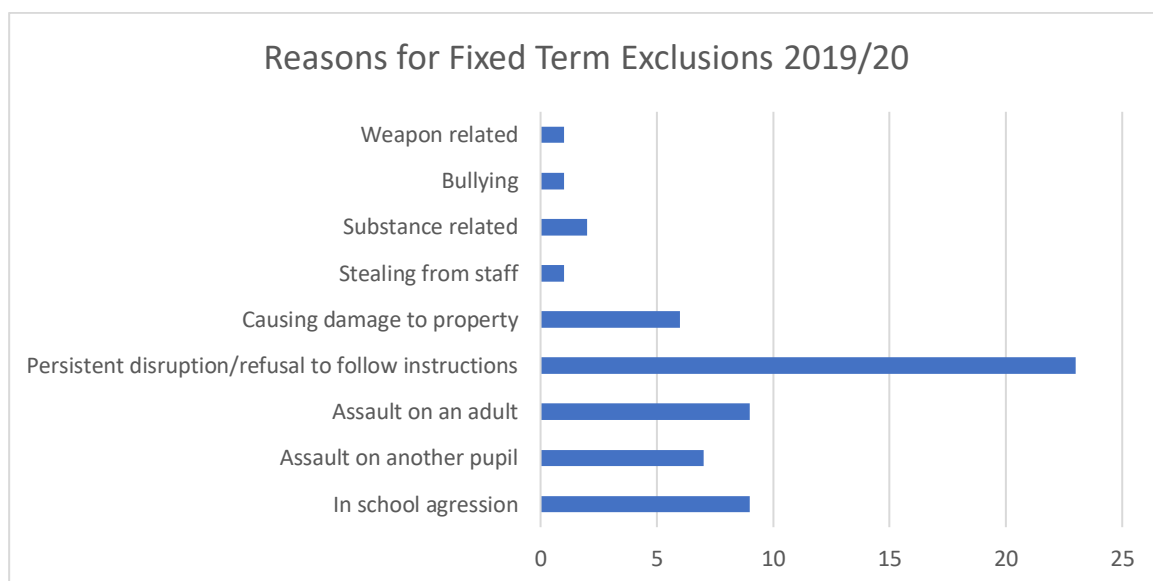
5.41 This data tells us that the most used reason for a young person to be subject to a fixed term exclusion was for persistently disruptive behaviour or refusal to follow school's expectations resulting in disruption to the learning of others. Of the 17 young people who were excluded for this reason in 2019/20, 6 of them have since moved on to a more specialised setting better able to meet their needs and 4 further young people have additional support to address their needs and to help them to avoid further fixed term exclusions.
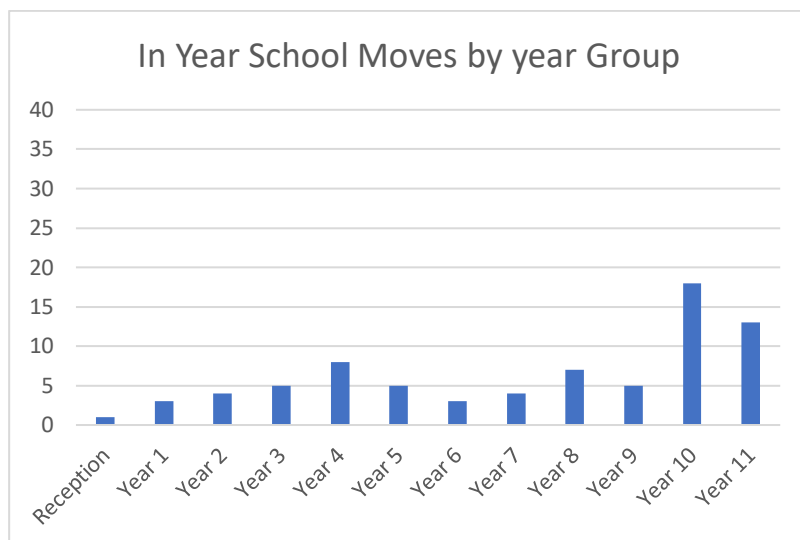
5.42 The Target 25 group monitors the hours of education that pupils receive. The Target 25 group a multi-disciplinary group with knowledge and understanding of the learners and the challenges they may need to overcome. The Authority's commissioning officer also attends. Together the group provides a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable looked after children.

5.43   There is a further monthly meeting chaired by the Assistant Mayor and attended by Senior Officers of the Local Authority, Service Managers from Education Welfare, Social Care and Special Educational Needs; this group monitor not only the young people at risk of not having a full time education, but also actions and plans around young people who may have been excluded from school or whose attendance falls below 95%, taking a solution focussed approach to resolving the barriers for each learner.

In Year School Moves

5.44   Moving to a new school during a school year should be avoided whenever possible. However, sometimes factors beyond our control mean that children or young people move to new placements or move to alternative settings that are better able to meet their needs following statutory assessment.

In Year School Moves 2019-2020

There were 78 school moves in total, meaning that 19% of our young people were subject to a school move during the school year.
28% of all the moves were due to a change in placement.
14% of the moves were young people moving to a school better able to meet their needs.
11% of the moves were for young people moving from a mainstream to a Special School.

In Year School Moves by year Group

This graph shows that 40% of the school moves were for young people in either Year 10 or Year 11.
60% of the moves were for young people at Secondary School.

Proportion of Yr Group subject to in-year school move
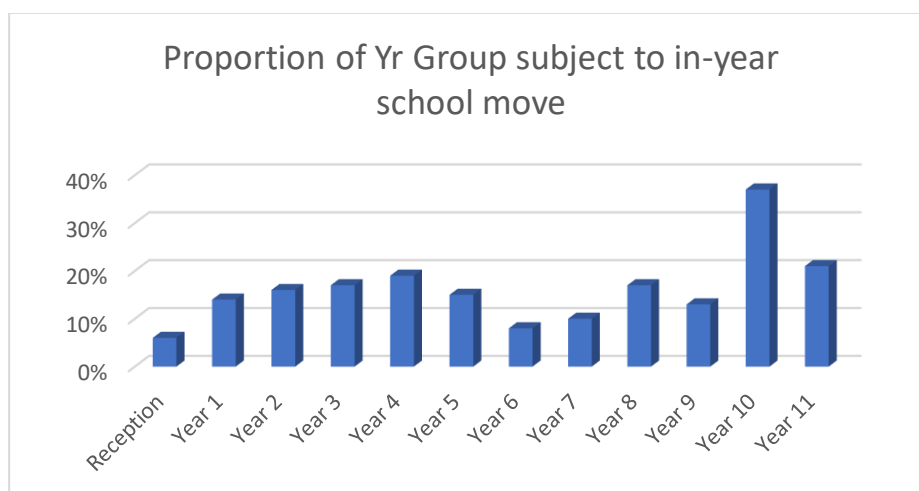
This data shows the number of young people subject to an in-year school move as a proportion of the number of LCC LAC young people in that year group during this academic year.

In Year School Moves by SEN Code
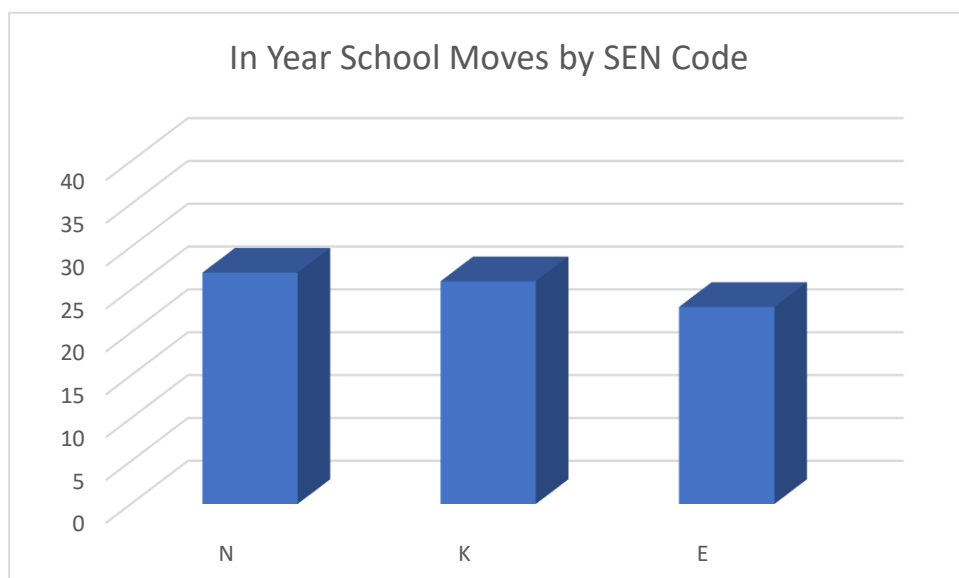
Although moves are broadly similar for LAC with SEN codes of N or K, the proportion of moves for young people with Education Health and Care Plans is higher than the cohort proportion.

In Year School Moves by Ethnicity

Chart showing In Year School Moves by Ethnicity. Y-axis from 0 to 40. Categories: WHB (≈39), AAF (1), ABA (1), AIN (2), AIND (2), AOT (1), APK (2), APKN (1), BAO (1), BLG (1), BSO (2), MOT (2), MWA (7), MWB (7), OEO (3), OOTH (1), WEU (2), WRR (1).
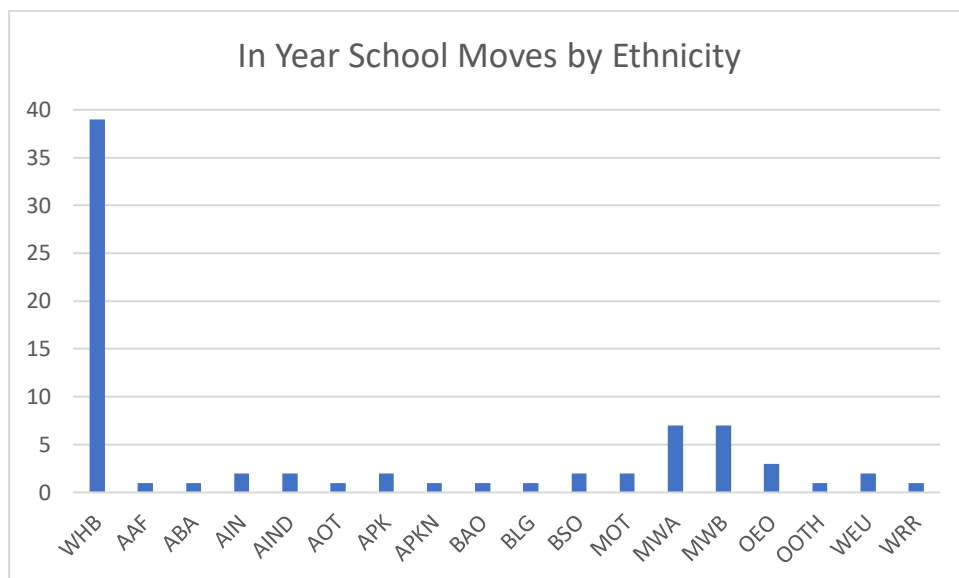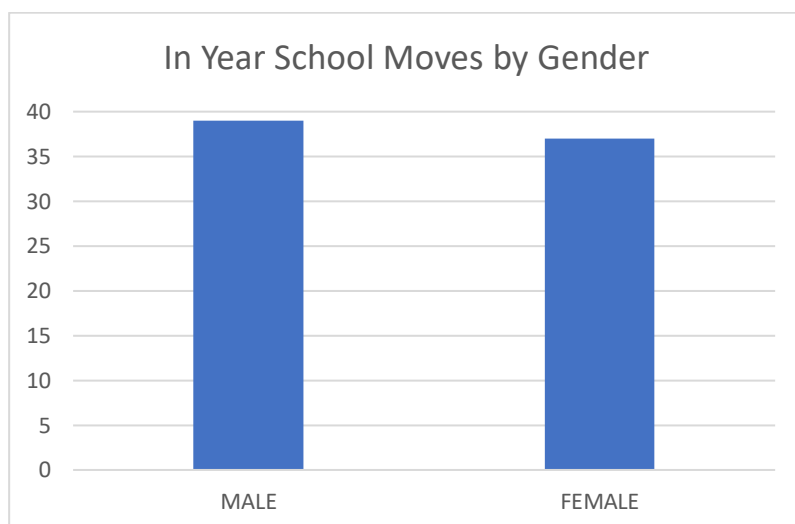
This shows that 50% of the school moves were for young people with recorded White British heritage. This is close to the proportion of the cohort recorded as White British.

In Year School Moves by Gender

Chart showing In Year School Moves by Gender. Y-axis from 0 to 40. MALE ≈39, FEMALE ≈37.

More male learners were subject to school moves during the year; however this tells us that proportionately, moves are slightly higher for female than for male LAC.

Enrichment Activities

5.45 A key area where the Virtual School aims to add value to a looked after child's education provision is through the enrichment activities we organise and run that are in addition to school provision. There was a raft of activities and interventions planned, but we were overtaken quickly by the impact of the global pandemic and much of the planned activity was either postponed until 2021 or moved to a virtual platform.

Curve Theatre

5.46 In December 2019 we were pleased to host an exclusive performance of Giles Andreae's Giraffe's Can't Dance at Leicester's Curve for our Early Years children, their carer's and families. This funny, touching and triumphant tale about a giraffe called Gerald who finds his own tune provided a joy filled afternoon enjoyed by all.

5.47 Sadly, a planned visit with our Key Stage 4 young people to see examination text 'An Inspector Calls' was an early victim of lockdown cancellation. We will aim to revisit this option in 2021.

Transition Project

5.48 In October 2019, we had a positive Awards Event at the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, hosted by Ashley John Baptiste. We celebrated the successes of a wide range of young people for what they had achieved in the last year and listened as Ashley described his own experiences as a looked after child and the experience of going to Cambridge University on his own, as there was no one to take him that first term. I have reflected on that story so many times and sincerely hope that none of our young people are put in that position. We owe them all the support we can muster at key points in their lives to enable them to grow and succeed as exceptional young people looking forward with positivity.

5.49   We have continued with our Transition project this year, following and supporting Year 6 young people as they begin their journey into secondary school. Sessions that helped them to get to know each other and gel as a group were held at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre before all of our Year 6 learners attended a Transition Conference in June 2019 to begin to think about the resilience required to succeed in secondary school and what success might feel like. A smaller group who were going to the same secondary schools were lucky enough to go on a short residential with Virtual School staff, supported by staff from their new schools, to begin building relationships and confidence before the August start. There were catch up meetings in the autumn term but plans to end this cohort with another residential opportunity were thwarted due to COVID 19.   Instead, young people were spoken to online in a virtual environment and their successes acknowledged.

5.50   Leicester Virtual School staff use the Outcome Star Shooting Star to measure the progress individuals make during the period of their involvement in this programme. This tool asks young people to self-assess themselves in six core areas at the beginning of the programme, at a mid-way point and at the end.

The following graphs show the progress that the cohort currently in Year 8 in their secondary schools made during their time in the Transition Programme.

Almost all of the young people have made progress in at least one core area with 75% assessing that they have made progress in at least two core areas.
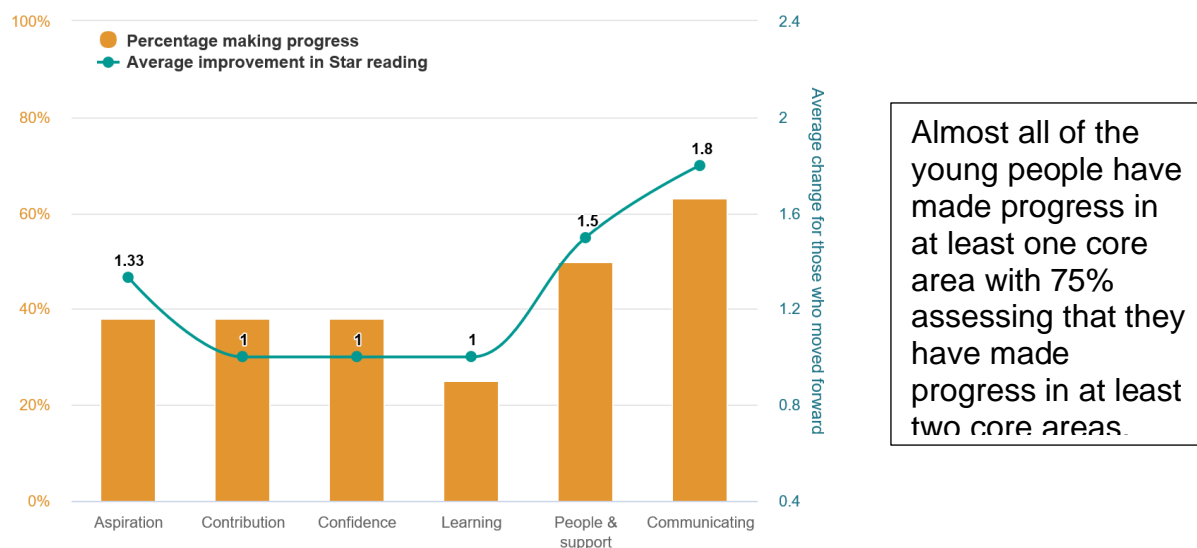
	Are people making progress?	
In 1+ outcome areas Percentage of people making progress in at least one outcome area	**In 2+ outcome areas** Percentage of people making progress in at least two outcome areas	**In 3+ outcome areas** Percentage of people making progress in at least three outcome areas
87%	**75%**	**37%**

5.51 One of the stated aims of this project was to reduce the number of and incidences of fixed term exclusion for young people in Year 7.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No of Y7 young people excluded	9	5	2
No of days lost to Y7 exclusions	52	24	7
No of Y7 exclusions	15	11	3

5.52 This shows that we successfully achieved that aim, with a significant reduction in the number of young people excluded year on year; whilst we must remember that this school year was cut short by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the reduction in both the number of days lost to exclusion and the overall number of exclusions demonstrates real success.

5.53 It is regrettable that two Year 7 were students excluded during this year, but both have since moved on to other settings better able to meet their needs. Neither has been excluded again since their move.

Pandemic Response

5.54   Following the closure of schools on March 20th, 2020 the staff of the Virtual School immediately redoubled their efforts to ensure that all our young people were well supported and managing in the extraordinary times. So, as well as conducting business as usual:

- Very quickly worked with Virtual School staff from other Local Authorities and our PEP provider, eGov, to create an alternative PEP document that would accurately reflect the closure and lockdown situation for schools and for young people. This was finalised in the second week of the lockdown and was rolled out to schools following the Easter holiday. All PEPs moved to happen online.

- Work of the tutors was reviewed, and an appropriate platform selected to enable this to continue safely online and deliver dynamic content.

- Virtual School touch down web page with resources to support learners and carers created in first couple of weeks of lockdown. Resources were updated or added to weekly.
  https://schools.leicester.gov.uk/services/virtual-school/

- Provision of a named link for each Key Stage to support any carers with questions about learning or requiring support.

- Virtual School response to the Government Digital Devices scheme to ensure young people have the resources to work effectively from home.

- When schools first closed, the team contacted every child or family to establish how many were accessing provision either at their own school or at a nominated alternative. We ensured that they all had access to appropriate learning resources where they were working from home.

- Schools very quickly provided learning via their website or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that was accessible to the children and carers. Designated Teachers in the schools stayed in regular touch with our children who were not attending; this might be a telephone call or by email, depending upon the age of the young person.

- Learning Mentor continued to support her caseload virtually, providing telephone support to young people in key year groups with a regular check-in.

- Project Officer reviewed and rearranged any enrichment booking/activities we had planned

- Worked with Team Leader and Educational Psychology team to re-plan Transition Project to ensure continuation of support for this cohort of young people.
- Tutors immediately moved all tuition online
- Tutors set work for any young people without a school place, also providing marking and feedback
- The Virtual Head worked with a Senior Educational Psychologist to provide a workshop for carers to address concerns about the return to school in August 2020

Personal Education Plans
Maintain PEP Compliance / Develop Systems to Secure Information Sharing

5.55   Virtual School Officers aim to attend Personal Education Plan meetings (PEPs) for as many young people as possible. Each young person should have a PEP meeting each school term. As it is impossible for Officers to attend all, priority is given to meetings about young people who are new into care, those whose circumstances are judged to be complex as well as children and young people in key transition years – Year 2, Year 6, Year 9 and Year 11. However, the COVID pandemic has required that all PEP meetings have moved online. Initially these were held on Skype but transitioned to Microsoft Teams. With Officers working from home from March 2020, they have been able to attend more PEP meetings as they are no longer travelling between meetings and schools, which has been a positive outcome of the crisis and will be reviewed as a way of working going forward into the new normal.

5.56   Since January 2017, we have been using eGov's, ePep, a secure online platform for our Personal Education Plans. Meetings are chaired by school, who set smart learning targets for the young people with the aim of accelerating progress. All PEPs are quality assured by either the Virtual Head or Virtual School Team Leader. Whilst we always aim for all our children to have a current PEP, our rate of compliance remains high at an average of 96.5% during the school year 2019/20.

5.57   The quality of PEPs has continued to show steady improvement. Following the closure of schools the Virtual Head moved quickly to work with eGov and other Virtual Heads across the country to design and launch a bespoke PEP that enabled schools and other professionals to consider the education of

young people during the summer term when they were variously in school or learning from home. This bespoke response was well received and completed, but sadly some schools did not prioritise the inclusion of the young person's voice when they were not in school and this did lead to a small reduction in the quality of PEP completion.

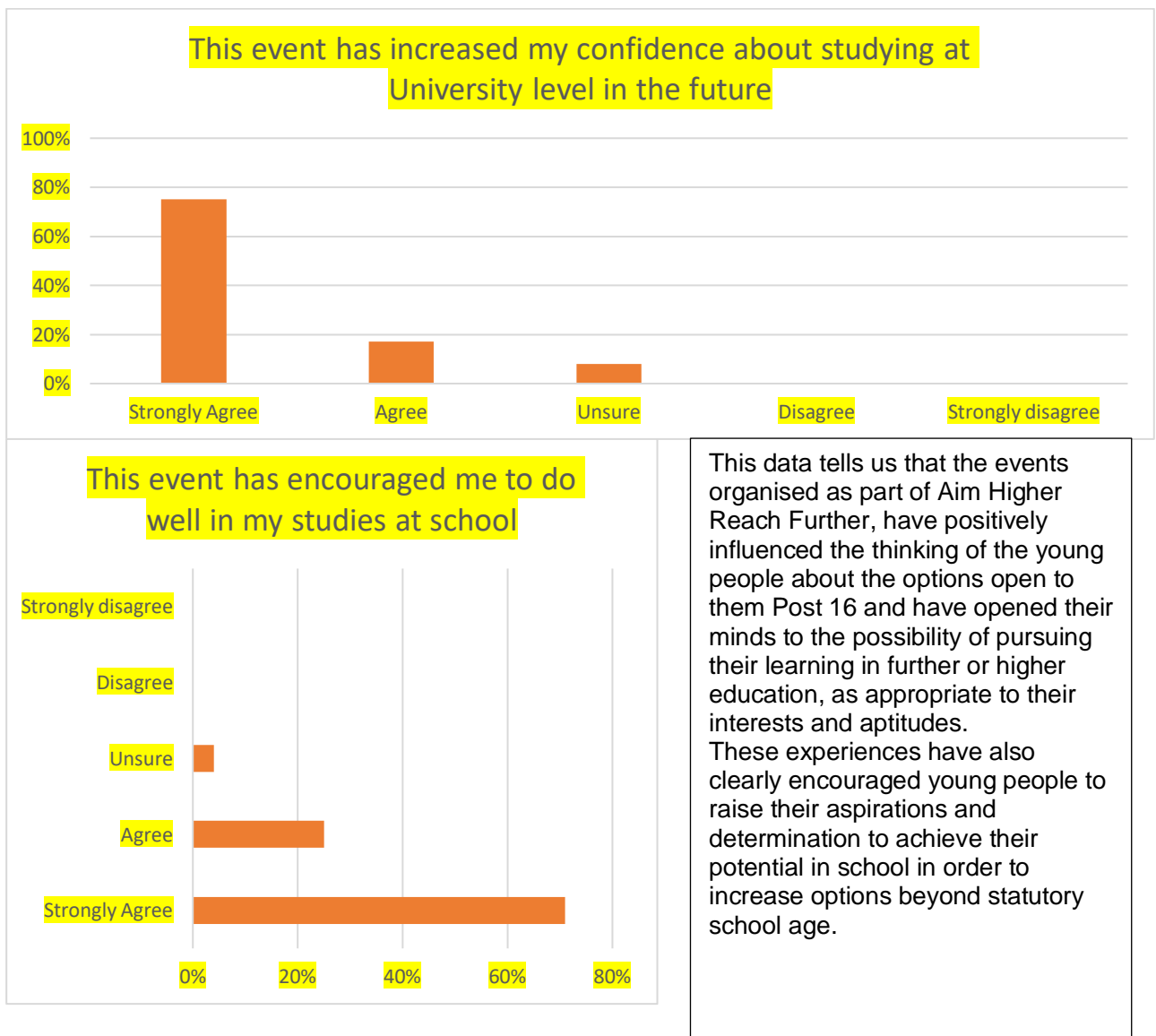**Aim Higher Reach Further**
Aim Higher to Accelerate Progress

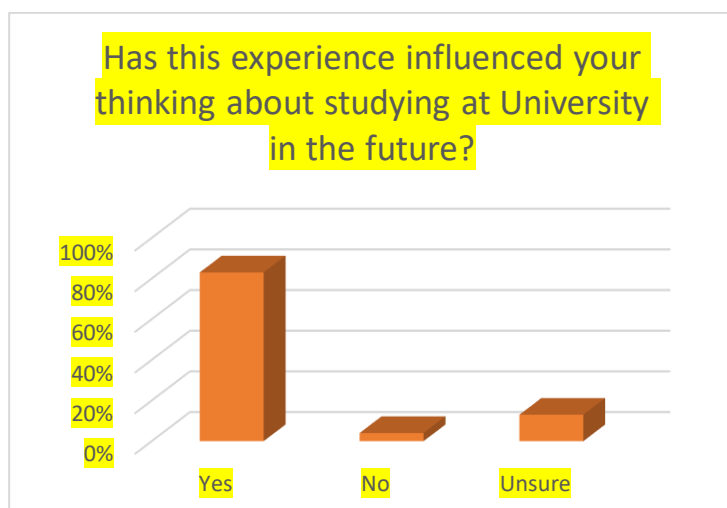**Supporting Foster Carers & Designated Teachers / Creating a VST Web Presence**

5.58   The team identified a need for a piece of work to raise the aspirations and attainment of our young people and to encourage our care leavers to view their futures differently and empower them to consider University as a viable option. Nationally 37% of young people progress from further education on to University. The figure for our care leavers at the beginning of this piece of work was just 2.8%.

5.59   The Pre-Grad Programme was launched in October 2015, with a cohort of students from Year 7, 8 and 9. They were all identified on the basis of their results at the end of Key Stage 2 and feedback from schools as having the potential to go on to University post 18. The first cohort of the programme are now in Year 12, as at September 2020, so we are now beginning to see the impact the programme has had on their attainment and aspirations. However, we have identified that there is work to do around encouraging those supporting our learners to see higher education as a potential route and to highlight the support the Local Authority will put in place to enable this to happen, as many fear the potential financial impact of going to University.

5.60   From September 2019 the programme was re-named Aim Higher Reach Further with efforts focussed on all the learners and providing them with the support to achieve their best work and ultimately land in adulthood as productive members of society

Of the pupils in the first two Pre-Grad cohorts who have now progressed beyond statutory school age, their progression is as follows:

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
No longer LAC	29%	37%
Detained	10%	1%
Young Parent	3%	5%
NEET	3%	7%
Level 1 Studies	3%	5%
Level 2 Studies	27%	22%
Level 3 Studies		12%
Apprenticeship		3%
Employed		3%
University		5%

This tells us that 12% of the cohort are pursuing A Level studies (or their equivalent) and are considering moving on to higher education at the end of their current course of study. 5% have now moved on to University with more planning to do so in 2021. The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has discouraged some learners from progressing to University this year, with most deferring to 2021.

A significant proportion of those young people who left care after enrolment on the programme were expected to be in this part of the cohort, but we are unable to track

The following data is feedback from the young people who engaged with these sessions between 2018 and 2020.

This data tells us that the events organised as part of Aim Higher Reach Further, have positively influenced the thinking of the young people about the options open to them Post 16 and have opened their minds to the possibility of pursuing their learning in further or higher education, as appropriate to their interests and aptitudes.

These experiences have also clearly encouraged young people to raise their aspirations and determination to achieve their potential in school in order to increase options beyond statutory school age.

Has this experience influenced your thinking about studying at University in the future?

(Chart showing responses: Yes ~100%, No ~5%, Unsure ~20%)

Letterbox Club

5.61   During 2019/2020 the Virtual School enrolled all its looked after children in Years Reception, 1, 3, 5 and 7 in the Letterbox Club, a national scheme run by Book Trust, a national charity. The club is managed in partnership with the University of Leicester and was first conceived and set up by Leicester City Council's Virtual School Team.

5.62   The project explores ways of improving the educational outlook for children in care by providing them with educational materials. Each child receives a parcel once a month for six months, with an additional parcel at Christmas. Each parcel is addressed to the child at their home and includes a letter personalised with the child's name, two reading books and stationery items such as pencils, an exercise book or drawing book, a bookmark and a maths game. Sometimes the child receives a CD to accompany one of the books. The books chosen include a mixture of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, with good levels of illustration and aimed at the "interest age" of each cohort of children. The mathematics games focus on number and arithmetic and are provided at a suitable level for the age of the children.

5.63   Unfortunately, the planned delivery of parcels from March 2020 to October 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic and parcels started going out to children in September 2020. Feedback on the impact of this will be provided in due course.

Emotional Wellbeing in Education Project

5.64   Some of our looked after children have significant difficulties with their social, emotional and mental health and this can often have a negative impact on their ability to engage positively with education and go on to achieve their potential. As a way of managing this, the Virtual School commissions work via the Education Psychology Service and Bullfrog Arts to address individual needs.

5.65   The EWE project consists of a Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (LAC) and two full time equivalent Assistant Psychologists. Referrals to the project are received through consultation with the Virtual School Team. The children are identified as those who would benefit from additional psychology service support due to multiple risk factors i.e. multiple school moves, placement moves, exclusions, externalising or internalising behaviours.

5.66   School can be frightening places for children who struggle with building relationships, managing emotions and trusting adults. For children to focus on learning it is important that they feel safe and secure in their environment. Research shows there is limited provision in school settings for LAC that bridges the gap between the child's emotional wellbeing and their educational attainment. The EWE Project uses Theraplay ® informed practice to support relationships between a child and key adult and with their peers. It also develops staff knowledge and understanding of trauma and loss and how it presents within the school enviroment.

5.67   The evidenced based project continues to promote engagement with education by providing therapeutic support for children, staff and parent/ carers.

Bullfrog Arts

5.68   The Virtual School commissions work by Bullfrog Arts, who have been engaging the most vulnerable children and young people of Leicester City in high quality arts activities this year. Using singing and music, the work focuses on improving emotional health, well-being and self-efficacy and is unique to Leicester. All the work is carefully tailored to meet the needs of the individual

and support the creative, expressive and musical ability of those they work with. Bullfrog Arts staff are skilled musicians, teachers, social workers and creative practitioners who are specialists in working with Looked After Children and supporting learners who have experienced trauma and loss in their lives. The Bullfrog approach has been proven to help children and young people regulate stress, improve self-confidence, build resilience and nurture a positive sense of self-image and worth.

5.69   Taiko drumming is a Japanese art-form that is very engaging, quick to learn and can be especially beneficial to students who have difficulty regulating their emotions or who display challenging behaviour. It is a spectacular and very accessible medium with a rich cultural legacy that has the additional benefits of engendering confidence, team-work skills, concentration and the ability to regulate emotions amongst students.

Bullfrog Arts have worked on several strands, as agreed with the Virtual School this year. These include: -

- Bullfrog Taiko, working with individuals to develop self-regulation and emotional resilience
- Bullfrog Taiko residential, with Ellesmere College
- Foster Family Rhythms, enabling families and children to play music together
- Bullfrog Performance Group, who performed at the Lord Mayor's Christmas Concert in December 2019 and in the Summer Concert in July 2020
- Rock School project with Netherhall Residential Home
- Rock School project with Dunblane Avenue Residential Home
- Singing Project, working with 5 schools this year to train the adults around the children to sing with them and embed singing into routines
- Fostering Voices, an opportunity for Foster Carers to meet weekly and sing together and share experiences
- Peripatetic music teaching, delivering one to one music lessons for young people to develop emotional resilience, delivered to five young people this year

- Bullfrog Orchestra, a partnership project between Bullfrog Arts and the Philharmonia, fusing Taiko drumming with orchestral music, delivered to 10 young people this year

5.70 Face to face work came to a brief halt when the pandemic struck and lockdown stopped face to face sessions, but colleagues quickly converted to the virtual environment, delivering instruments to young people and families and sessions continued online successfully. The usual end of summer term concert was filmed in a socially distanced way and still allowed the young people to play together and demonstrate what they have learned. Feedback about the work Bullfrog Arts do with our children and their adults is always positive and has included this year: -

"to see the students having a positive experience was incredible".

"Thank you very much for organising such a unique experience for the young people ... This is exactly the kind of thing we were hoping to achieve from this project".

"The FV group is the best part of my week as a leader and a human being. It's really helped me through lock down, connecting with everybody, sharing the ups and downs of our weeks. But it's so powerful, music and singing in general. For our young ones it means that they can convey their emotions through song and in a way that is different to any other medium. They can really let go in the power ballads and you can have fun and address their emotions with songs and just generally have a great time so I would recommend it for everybody."

"It makes me proud to be part of it, it's something to tell my mates and talk about."

"When we were approached by Bull Frog Arts to set up a Taiko Drumming intervention project for three of our students, we knew we were onto something special, but we could never have imagined how amazing the last two years would be! What started as a project for three of our students, turned into a drumming group for ten students with a two-day residential for some of them at the Kagemusha Taiko Centre in Newton Abbott and an end of term performance. The Bull Frog staff were fantastic: they were enthusiastic, engaging and worked hard to bring the shy, slightly disaffected and not-so-confident students out of their shells and banging those drums with their shoulders back, heads held high and a giant smile on their faces."

Use of Pupil Premium Plus funding

5.71   In 2019/2020, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation was £2345 for each young person who had been in care for 12 months up to 31st August 2019.

5.72   The Virtual School continued with the practice of using up to £500 per pupil as a pooled resource to fund a range of core activities delivered by the Virtual School, including Aim Higher Reach Further, Bullfrog Arts Interventions, Educational Psychology support and one to one tuition.

5.73   Schools now request Pupil Premium Plus funding, linked to smart learning targets, in a child's Personal Education Plan. There is an expectation of this relating to issues identified in attainment data so that impact of the funding might be measurable. Sometimes, funding is for staffing or additional staffing and the impact of this might be the young person remaining in their education or avoidance of exclusion.

1:1 Tuition

5.74   In 2019/2020, young people from all key stages benefitted from personalised 1:1 tuition. This is agreed during PEP meetings or by referral from a learner's school, with tuition usually focussed on core subjects, to support the young person achieving their target grade or to make them feel more confident in English or Maths. Tuition usually takes place at home, outside the school day. Some may have just an hour a week of tuition to develop confidence and address underachievement in one area of the curriculum, whilst others may have more intensive tuition to address gaps in their learning usually associated with their education before coming into care.

5.75   The Virtual School employs 2 full time tutors (2.6 from February 2020) who work during term time to deliver bespoke learning support to our young people. Usually this would be face to face, but when lockdown came into play in March 2020, all tuition transferred immediately online, initially via Skype but then via Microsoft Teams. Working in this way means that these tutors can teach more pupils than when they were travelling between schools. Some young people and carers did initially struggle with technology, but these issues were quickly resolved and for most young people, it has worked successfully.

The Virtual School still has cause to use tutors from Agencies, because need outstrips supply all the time, but the following information shows the impact of the tuition provided.

5.76 Entry and exit data with 6 weekly reviews are collected for all pupils requiring tuition in order to assess impact and agree next steps. Some young people require a short burst of tuition whilst others require longer term support.

Who?	Total learners	Hours	No making at least 1 level of progress	% making at least 1 level of progress	Cost
Agency Tuition	38	2014.5	28	74%	£130,288.78
Virtual School Tutors	30	2185	26	87%	£65,042.92

This data tells us that although agency tutors saw more pupils than VST tutors, VST tutors delivered more tuition hours direct to young people with a higher proportion making at least 1 level or grade of progress as a consequence of the intervention for significantly less cost.

About the schools our pupils attend
Quality of provision attended

5.77 It is our aim for all our Looked After Children to attend an OFSTED registered school that is at least good. However, there are several factors that need to be considered when identifying a school, including proximity to the home address, friendship bonds and a school's capacity to support vulnerable learners. There may also be situations where a school judged by OFSTED to be less than good is the most appropriate place for the pupil to be educated and where a young person comes into care placed at a school judged inadequate, it may be more damaging to move them to another school than to leave them where they are when that school place is the one element of stability in a child's life.

Our young people of statutory school age attend 164 different schools and establishments.

Attend a school rated 'outstanding'	19%
Attend a school rated 'good'	50%
Attend a school rated 'requires improvement'	17%
Attend a school rated 'inadequate'	2%
Attend an Academy that has not been inspected yet	11%

Alternative Provision

5.78   28 pupils attended alternative provision during 2019/20. The reasons for needing this type of provision vary. It might be a short term measure whilst a young person has moved and they are waiting for the allocation of a school place; it might be a regular weekly input that enables that young person to learn some key skills and also sustain their mainstream school place; it may be a longer term arrangement where a young person is unable to sustain their place full time in a mainstream school and we are working to get them an Education Health and Care Plan or a more appropriate school setting. Settings are chosen carefully by the Virtual School, who match the offer, group size and dynamics to the needs and interests of the learner.

5.79   These pupils are supported by the Virtual School Team to ensure that they have access to a curriculum that is appropriate to their age and ability. Regular PEP meetings detail short term targeted support to enable them to return to mainstream or specialist provision, where appropriate.

5.80   All settings have been quality assured by LEBC, by the commissioning school or by staff from the Virtual School Team to ensure they are able to meet the needs of our vulnerable learners. Areas covered in this quality assurance process include safeguarding, health and safety, teaching and learning, admissions guidance and support, learner entitlement and management. Many of these providers are used by other departments in the Local Authority and by schools in the City.

PROVIDER	No of learners accessing provision	Offer
New Leaf Triangle	7	Therapeutic input and core studies
Soft Touch	1	Music intervention and art work
Brolay Farm	3	Therapeutic intervention and interpersonal skills
Trans4m	2	Range of accredited courses offered
TripleSkillz	2	Physical / Vocational skills designed to foster positive responses
Tech, Coalville	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Goldhill Adventure Playground	1	Play based activities with core learning embedded
Uneek	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Park View Riding School	1	Equine therapy
Future Cycles	1	Accredited cycle maintenance course
E2	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Waterfront	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Corner Post Education Centre	1	Physical / Vocational skills designed to foster positive responses
Mixed Foundations	1	Mentoring service
Bon Terre	1	Therapeutic input and core studies
Si Sports	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Hitz (Leicester Tigers)	1	Accredited course
Rangers	1	Physical / Vocational skills designed to foster positive responses

Leicester City Council Virtual School

5.81   Leicester's Virtual School Team is managed by the Virtual School Head, Vivien Tetley. Leicester City's Virtual School is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH).

5.82   The Virtual Head meets termly with Virtual Heads from the East Midlands region. These meetings give the opportunity to remain abreast of national developments and to be briefed by Ofsted on key messages. They also provide opportunities to share good practice and reflect on both strengths and areas for development. This information is disseminated to the virtual team, schools, carers and social workers as appropriate.

5.83 A team manager is responsible for the operational management of the team. The team consists of one team leader, five officers, one mentor, one project officer/mentor one administration assistant (0.6) and an Information Officer (0.6) and 2.6 tutors. Virtual School officers and tutors work during term only.

5.84 VST officers are responsible for ensuring that each child has an up to date and effective Personal Education Plan, as well as providing advice, support and challenge to social workers, carers and schools in order to ensure that each child is making good progress at school. Each officer has a caseload of schools and is expected to develop a positive working relationship with each school in order to support both the school and the LAC children placed there. Each officer is responsible for tracking and monitoring the attendance, progress and attainment of children in the schools they oversee. The officer will also ensure where issues arise with a child's education these are resolved quickly and effectively. The work of the officers is overseen and supervised by the Team Manager.

5.85 This year has seen the Virtual School develop their offer into new phases, overseeing children in the Early Years and Post 16 phases. 2 new officers were recruited to the team and have had real impact on this work, developing relationships with providers and supporting settings to undertake personal Education Plan meetings for Early Years children attending a nursery setting and Post 16 young people who remain in education. The Post 16 Officer also maintains close links with Leicester's Connexions service to ensure that all our Post 16 learners have access to a termly PEP and review of their provision.

5.86 The Virtual School procures support from a Senior Educational Psychologist who specialises in the needs of vulnerable children and two Assistant Educational Psychologists who deliver direct work with young people in school using Theraplay. The Senior Educational Psychologist provides advice and support to the team around understanding and meeting the educational needs of children. The Educational Psychologist will also complete assessments of individual children to ensure that the team (and wider network) has clear understanding of the strategies needed to support children where there may be difficulties or where more complex needs are identified and liaises with colleagues in Special Educational Needs where necessary.

APPENDIX A:
Monthly Data return Information, 2019/2020

Monthly Key Indicators	Sep-18	Sep-19	Oct-18	Oct-19	Nov-18	Nov-19	Dec-18	Dec-19	Jan-19	Jan-20	Feb-19	Feb-20	Mar-19	Mar-20	April 2019	Apr-20	May-19	May-20	Jun-19	Jun-20	Jul-19	Jul-20
Number of LAC of school age	412	464	409	442	405	432	432	446	438	450	414	434	445	439	446	429	447	430	448	438	443	438
No. of LAC with concerns regarding school place	60	66	72	93	44	74	43	142	40	89	44	97	64	102	71	C	98	C	97	C	83	C
% LAC with concerns regarding school place	14.50%	14%	17.60%	21%	11%	17%	10%	32%	9%	19%	9%	22%	14%	23%	16%	O	22%	O	22%	O	19%	O
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance	32	31	59	52	32	43	34	91	29/6.6%	52	27/6.5%	49	30/6.7%	50	43/10%	V	53/12%	V	66/15%	V	61/14%	V
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/CITY schools	19	18	32	30	21	24	22	67	21/4.8%	30	19/4.6%	18	20/4.5%	21	29/6.5%	I	34/8%	I	41/9%	I	27/6%	I
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/OOC Schools	13	13	27	22	11	19	12	24	8/1.8%	22	8/1.9%	31	10/2.2%	29	14/3%	D	19/4%	D	25/5.5%	D	34/8%	D
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance	41	44	65	77	55	58	52	124	42/9.6%	72	49/11.8%	77	44/9.9%	81	54/12%		81/18%		80/18%		70/16%	
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/CITY Schools	24	24	35	41	27	37	33	88	28/6.4%	40	27/6.5%	33	24/5.3%	29	38/8.5%	L	52/12%	L	49/11%	L	32/7%	L
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/OOC Schools	17	20	30	36	28	21	19	36	14/3.2%	32	22/5.3%	44	20/4.5%	52	16/4%	O	29/6%	O	31/7%	O	38/9%	O
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance	56	77	88	159	110	93	105	182	95/21.7%	138	104/25%	128	95/21.3%	135	88/20%	C	126/28%	C	121/27%	C	123/28%	C
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/CITY Schools	34	43	52	68	51	55	64	122	58/13.2%	69	65/15.7%	54	57/12.8%	57	57/13%	K	78/17%	K	75/17%	K	57/13%	K
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/OOC Schools	22	34	36	91	59	38	41	60	37/8.4%	69	39/9.4%	74	38/8.5%	78	31/7%	D	48/11%	D	46/10%	D	66/15%	D
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Monthly	6	9	6	15	9	8	3	6	5	5	4	6	10	4	7	1	8	0	6	0	1	0
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Cumulative	6	9	12	24	21	32	24	38	29	43	33	49	43	53	50	54	58	54	64	54	65	54
No. of LAC with less than 25 hours education per week	19	22	13	16	12	16	9	18	11	17	17	20	20	21	17	N	17	N	17	N	13	N
% of LAC reported by school via PEP on trajectory to meet target set by school	56%	86%	68%	72%	64%	70%	65%	70%	65%	60%	62%	68%	65%	70%	67%		74%		64%		57%	
% school age Children in Care with current Personal Education Plan (Statutory school age only) (VH info)	96%	93%	95%	93%	97%	96%	94%**	95%	95%	96%	91%	98%	97%	98%	97%	99%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%	99%
% of PEPS QA'd as 'on target'	65%	91%	62%*	65%	65%	69%	71%	70%	78%	73%	78%	70%	76%	71%	77%	72.20%	82%	75%	85%	72%	79%	75.50%
% of PEPS QA'd as good or outstanding														12%		12.30%		12%		15%		13%
No. of PEPs quality assured by Virtual Head		50		38		62		118		126		71		108	117	169	34	112	84	72	208	208