

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of our Looked After Children during the academic year 2020/21. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes for our Looked After Children.

Context

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for children in care across 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 and raise achievement.

Our aspiration is that all our looked after children and young people;

- attend a good or outstanding school and learn
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive
- 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 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.

Summary of Key Priorities for 2020/2021

- To narrow the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers
- o Improve proportion of looked after children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- o Improve proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 and KS2
- o Continue to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE, with a focus on English and Maths
- o Improve outcomes at Key Stage 4
- o Improve outcomes and reduce drop-out for young people pursuing Level 3 courses in schools or Sixth Form Colleges
- o Improve attendance
- o 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
- 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

Notable Achievements in 2020/2021

- *Authorised absence for Leicester's looked after children is lower than for all children and young people in Leicester. Unauthorised absence, which is considered absence that has not been agreed as legitimate in cause, is much lower for looked after children and young people than for all children and young people in Leicester.*
- *There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2020/21*
- *Year 6 to 7 Transition Project maintains significant impact in reducing incidences of fixed term exclusions in Year 7*

Pupil Characteristics

The cohort of looked after children in the Virtual School has decreased a little this year. 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 at any point 2020/21	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2016	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2017	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2018	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2019	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2020	Number of children in care for a minimum of 12 months up to 31 st March 2021
Number of school aged children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council	629	660	543	549	572	549	359	460	375	405	431	419
Children with a plan for adoption	22	39	83		49	56	14	45	53	35	38	34
Children in foster care	209	472	558	413	552	478	201	328	335	334	329	358
Children in residential settings	62	71	70	52	113	99	36	52	48	37	59	65
Children with a plan to return home	120		205	123	110	107	1		75	93	104	51
Children with disabilities	45	52	102	80	110	103	32	46	65	70	70	75
Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children and Young People	6	14	20	0	10	6	2	3	7	18	2	4
Care leavers	116	207	218	220	283	156	88		N/A		N/A	N/A

Whilst numbers of school age children and young people looked after has decreased slightly this year, the areas of note here concern the increase in the number of young people moving into adoptive placements; numbers in other areas have decreased across the board by a small amount.

Early Years	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Post 16
122	24	19	22	27	32	45	31	38	43	45	47	57	78

This shows us the spread of how many children and young people in each school year were looked after at some point during the school year. For some young people this is long term but there are others whose care journey is short. This demonstrates clearly the numbers are higher in secondary education and these are the young people whose care journeys are generally longer and more complex.

Age	Into Care	Left Care
0	18	1
1	16	14
2	6	12
3	8	22
4	5	8
School Year	Into Care	Left Care
R	10	11
Year 1	5	6
Year 2	7	4
Year 3	4	0
Year 4	8	3
Year 5	6	3
Year 6	4	6
Year 7	2	4
Year 8	7	5
Year 9	7	3
Year 10	13	9
Year 11	10	8

This information about the numbers of children and young people entering and leaving care during 2020/21 shows clearly that children up to the age of 5 are the group where care journeys are shorter.

The impact of COVID on the court system has meant that journeys to adoption may have taken longer than they did pre-pandemic, but the rate of children we have placed for adoption has remained stable.

The table below shows an increase in the number of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans this year, but it is likely this is the result of more accurate recording in Local Authority systems, particularly for those young people placed out of the area.

SEN CODE	Mar-17	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21
N (no SEN)	48%	45%	51%	48%	51%	48%	46%
K (SEN Support)	37%	38.50%	35%	36%	34.53%	35%	31%
E (EHCP)	15%	17%	13%	17%	14.00%	17%	23%

Information correct at 28th September 2021

Number of children with SEN in each year group (Correct at 01/08/2021)

SEN Status	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL number	Total % of LCC	Total % CLA
CLA in Year Group	24	19	22	27	32	45	31	38	43	45	47	57	430	1.03 %	
ALL LCC in Year Group	2785	2811	2846	2857	2981	3010	3040	4369	4369	4283	4176	4107	41634		
E All LCC	36	56	48	49	57	53	61	29	27	22	27	19	484	1.16 %	
K All LCC	252	294	332	364	359	460	421	308	263	254	219	189	3715	8.92 %	
E (CLA)	4	2	1	1	8	10	5	5	9	14	13	27	72		16.74 %
K (CLA)	3	2	8	14	11	17	15	14	15	14	14	9	127		29.53 %
TOTAL SEN (CLA)	7	4	9	15	19	27	20	19	24	28	27	36	199		

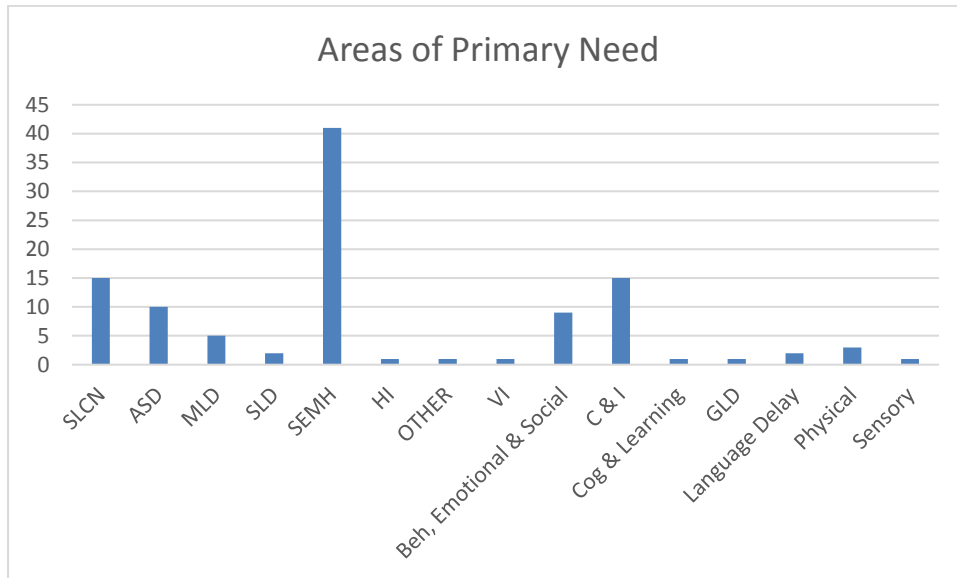
This data indicates that CLA represent 1.03% of the whole Leicester cohort. 46% of our CLA have some level of special need. This is a very high proportion compared with figures for all Leicester children with an EHCP (1.16%) and all Leicester children with a known learning need (8.92%), although in general, the prevalence of SEN in CLA is higher than for the total population.

This information appears to tell us that there has been a 5% increase in the number of our young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. It is more likely because there has been a piece of work completed to improve the recording of young people with an EHCP, particularly those placed outside Leicester City, that has contributed to this.

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

37 of the young people with EHCPs are educated in City settings. Of these young people, 22 (60%) are recorded as having had an Annual review during the academic year 2020/21.

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.



It is clear that by far the greatest primary need for those CLA with EHCPs is in the area of social, emotional and mental health needs. This differs from the national trend, where from data published in 2019 the most common area of primary need was Autistic Spectrum Disorder, which is double the rate of the second place need of Speech, Language and Communication Needs with SEMH coming in third. Given the early life experiences of our CLA and the trauma they have experienced, this is not a surprise to us but does highlight why there may be a national shortage of specialist places for young people with SEMH needs.

Gender	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21
Male	56%	56%	56%	53%	54%	54%
Female	44%	44%	44%	47%	46%	46%

This table shows us that although there has been a small change in the last 3 years, the gender balance of our CLA cohort remains more than 50% male.

Ethnicity	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Leicester All pupils July 2021
ABAN - Bangladeshi	0.25%	0.25%	0.23%	0.00%	0.25%	0.20%	0.00%
AAF - Asian African	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.60%
AIND - Indian	5.90%	6.40%	6.44%	5.64%	4.42%	4.60%	32.10%
AOT – any other Asian background	3.19%	2.96%	2.76%	2.71%	3.19%	3.50%	5.60%
APKN - Pakistani	2.70%	2.71%	3.22%	2.71%	2.70%	1.70%	4.20%
Bangladeshi	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.60%
BAOF - other Black African	0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.49%	1.50%	1.40%
BLB – Black/Black British Caribbean	1.97%	1.97%	1.61%	0.90%	1.23%	1.10%	0.80%
BLF – Black/Black British African	0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.74%	0.90%	4.40%
BLG – Black/Black British Other	1.97%	1.97%	1.84%	1.58%	0.74%	0.90%	0.00%
BSOM - Somali	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	1.35%	0.25%	0.70%	3.00%
CHE - Chinese	0.49%	0.49%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%
MWBA – Mixed White/Black African	2.46%	2.46%	5.98%	1.58%	0.00%	0.50%	1.20%
MBO	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.10%	0.00%
MOTH - any other mixed background	2.70%	2.22%	2.30%	3.39%	3.44%	4.00%	2.10%
MWAS - White/Asian	3.44%	3.45%	3.45%	4.06%	5.65%	4.60%	1.90%
MWBC - White/Black Caribbean	2.70%	6.16%	5.98%	5.64%	4.91%	5.50%	2.10%
OEO – Other Ethnic Origin	3.44%	0.49%	0.46%	0.68%	1.23%	1.10%	2.60%
NOT – Information not obtained	1.47%	0.74%	1.61%	3.84%	4.42%	5.50%	0.80%
REF – Refused	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.00%	0.30%	0.50%
WEN - White English	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.36%	0.00%
WBRI - White British	57.74%	58.13%	58.16%	58.69%	58.23%	57.70%	23.70%
WEUR - White European	3.44%	3.45%	3.68%	2.93%	2.95%	3.50%	6.00%
WIRI - White Irish	1.47%	1.48%	1.61%	0.45%	0.49%	0.20%	0.10%
WOB - White other British	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%	0.00%	0.30%	0.10%
WOW – White other	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	0.23%	0.25%	0.30%	1.70%
WROM	1.23%	0.99%	0.23%	1.13%	0.98%	0.70%	0.10%

This data tells us that there have been small fluctuations in some groups, but numbers of CLA may be too small to make this significant. It is clear, however, that the CLA population is not reflective of the population for all of Leicester.

Achievements and Outcomes

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

During Summer 2021 no formal assessments of children's education were undertaken.

Normally there would be 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.

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 2021. The new multiplication tables tests for Year 4 children were also cancelled.

GCSE, A level and BTEC results were based on teacher assessment and school-based testing. The results achieved by our Year 11 learners were collected by the Virtual School Team.

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 2021 results because there was no assessment.

The impact of this can be felt in secondary schools where there is no end of key stage data for schools to use for grouping learners. Most secondary schools have implemented their own assessments of these learners during the first term and will use this information for baseline judgements.

School Readiness

The Virtual School Officer with responsibility for the Early Years children attends PEPS for children from aged 2 upwards, where the child is registered in an Early Years setting or from birth if the child has significant learning needs requiring the support of a range of professionals. The impact of this work on the cohort has been very noticeable this year. We had only 1 young person who did not have a school place at the start of the school year in September 2020. The assessment of the needs of this cohort in Early Years settings has improved the transition to Reception with schools better prepared to meet the needs of those learners requiring additional support.

School readiness is discussed in PEP meetings each term, generating the following information;

School readiness activity

How many of our 17 children who are aged 3-4 years who will be starting school can do this?

	Emerging	Developing	Secure
• Settle happily when parents/carers are not there	1	2	14
• Express how they are feeling eg happy/sad.	4	9	4
• Play with others and begin to share	4	8	5
• Listen, talk, and understand	1	9	7
• Enjoy rhymes, songs, stories, and books	0	3	14
• Walk, run, climb and balance	1	1	15
• Can use a knife and fork and drink from a cup	1	5	11
• Use the toilet, wash their hands, and clean their teeth	1	3	13
• Begin to dress themselves	1	6	10

Having only done this work for one whole school year we have no comparative data so will monitor this with interest going forward. The impact of this work will be monitored as these children start their school careers through the numbers achieving their Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year. However, it is already clear that these children are experiencing fewer issues in the Reception year than may have been experienced by their peers in previous years when this work was not undertaken.

Example of intervention work by the Virtual School to support attainment in Early Years

Background

Pupil E (aged 4) was taken into care after witnessing Domestic Violence. There were concerns around neglect and parental mental health. Birth dad is formally diagnosed with ADHD.

Pupil E became known to me as he had already started at Primary School. I contacted the school to introduce myself which led to the Head Teacher who was also the Designated Teacher (DT) for looked after children saying please help us. Pupil E was highly dysregulated, crawling under tables, running around, hitting, and punching other children which was unmanageable within the classroom environment. At times, he was being taken out of class and taught separately in the library. The school said without help he was at risk of exclusion.

The carer felt she couldn't manage Pupil E's violent behaviour and angry outbursts. She subsequently gave notice and ended the placement.

We struggled to find a new placement and eventually found one with independent carers out of the area. New carers attended a transition PEP at the school and undertook a handover from the previous carer. It was important to establish this good match before a school place was sought closer to new placement.

Pupil E was found a place at a mainstream school and completed 21 months there.

What did Virtual School do?

- Referral to our Educational Psychologist who went to observe Pupil E in school. They also provided immediate help by giving strategies over the phone to use with Pupil E during unstructured times such as lunchtime.
- Advised school to apply for element 3 funding to pay for a 1:1 and I provided a support letter for this.
- Signposted training in ADHD Solutions to school
- Advised of strategies to try with Pupil E in the class such as having safe place in the classroom, like a curtain at the back of the class or a tablecloth so Pupil E could have a safe space.
- Liaised with the City's School Social, Emotional and Mental Health Team
- Researched schools that were a possibility for Pupil E. One school made it clear they would struggle to meet Pupil E's needs. I visited the two other schools and chose a school that were very supportive and after looking around and speaking to the Head I just knew it was the right place for Pupil E as I would send my child there.
- Arranged for carers and Pupil E to visit the school.
- Liaised with the school and carers re a start date and a transition plan.
- Offered to fund a 1:1 at the new school to avoid delay in starting.
- Arranged and chaired several PEP meetings at the school.
- Prevented exclusion by offering immediate support and by offering the Head Teacher an opportunity to 'offload'.

Outcome

Pupil E has never been excluded from school. Pupil E is now 6 years old and is back living with Mum under a placement with Parents Order. He has moved schools and attends a mainstream primary school local to where Mum resides. Although he is academically behind, he can socially manage being in a classroom and better manage relationships with peers. A Psychotherapy assessment is due to take place so they can better identify his needs and it is hoped that once some of the trauma has been addressed then he will be able to focus more on his learning.

Example of intervention work by the Virtual School to support attendance and attainment at KS2

Case Study – Pupil A

Overview:

Pupil A started tuition during the lockdown period of Covid19. She has the capacity to be a confident and able student, who has worked hard to make progress throughout Year 4. Pupil A was starting to lose confidence in her abilities and a lack of schoolwork was being completed at home. The school feared that this would lead to a negative impact on her attainment and further decrease her self-esteem and confidence. *'Our fear is that, with one full term still left of learning, we don't want the gaps to widen again'*

Pupil A accesses support from a mentor in school and was having academic interventions, before school closed for the lockdown period.

Previous attainment level: 4W

Current attainment level:

'Expected'- Year 5 level

Expected outcome:

Pupil A will have enough direction and confidence to approach all work set by her class teacher. she will contribute more in class and believe in her own ability. She will continue to make progress in her learning and gaps in her learning will be plugged.

'And with one term left of learning, we can still make a big difference. If she has a bit of direction and guidance from a teacher, she will access the work and complete it'.

Challenges:

There has been a limited amount of teacher set work completed at home through lack of confidence in own independent abilities.

Initially Pupil A found online tuition very difficult, she didn't speak hardly at all during our first session and even started crying during part of it. She lacked any confidence in herself and would rarely expand her answers to more than one word. Pupil A was incredibly quiet and, whilst she engaged with me, she hardly responded to any interaction at all.

Strategy and achievements:

Session notes:

To begin with, Pupil A was very quiet and needed a lot of encouragement from her carer to engage with me at all, we tried some Year 4 maths problems and Pupil A clearly lacked confidence in giving any of the answers a go. She struggled to add on a multiple of 10 to a number, and then completely shut down and started crying. We had a break, then she returned to the session with a lot happier. She engaged with me much better and was counting in 10's from any given number, I shall plan some simple addition and subtraction lessons for next week and hope to build her confidence by basing them as quite low ability initially and then gradually increasing the difficulty.

Half a term in, sessions with Pupil A have become much more productive. She asked me to help her with her homework, so we worked together at getting a first draft of a Space poem together. She was able to write rhyming couplets, using similes and expanded noun phrases.

She seemed to enjoy the task and had some lovely, creative ideas. She said she would like us to alternate between helping her with homework and other work. Carer commented that she was very thankful for my work with Pupil A and that she had made so much progress academically and with her confidence since starting tuition :-)

Summary:

Pupil A is a delight to teach. Her progress in terms of confidence and contribution during sessions is incredible. She will now engage in general conversation and initiate it, often talking about what she has been up to or by talking about her younger brother. Pupil A's self-confidence is more evident; she is more willing to try and she realises getting things wrong is not failure but an important part of learning.

This improvement is mirrored in school-work and general demeanour at home and school. Her teacher reports that she is contributing so much more at school and is 'whizzing' through her learning across the board.

Feedback:

Students comments:

Q: How do you feel that tuition is helping with your education?

A: *'It is helpful because If I don't understand something in class, then I would get upset if I didn't know what to do. But then I learn it with you in my tuition so then I understand what to do and then I won't get upset in class.'*

Carer comments:

'I don't know what it is that you are doing...but whatever it is it works!! She is doing so well and we are so happy so thank you so much.' She explained that she is much more confident since doing tuition and that everyone is noticing how well she is doing at school and in terms of her own self-belief now.

Email from Class teacher:

She has really improved in class and is whizzing through the learning in all areas. She has even been putting her hand up more and contributing which is fantastic.

Key Stage 4

Improving KS4 Outcomes

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.

GCSE Results Analysis 2021 (based on teacher assessments, collected by the Virtual School)

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	All Leicester LAC 2021	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2021	Leicester City All 2021	National all LAC 2021
Cohort	50	42			46	45			60	47			58	41		
English 4+	20%	24%	69.90 %	15%	35%	35%			32%	32%			33%	32%		
Maths 4+	10%	12%	60.10 %	11%	22%	22%			24%	13%			17%	17%		
5 GCSEs at 4+ (inc Eng and Ma)	6.70 %	9%		13%	13%	13%			15%	11%			14%	12%		
Basics (Eng and Ma at 4+)	8.90 %	12%	56.10 %	7%	17%	17%	55%	65%	15%	13%			16%	15%		

2021 has been another difficult year for our Key Stage 4 young people. The closure of schools in March 2020 mid way through their Year 10 learning followed by repeated episodes of school closure, bubble closure and illness have all impacted on the quality of teaching and learning and particularly on the confidence and mental health and well-being of these young people. Formal examinations were cancelled for the second year running and our learners were awarded grades based on their teacher assessments, that were informed by the way their school conducted the recommended assessments. We are very proud of these learners, their achievements and their resilience in challenging circumstances are testament to their commitment and endeavour.

The most significant feature of this Year 11 cohort is the proportion of them with Education, Health and Care Plans at 47%. 15 (26%) of the cohort did not follow a GCSE based curriculum:-

- 6 attended a Special School and would not be expected to do GCSEs or equivalent
- 3 attended a Special School and have taken Functional Skills tests in English and Maths
- 2 attended specialist settings but by reason of their physical or mental health have been unable to take any formal qualification
- 2 newly arrived UASC were not entered for any qualification

- 1 young person was subject to multiple house and school moves and was not able to access any qualifications
- 1 young person has been held back a year and will complete GCSEs in 2022

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 31/03/2021. However, the proportion achieving 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths, has risen again for all young people in care, but the number achieving a Grade 4 or higher in Maths has decreased. It is likely that this is attributable to a combination of pandemic impact on learning and learning styles but will be monitored closely in the next year.

Learners from different ethnicities did perform at different levels this year, but the numbers in those groups are too small to draw any firm conclusions about this.

As previously stated, 47% of this cohort have an Education Health and Care Plan. A further 22% of this cohort are recognised as having additional needs, but the young person's needs could be met within their mainstream school. 31% of this cohort have no identified additional learning need.

Of the young people who achieved Grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, none have additional learning needs; 66% are identified as White British, with 11% in each of White and Asian, Indian and Other Mixed Background.

Of the young people who achieved 5 passes at grade 4 or above, 11% have EHCP. 71% identify as White British, 14% of this group identify as Other Mixed and Mixed White Asian heritage.

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

Student B

Overview:

Student B required tuition in maths in Year 10 as he was not engaging in lessons and was a long way behind his target attainment level. He was achieving 'ungraded' during Year 10 school maths assessments. A VST tutor started tuition once a week and began with foundation level maths, covering basic arithmetic and times tables and moving onto reasoning and exam technique.

Previous attainment level: GCSE Grade 0-2

Current attainment: GCSE Grade 3

Notes:

Student B engaged well in tuition but there were clear gaps in his learning for various reasons including his poor focus in lesson time, a lack of a consistent teacher (supply teachers had to be used in school for some time during his year 10 year due to his teacher's long term sickness) and poor relationships with teachers in school. He was behind in his learning and there were some basic skills than needed to be mastered in maths before he could progress to more complex, GCSE work.

We covered times tables and basic arithmetic including methods for performing standard calculations. He progressed well from the start. We started to go through past exam papers and he has started to cope

well even with the more challenging questions. His command of the basics has improved dramatically including his mental arithmetic. We are focusing now on more reasoning work where he will apply methods to worded questions and solve problems.

Student B now has clear aspirations and has been offered a place at Leicester College on an electrical installation course. He is keen to start his own business once qualified and now has so much more determination with this goal in mind.

Students comments:

Q: How do you feel that tuition is helping with your education?

A: Confidence, specific topics & understanding of the subject

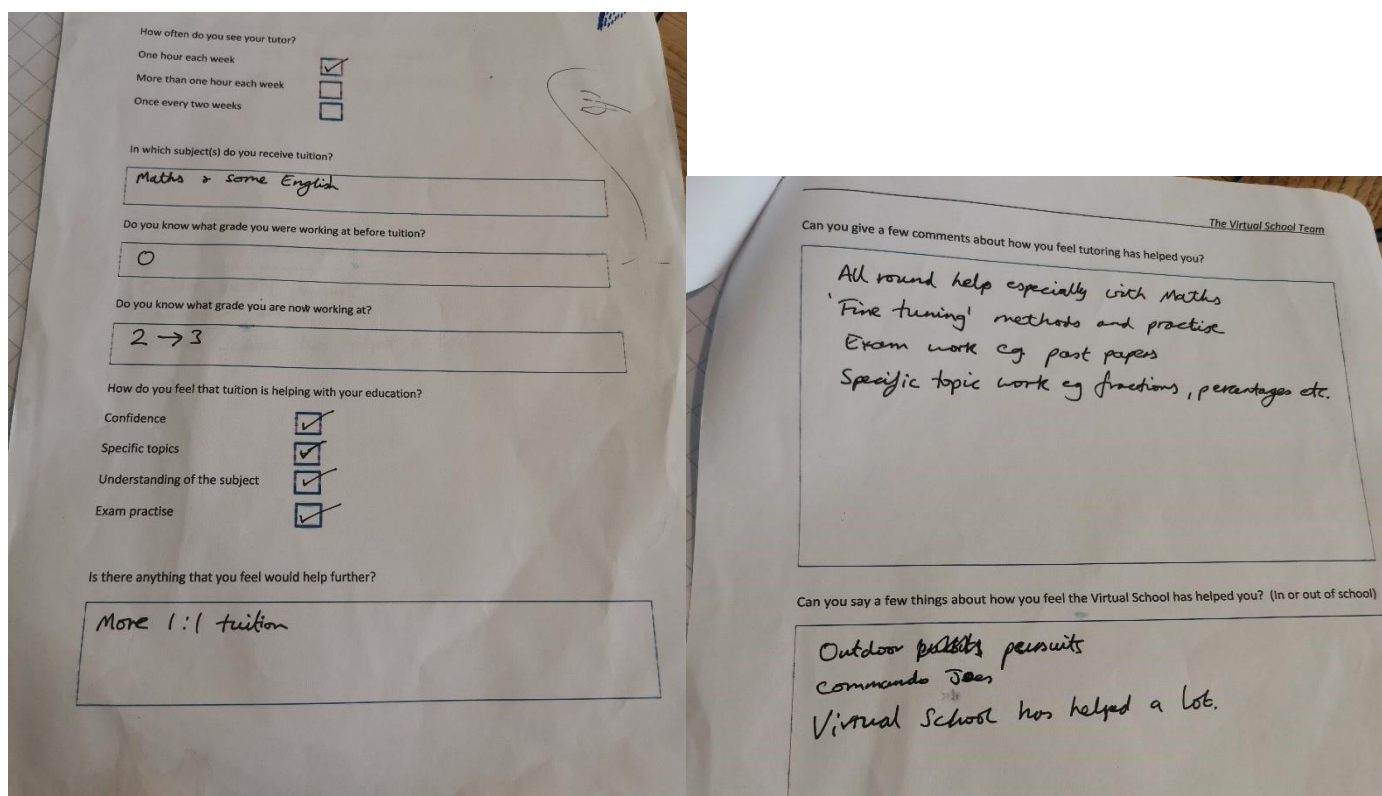
Q: Is there anything that you feel would help further?

A: More 1:1 tuition.

Q: Can you give a few comments about how you feel tutoring has helped you?

A: All round help especially with maths, 'fine tuning' methods and practice. Exam work like past papers. Specific work on topics e.g. fractions, percentages etc.

Q: Can you say a few things about how you feel the Virtual School has helped you? (In or out of school)



Expected outcome:

If Student B continues to apply effort in his tuition and in revising before assessments, he will be able to achieve a grade 3 or 4. This will allow him to access the college course or apprenticeship that he is seeking. He aspires to work in electrical engineering or mechanics.

Destinations for Post 16 young people***Improve outcomes for L3 & Reduce drop-out***

Post 16 Destinations 2020	2019 No.	2019%	2020 No.	2020%	2021 No.	2021%
Cohort size	46	46	60	60	58	58
Level 3 course	10	21.73%	8	13.33%	8	13.79%
Level 2 course	10	21.73%	17	28.33%	9	15.51%
Level 1 course	9	19.56%	11	18.33%	14	24.13%
Remain at Special School	4	8.69%	6	10%	14	24.13%
Secure/Health setting	0		4	6.66%	0	
Apprenticeship	1	2.17%	3	5%	1	1.72%
Job	1	2.17%	0		0	
Traineeship	1	2.17%	0		5	8.62%
NEET	10	21.73%	11	18.33%	7	12.06%

Information provided by Connexions, October 2021

Although this does appear to show a slight reduction in the number of young people pursuing Level 2 and Level 3 courses Post 16, it is important to remember that the Year 11 cohort in 2021/21 was unusual in the number of young people with EHCPs who have taken a different route staying in education that their peers in previous years. It is matched by a similar increase in the number of learners remaining in Specialist provision. It is also notable that there has been an increase in the number pursuing traineeships and a continuing pattern of reduction in NEET figures at this point.

Of the 7 young people NEET at this point, they break down as follows:

Young parent	2
Passive/not engaging with support	1
Awaiting SEND place out of area	4

Work Readiness

All schools have a statutory duty to provide information, advice and guidance to their students from year 7 upwards. In year 10 and 11 this should increase significantly to start to prepare their students for making well informed decisions for post-16 transition and the world of work. The framework to support schools to deliver this is based on the eight Gatesby Benchmarks. In using these benchmarks schools should address the needs of each pupil and link the curriculum learning to careers, provide encounters with employers and offer experiences of workplaces.

For those who are looked after by LCC, additional information, advice and personal guidance is provided from year 10 upwards. This recognises not all will have had the right level of support from the school at which they were on role, especially if there have been changes/unsettled placements. By the summer of term of year 11, the aim is for all to have an offer of learning for post-16. The vast majority of the CLA young people

in this cohort will have an offer to stay in full-time education, mostly in a college or a school setting but the offer may be with a training provider, and for a small number it may be a specialist placement for their SEND needs. Even if they are staying in a school 6th form or going onto a full-time college course, the activities that are done with our young people should start to increase their work readiness, for example, decision-making, independence and the understanding of a broader range of options.

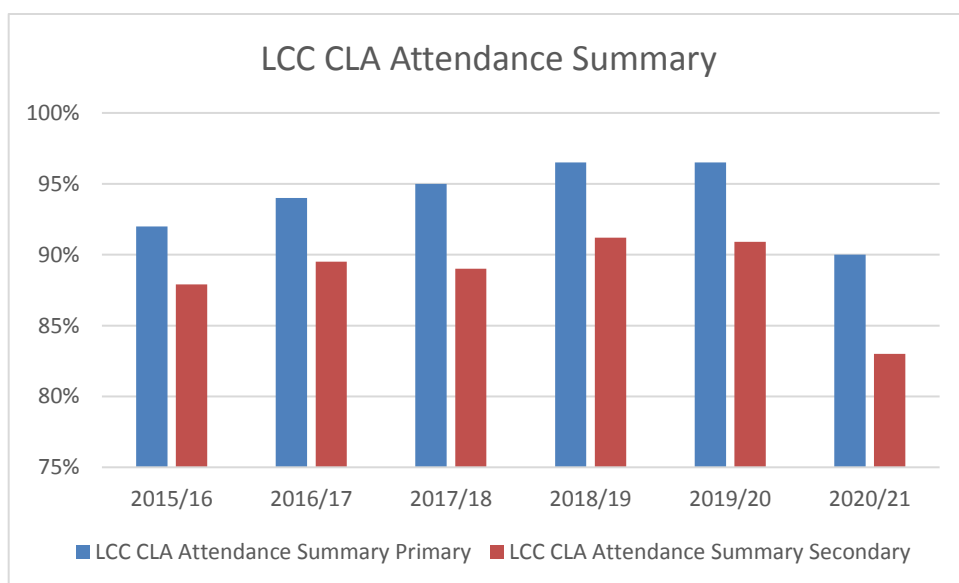
The support with IAG and preparation for work continues with our post-16 CLA cohort and intensifies for those who are NEET. PEPS will continue with this cohort and are offered even if the young person is disengaged so that the individual will know that when they are ready it will be not too late to form a career plan. As part of the planning for post-18 work and learning there is more work done around interviews, applications and the local labour market. This will include direct liaison with employers if appropriate.

As well as the additional IAG referred to above, our care leavers and CLA from year 10 were offered a chance to meet with an employer this year. This employer was either linked to an area of work they wanted to get into, or an area they wanted to find out more about. The aim of the contact was to help individuals improve their understanding of different job roles, gain knowledge of how to apply for jobs, gain a contact with an employer, improve their confidence and refine their thoughts about their future careers. Ultimately this should help to prevent some of our young people becoming NEET or act as a step towards re-engagement.

‘Get Inspired’ is a project managed by LCC, with funding from ESF. It is just underway and will provide intensive support into work or learning for those who are age 16-24 and NEET especially if from a priority group. One of the groups we are prioritising are those who are looked after or have left care. It will allow additional resource to bridge the gap around work readiness and allow activities to be done with providers and employers to help increase the chances of a sustained transition.

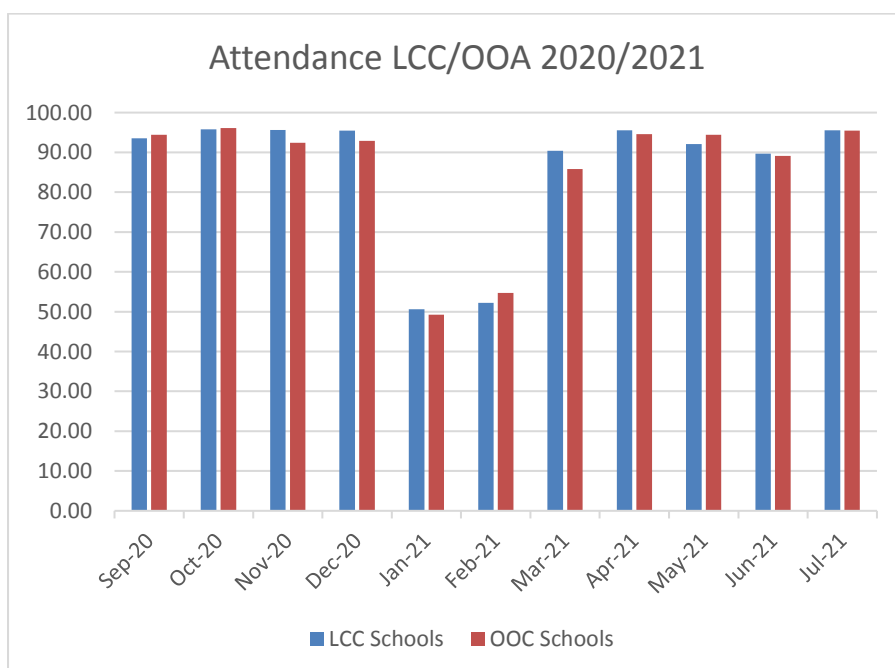
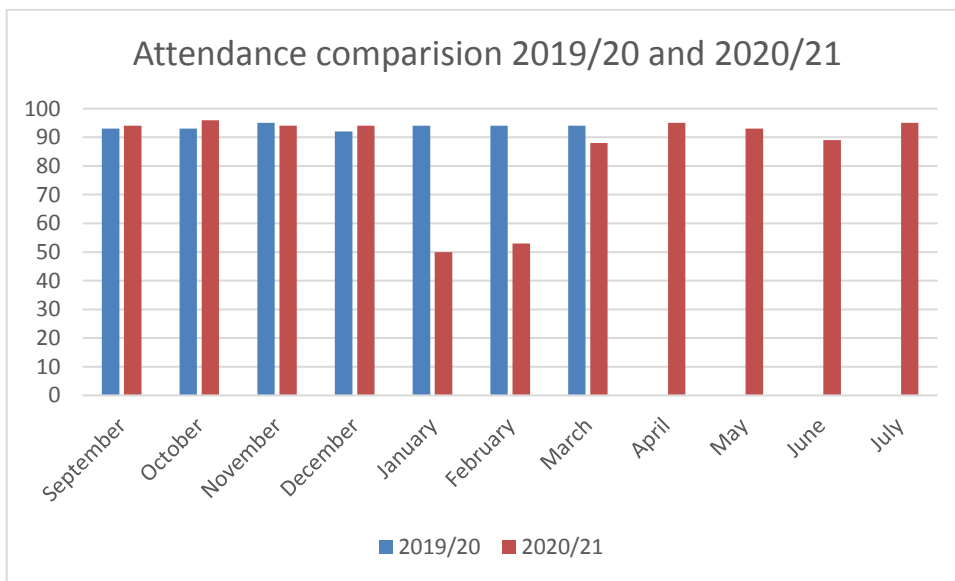
Attendance and Exclusions

Improve Attendance



It is clear that 2020/21 has been another year where the attendance of our CLA has been impacted by the pandemic. In the Spring of 2021 when schools were closed to all learners, places were made available to vulnerable children and young people, including CLA. However, where our young people chose to access blended learning virtually from home just like their non CLA peers, the DfE instructed that they were marked absent when their peers were marked present. This has caused considerable distress to a number of learners who engaged well throughout.

It is clear from these graphs that attendance in Primary schools remains better than in Secondary schools across the year. However, the impact of the COVID pandemic from March 2020 with school closures and lockdown periods has had a devastating impact on attendance. We will continue to monitor this closely going forward as schools return to patterns we saw pre-pandemic.

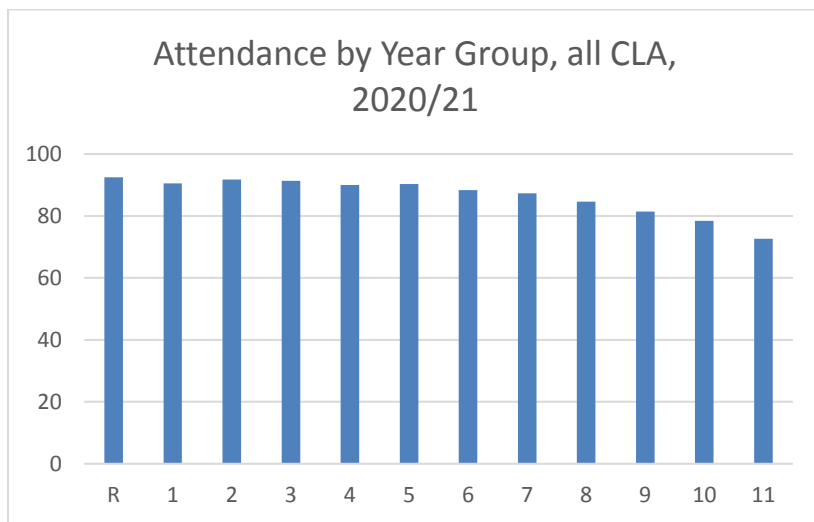


There is little difference between attendance rates in and out of area this year with all schools adversely affected by school, year group and bubble closures at different times making it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about patterns of attendance or non-attendance.

The attendance pattern over the last 6 school years was showing 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, but this has been adversely impacted by the pandemic, which has impacted on attendance for 2 academic years.

Attendance for all CLA in 2020/21 was adversely affected by the pandemic and school closures due to lockdown in early 2021. Although school places were available in most schools for vulnerable learners, many chose to learn from home like their peers, accessing the same learning they would have accessed if they went into school.

It is no surprise that the overall percentage attendance declines as young people progress through the age ranges and fits with the annual pattern of attendance.



What is the impact of coming into care on the school attendance of these children and young people?

Comparing the attendance for the year prior to coming into care and the year they came into care, the following is noted about these 63 learners who all attended schools in Leicester City:

- 5 CLA maintained their attendance at the same level
- 6 had no attendance the previous year – 2 were not of statutory school age, 1 was newly arrived and the other 3 were in schools out of area where we had no attendance information.
- 26 young people improved their attendance
- 26 had their attendance fall

Difference	Attendance rises	Attendance falls	Notes
0 – 5%	13	8	
6 – 15%	9	7	
16 – 30%	3	9	
More than 30%	1	2	2 learners whose attendance fell by more than 30% moved house twice during 2020/21

Of those whose attendance fell, 50% were Key Stage 1 and 2, 24% Key Stage 3 and 26% Key Stage 4

Of those whose attendance rose, 69% were Key Stage 1 and 2, 20% Key Stage 3 and 11% Key Stage 4

Higher overall absence leads to lower attainment at KS2 and KS4

The Department for Education (DfE) published [research](#) in 2016 which found that:

- The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4
- Pupils with **no absence** are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*- C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils that missed 15-20% of KS4 lessons

Attendance Headlines for 2020/21

31 (8.20%) young people achieved 100% attendance

165 (43.65%) were persistently absent – this figure is significantly higher than usual and likely to be impacted by the pandemic and school closures as well as COVID related absence and isolations

Average attendance for the whole cohort was 86.78% for the school year. This is lower than in previous years and is a direct result of the pandemic, related illness, school and bubble closures that left young people at home.

Attendance 2020-21

There are many reasons why our young people may miss school. We always aim for and encourage 100% attendance and in 2020/21, 35 young people achieved this.

Reason for non-attendance 2020/21	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)	12 (3%)	0.15%	12	22039	5	16550	7	3969	0	1520
Authorised Absence (days)	9220	4.13%	9220	296122	3392	176527	2955	68979	2873	50617
Unauthorised absence (days)	1516.5	1.99%	1516.5	143081	431.5	72550	364.5	39886	720.5	30645
Exclusion (days)	143		143		18.5		45.5		79	
Total			10891.5		3847		3372		3672.5	

This data tells us that the most common reason for absence from school in 2020/21 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. Unauthorised absence, which is considered absence that has not been agreed as legitimate in cause, is much lower for looked after children and young people than for all children and young people in Leicester. Unauthorised absence in Key Stage 4 is higher than from reception to Year 9.

Absence caused by fixed term exclusions is highest at Key Stage 4. 3 Key Stage 4 students had more than one fixed term exclusion during the year. In total just 6 students were subject to more than one fixed term exclusion but in one of these cases, the young person was excluded five times.

Absence due to holidays is higher for our CLA 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 2020/2021

Reduce Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2020/21.

The Virtual School Team was able to support pupils at risk of exclusion. Team members attended PEPs, worked with pupils, their carers 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.

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

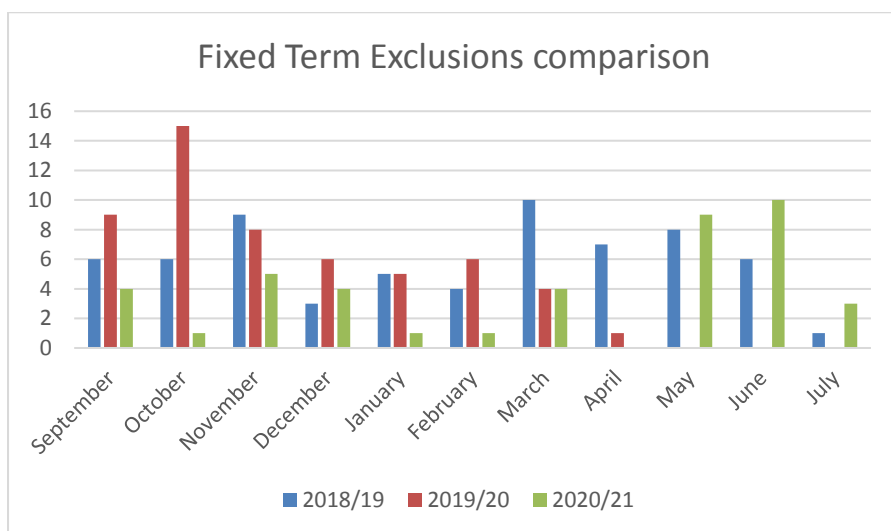
1:1 support staff to enable a young person to remain in school, settle and make progress. In schools where numbers of CLA are high, the Virtual School has funded or part-funded a mentor to work specifically with our children to ensure they have appropriate support to keep them in school and learning.

31 pupils received a fixed term exclusion during 2020/2021. Of these 31 young people, 6 of them were excluded for a fixed term on more than one occasion. 1 young person was subject to 5 separate fixed term exclusions. This young person has since moved on to a new setting better able to meet need.

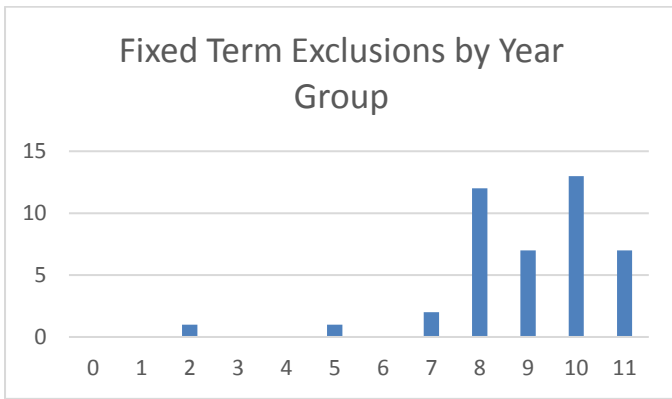
The total number of days lost to fixed term exclusion was 143. This figure represents a very small increase (1 day) from the previous year. However with a drop in the number of young people looked after, this represents a greater proportion of the whole cohort.

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	13.00%
2014/15*	18	283	6.30%
2015/16*	27	403	6.70%
2016/17	46	410	11.00%
2017/18	34	446	7.60%
2018/19	44	448	9.80%
2019/20	33	464	7.00%
2020/21	31	418	7.41%

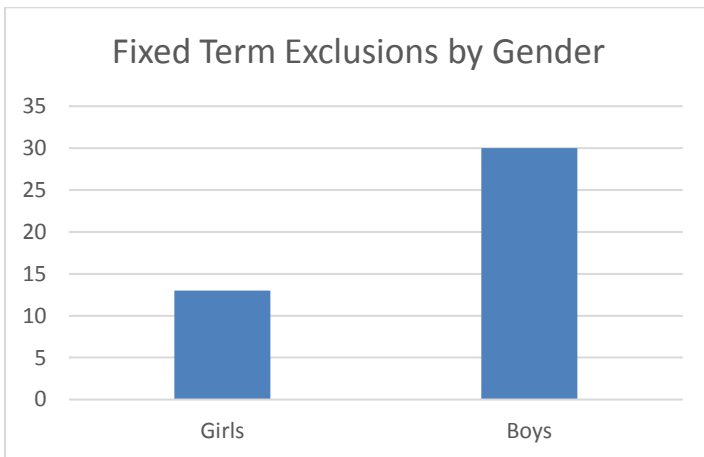
*note – these figures are for CLA in Leicester City schools only



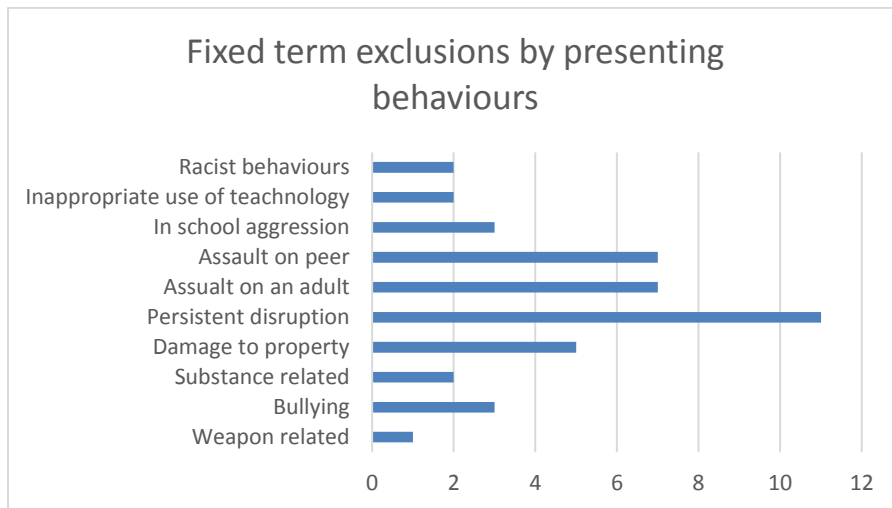
This graph shows up that fixed term exclusions were generally down in the first half of the school year compared with the previous year but then rise in the summer term as schools are returning to a more familiar way of working post pandemic. This was a challenge for some of our young people who struggled to regulate themselves back in the classroom full time.



This graph shows that there are key year groups where exclusions are higher – Years 8,9, 10 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 higher prevalence of exclusions.



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.



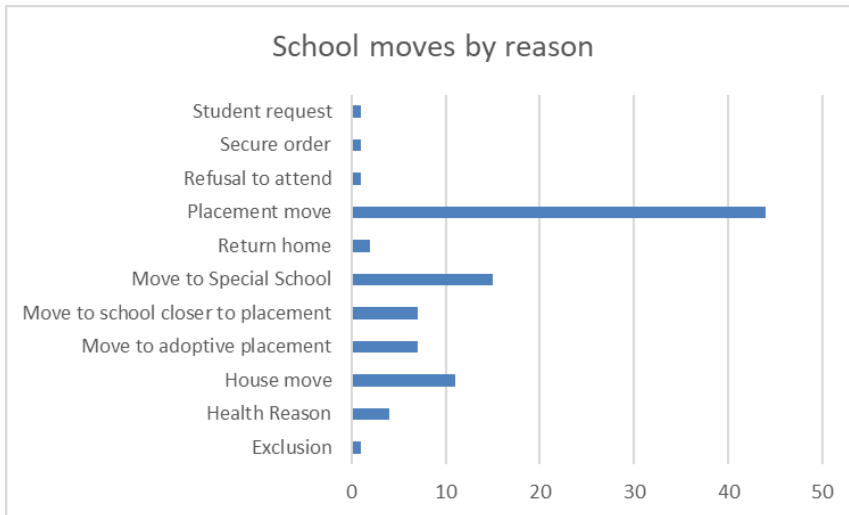
This data tells us that the most used reason for a young person to be subject to a fixed term exclusion was for persistently disruptive behaviour or refusal to follow school’s expectations resulting in disruption to the learning of others. Of the 11 young people who were excluded for this reason in 2020/21, all have received additional support to address their needs and to help them to avoid further fixed term exclusions.

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.

There is a further monthly meeting chaired by Deputy Mayor Cllr Russell 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

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.



There were 94 school moves in total, meaning that 23% of our young people were subject to a school move during the school year. However some young people moved multiple times across the year bringing the actual percentage of young people with school moves down to 20%.

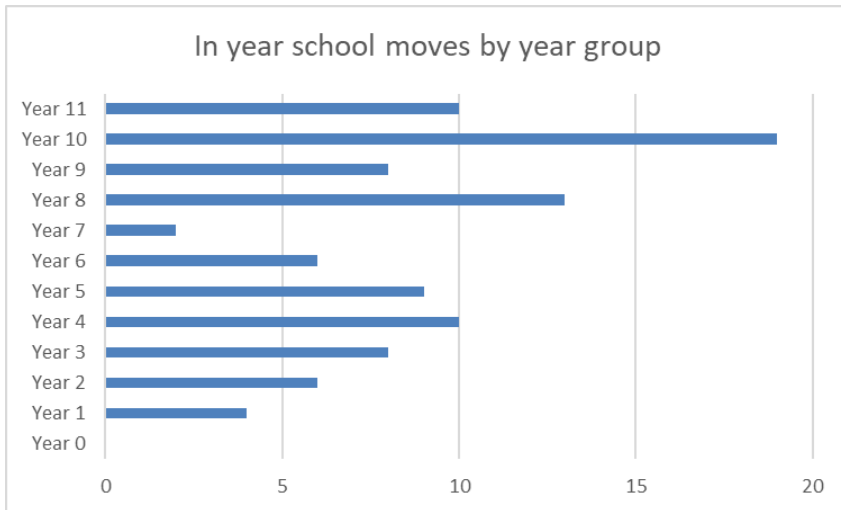
47% of all the moves were due to a change in placement. Adding in those who returned home or moved to forever homes makes this figure 56%.

20% of the moves were young people moving to a school better able to meet their needs.

Of those young people who moved schools during the school year, 9 young people moved more than once. 3 of these 9 young people moved school three times as a consequence of house moves both in and out of Leicester.

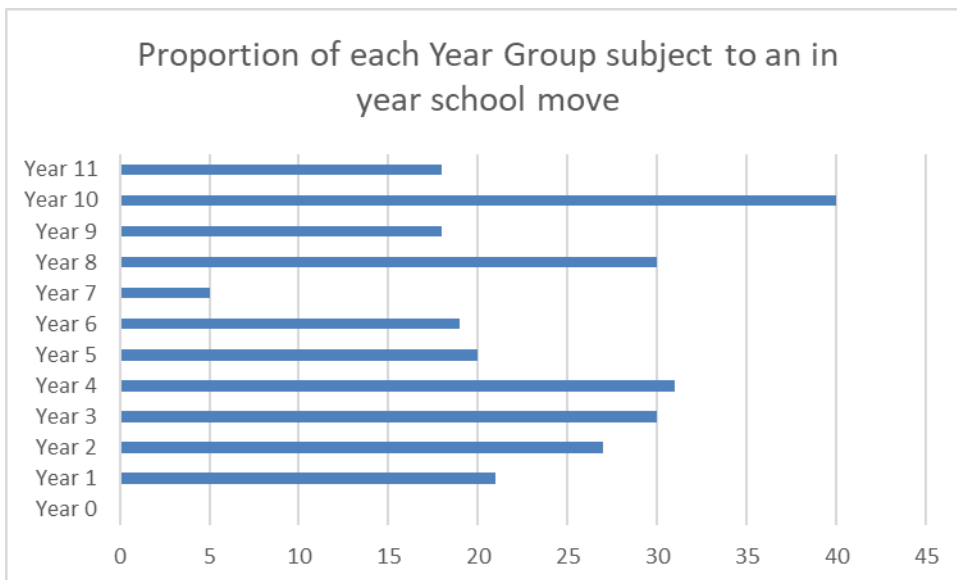
6 young people moved school twice:

- 1 moved to avoid a permanent exclusion then refused to attend the new school and subsequently moved again;
- 1 moved back into the area and later refused to attend the school they had chosen and moved to another school in Leicester.
- 1 young person moved twice as the move to a Specialist setting out of the area was to a setting shortly afterwards closed by OFSTED, requiring a further move elsewhere;
- 1 young person moved from a mainstream school to specialist provision then later moved out of the area and to a new school close to placement;
- 1 young person moved to a secure setting and following the end of that was placed at a new specialist setting;
- 1 young person has moved twice as a consequence of moving between hospital settings appropriate to need.



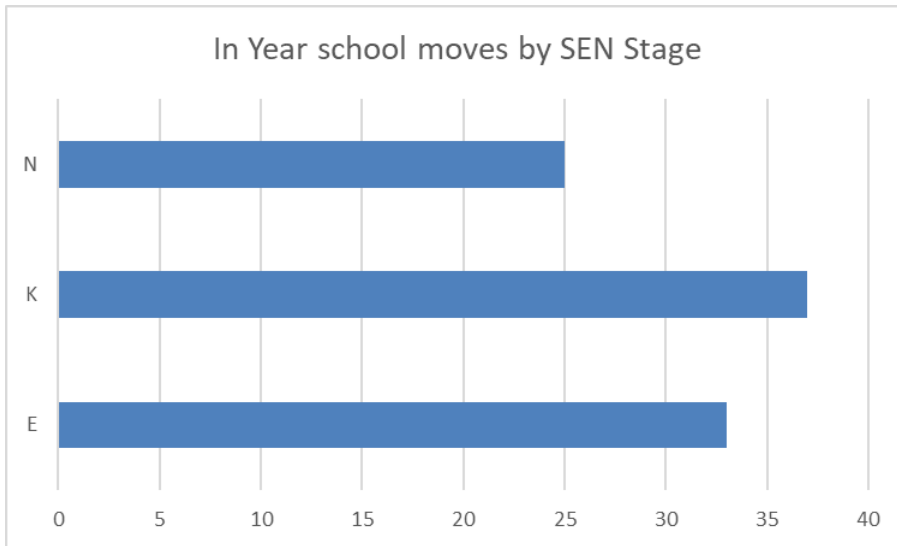
This graph shows that 30% of the school moves were for young people in either Year 10 or Year 11.

54% of the moves were for young people at Secondary School.

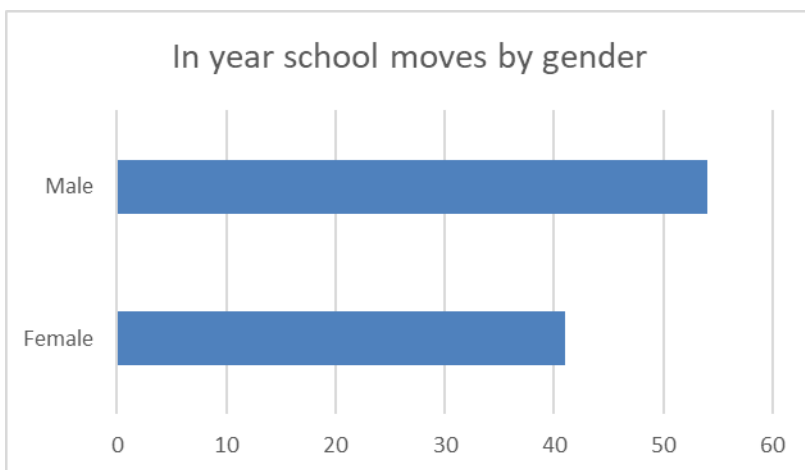


This data shows the number of young people subject to an in-year school move as a proportion of the number of LCC CLA young people in that year group during this academic year.

The figure for Year 10 reduces to 30% of the year group if we account for young people who moved more than once during the year. 42% of these moves were due to a change of placement.



Although moves are broadly similar for CLA across all SEN codes, the proportion of moves for young people with learning needs that can be met in mainstream school provision is slightly higher than the cohort proportion. Children with no identified learning needs are the group with the fewest in year moves.



More male learners were subject to school moves during the year. This is broadly similar to the overall balance of the cohort.

Children and Young People Previously Looked After

The Children Previously Looked After Officer was appointed in October 2020. The CPLA Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance with regard to CPLA young people in Leicester City.

The first area to address was the lack of knowledge and understanding of the funding available to schools for CPLA. To help aid this the CPLA officer attended the Leicester City Primary Heads meeting and emailed the Headteacher of all Secondary schools within Leicester City. This led to a clear line of communication being established and through a range of discussions and sharing of good practice, a clearer understanding of the funding process has been developed to better support this vulnerable group.

Alongside this much work has been completed with the LCC Post SGO(Special Guardianship Order)/adoption support worker, to ensure that carers of adopted, SGO or CAO (Child Arrangement Order) children are fully aware of their rights. Joint meetings are now commonplace and all final PEPs are attended by the CPLA Officer to ensure carers have the most up to date information about how they are able to access educational support should they need it. This has now progressed to school meetings with CPLA carers, initially at Overdale Junior and Infant Schools to ensure that line of advice and guidance is still there once a court order has been signed and a child is adopted. This is to be extended in the future to a Trust wide carer meeting with the hope that other schools and Trusts opt into the need for developing communications with carers. To further ensure carers have up to date information the Virtual School have also redesigned their webpage making it much easier to access information.

On the wider context, Leicester City CPLA officer was a driving force in the creation of the first regional CPLA meeting. This was used to discuss national changes and the impact that could have locally as well as the shared challenges faced across the East Midlands for CPLA.

Enrichment Activities

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 and provide additional certification for the young people who take part. For the second year running, this plan has been impacted by the pandemic with some activities postponed once more whilst those that could do so moved online.

Aim Higher Reach Further

In the autumn of 2020, we had a positive Awards Event held virtually via Microsoft Teams, hosted once more 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 and how he has continued to build on his experiences to make a successful career. Ashley particularly enjoyed the opportunity to chat with some of our Care Leavers and enable them to share their successes with the invited audience.

Transition Project

We have continued with our Transition project this year, following and supporting Year 6 young people as they begin their journey into secondary school but it has all been held virtually. Young people were organised into smaller groups and engaged with a range of activities from arts based sessions and cooking to an online reading group than was particularly popular.

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	2020/21
No of Y7 young people excluded	9	5	2	2
No of days lost to Y7 exclusions	52	24	7	2
No of Y7 exclusions	15	11	3	2

This shows that we continue to successfully achieve that aim, with a continuation of low incidences of young people excluded in Year 7; whilst we must remember that this school year was again impacted by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the number of days lost to exclusion and the overall number of exclusions demonstrates real success.

Work of the Virtual School

Continued Pandemic Response

In August 2020, the Virtual Head and Principal Educational Psychologist delivered targeted training for foster carers around return to school and the recovery curriculum, preparing carers to best support our vulnerable youngsters and building confidence in schools' capacity to manage a challenging situation as the virus continued to mutate and spread. Leicester had been subject to a significantly longer period of lockdown than anywhere else in the UK and anxiety amongst carers and children was high.

As the new term began, 92% of our CLA returned to school, a higher proportion than returned nationally (87%) and we continued to monitor patterns of attendance through our usual channels. There continued to be daily updates of school and bubble closures and we were able to ensure that all of our CLA had access to appropriate learning.

In order to scaffold the return to school, we offered training to the Designated Teachers in our schools by the Anna Freud Centre on *Supporting Schools to Manage Unexpected Change*, which was very well attended and received.

As the pandemic continued to impact on schools and learning, we kept our sights firmly on our cohort of young people and their needs. We:-

- Checked all those at home and on blended learning had a laptop and access to school remote learning
- Checked all cared for children attending - 60.9% attended school in person (40% nationally)
- Attendance in January 2021 – 41% attending school, 59% blended learning
- Attendance in February 2021 - 49% attending school, 51% blended learning

As life began to resemble learning pre-COVID, we organised further training for our Designated Teachers, led by Professor Barry Carpenter on the *Recovery Curriculum*. Feedback from this session was universally positive. Feedback included:-

"Just wanted to say thank you for the training session today. It was the most thought provoking and engaging session that I have accessed in quite some time and has left a lot to think about."

"Just a massive thank you for arranging and inviting me to the training yesterday. It was superb - I could have listened to him forever and agreed with every word. A long time since I have had training like that!"

Following this session, we invited schools to bid for funding from PP+ for Recovery Curriculum Projects and continue to monitor the impact of these projects on how well our CLA have returned to school and settled back into learning.

Personal Education Plans

Maintain PEP Compliance / Develop Systems to Secure Information Sharing

Virtual School Officers, under the guidance and direction of the Team Leader and Virtual Head, 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 required that all PEP meetings moved online. 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.

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 97.5% during the school year 2020/21.

Letterbox Club

This was provided for 135 CLA during 2020/21.

During 2020/2021 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.

The project explores ways of improving the educational outlook for children in care by providing them with educational materials and reading material. 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.

As well as positive feedback received from the young people and their carers about the book club, we sought the young people’s opinions on the Letterbox parcels in general.

Statement (about Letterbox parcels)	Responses (agree/disagree)
I enjoyed receiving the book parcels	100% yes
I read some of the books on my own	100% yes
I read some of the books with an adult	100% no
I liked lots of the books	100% yes
I think the books are too easy for me	100% not sure
I think the books are too difficult for me at the moment	100% no
I read more now than I did before getting the parcels	75% yes 1 child said they read loads already.
I think other children would enjoy receiving the parcels	100% yes
Is there anything else you would like to tell us? Please write it in this box. Thank you!	<i>Good because I don't really get stationery like post it notes</i> <i>More art things and stationery- eg. sketch book</i>

Emotional Wellbeing in Education Project

During this year, the EWE Project has worked with:-

- 92 schools and settings;
- 41 primary schools,
- 32 secondary schools,
- 8 special schools and
- 9 alternative settings such as Children's Homes.
- In total the project supported 118 CLA this year.

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.

The EWE project consists of a Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (CLA) 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.

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 CLA 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 environment.

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

Reading For Pleasure Project

Reading for Pleasure has been a piece of work undertaken over the last year by one of our tutors. This early part of the project has focussed on our own residential homes as follows;

Residential homes:

- VST have worked collaboratively with all residential homes this year, to enhance the provision of reading materials and thus raise the profile of reading for pleasure for our young people.
- All residential homes have received a substantial number of books, individualised according to the ever-changing needs of the young people.
- Young people have received GCSE texts and support materials to aid their revision.
- Netherhall and Barnes Heath have substantially improved their resources for their young people with SEND needs, including audio books, picture books and dual language appropriate texts.

- Many of the homes have worked on improving their 'reading areas' and creating displays to make reading more prolific and visual to the young people. Staff favourite texts have been shared and made a part of daily conversations about reading
- Residential homes have received books in dual languages for their young people with EAL.
- One home now have regular visits to the local shop, to purchase magazines based upon their young people's interests and hobbies. This was inspired by VST signing them up for a subscription to 'The Week' newspaper.

Feedback from residential home managers:

"It has been wonderful having someone to support the home and source books that are appropriate for the complex service user group we have. This includes service users with autism who are non-verbal. We even have children's books in Arabic!"

"the book you provided that I requested for one of our young people was used through her education and was a good incentive to engage her, she did worksheets that were built especially for and around that particular book."

"it was so nice just to sit and read at the dining table, we have now put book-shelves up where the young people just go in and pick a book up"

"it was nice during lock down to have something other than just Netflix to keep me occupied" (young person)

"Book-shelves have gone up around the home and the main display board promotes a different book each month. We also had quizzes on different authors and people's favourite books."

"there was a clear uptake in young people reading and using books for fact checking and quizzes."

"The books/tapes have really been enjoyed by young people on short breaks. They have especially enjoyed the story tapes and the pictorial books aimed at very young children. Most of our young people have sensory needs so the brighter and more colourful the better. As many of our young people do not always get the opportunity to hear a story, as households are busy, they get lots of enjoyment when staff read to them."

Letterbox Transition Book Club

- In the Spring and Summer terms, VST set up and delivered a book club for Year 6 children. Based upon the Letterbox parcels that they receive throughout the year- raising the profile of reading through engagement and a shared excitement for the books they receive.
- 2 teachers planned the sessions collaboratively, looking at the content of the Letterbox parcels.
- The book club worked with 6 children who are all in Year 6 (4 girls and 2 boys).
- The Book Club was very well received and thoroughly enjoyed by the children and the staff!

Book club feedback examples from children:

- I liked it because I was asked lots of questions and we did lots of fun things
- I liked everything, I really enjoyed it
- I've really liked hanging around with you guys it's been very fun
- I've liked seeing all of you. Seeing people and making new friends virtually

It was lovely to see the solidarity and shared excitement as the children chatted about the books together and discussed reading preferences and opinions on the texts and parcel contents.

World Book Day 2021

- In March 2021, VST held a World Book day competition. Entrants had to enter with a picture of themselves reading in an unusual location and also a book review or poster.
- We received 18 entrants and the standard was high 😊
- The winning entry was a child who was having a difficult time emotionally, and his DT commented that it gave him a real boost of confidence and that as he received his prize (Bluetooth headphones) in front of the whole class, he was greeted with “cheers and whoops!”

All of our CLA were sent a £10 Book Token for World Book Day to enable them to choose a book of their own to read and enjoy.

Bullfrog Arts

This year, Bullfrog Arts have worked with:-

- 110 young people
- 5 young instrumentalists
- 10 young people on the Philharmonia project
- 5 schools on the Singing Project
- 1 residential home for the Taiko Residential
- 10 young leaders
- 3 settings to develop the Taiko Tots programme

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.

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 young people and staff from Tatlow Road Residential Home
- Bullfrog Performance Group
- Rock School project
- 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

The year started with a mixture of virtual sessions and some face to face work, with musicians visiting schools with a mobile gazebo that was used to deliver sessions in the school grounds. This was a welcome break for many students and an opportunity to return to some level of normality with their music.

This year we have begun a new piece of work in the Early Years sector, entitled Taiko Tots. Work is at an early stage, having been delayed by the pandemic, but will continue into the new school year. Several Early Years settings have been identified and training and preparation is underway for this exciting new development.

Tall Ships

As part of the work to support the transition of our Year 11 students, we were able to run this programme again this year and took 5 young people on a 5 day sailing experience that enabled them all to develop their interpersonal skills and resilience whilst earning a Level 1 RYA Accreditation.

One of the young people was so successful on this trip and so impressed the ship's crew that he has been invited to return and train to be a Watch Leader. This is a massive achievement and we hope that he will be available to support the Year 11 group we taken on Tall Ships in 2022.

Extract from email received from carers:

Not sure what we would have done for our foster son without the invaluable help of virtual school and their dedicated, hard working, child focused staff. From opportunities like Taiko drumming where he could focus his emotions, build good friendships, build his self esteem and see he is good at something & Tall Ships where he has been able to build his confidence and learn life skills to ensure he is able to stay in school. Without their amazing support staff and tutors, I know he wouldn't be where he is today. Also their dedication, determination and support throughout lockdown especially has kept him focused and on track especially while home schooling. We are so grateful to have been able to work alongside amazing and dedicated staff. Thank you

Use of Pupil Premium Plus funding

In 2020/2021, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation was £2345 for each young person who had been in care for 12 months up to 31st August 2020.

The Virtual School continued with the practice of using up to £400 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.

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

Virtual School tutors worked with 52 different young people in 2020/21

Agency tutors worked with over 20 young people in 2020/21 where this was commissioned directly by the Virtual School.

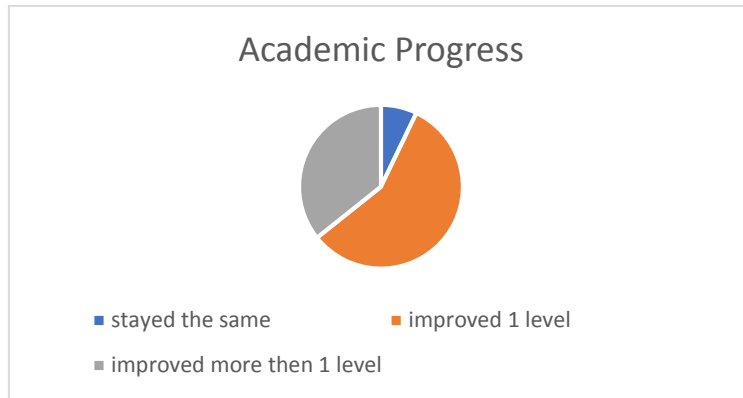
In 2020/2021, young people from all key stages benefitted from personalised 1:1 tuition. This is agreed during PEP meetings or by referral from a learner's school, with tuition usually focussed on core subjects, to support the young person achieving their target grade or to make them feel more confident 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.

The Virtual School employs 2.6 tutors who work during term time to deliver bespoke learning support to our young people. Delivery is now a mixture of virtual and face to face, according to need. Working in this way means that these tutors can teach more pupils than when they were travelling between schools. 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.

Analysis of the impact of the Virtual School tutors is very clear in recognising the difference they make to our young people.

Overall progress for those CLA tutored by Virtual School tutors generated the following impact:-

- 7.14% of pupils stayed at their previous working level
- 57.14% made 1 level of progress
- 35.72% made 2 or more levels of progress

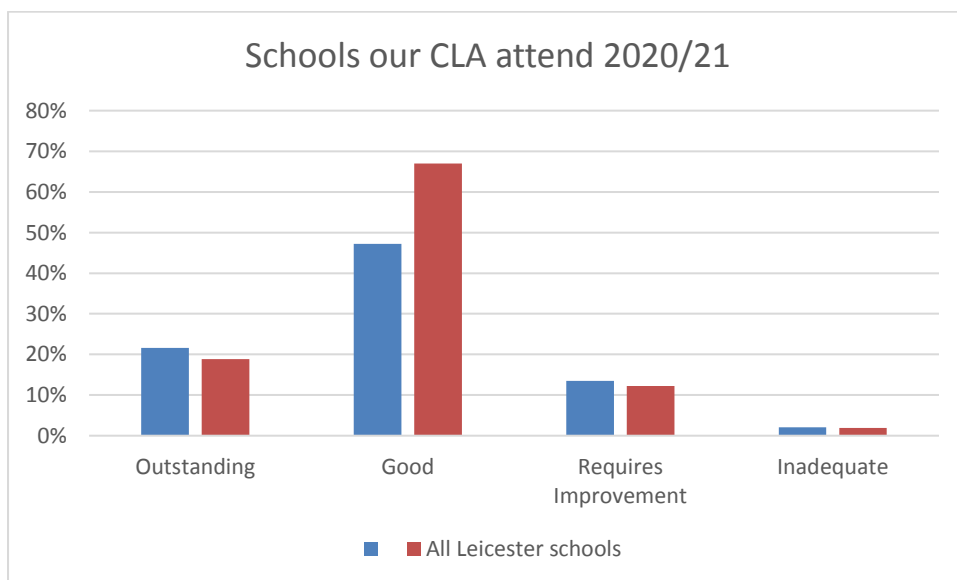


About the schools our pupils attend

Quality of provision attended

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 214 different schools and establishments.



This shows that the schools attended by our CLA are broadly in line with the proportion of schools in these categories in Leicester City. The key difference is the proportion attending a school judged as ‘good’ by OFSTED although these are much smaller disparities where CLA attend schools judged either ‘outstanding’ or ‘requires improvement’.

Alternative Provision

15 young people attended alternative provision during 2020/21. 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. Some Alternative Provision is commissioned by schools but is quality assured and checked to ensure it meets our expectations for that young person.

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.

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	4	Therapeutic input and core studies
Soft Touch	1	Music intervention and art work
Brolay Farm	2	Therapeutic intervention and interpersonal skills
Black Barn Farm	1	Therapeutic input and core studies
TripleSkillz	1	Physical skills designed to foster positive responses
Corner Post	1	Physical skills designed to foster positive responses
Elite	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Northampton Saints	1	Physical skills designed to foster positive responses
Positive Directions	1	Therapeutic intervention and interpersonal skills
Uneek	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Rushmere Academy	1	Range of accredited courses offered
Soft Touch	1	Arts based interventions to support engagement
Transfm	2	Range of accredited courses offered
Waterfront	1	Skills for Employment course

Leicester City Council Virtual School

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).

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.

A team manager is responsible for the operational management of the team and we have a Senior Virtual School Officer who is responsible for our response with regards to young people who are previously looked after.

The rest of the team consists of 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 time only. 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 CLA 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.

APPENDIX A:

Monthly Data return Information, 2020/2021

Monthly Key Indicators	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21
Number of LAC of school age	409	397	413	418	407	414	415	416	418	416	375
No. of LAC with concerns regarding school place	107	88	66	76	288	325	204	58	81	87	67
% LAC with concerns regarding school place	26%	22%	16%	18%	71%	78%	50%	14%	19%	21%	18%
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance	75	51	39	44	261	288	170	33	48	60	43
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/CITY schools	29	23	18	17	136	168	59	19	27	30	12
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/OOC Schools	46	28	21	27	125	120	111	14	21	30	31
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance	94	69	54	62	277	311	188	43	67	79	60
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/CITY Schools	40	31	21	23	139	181	65	27	38	38	16
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/OOC Schools	54	38	33	39	138	131	123	16	29	41	44
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance	137	112	89	93	310	337	224	77	143	125	81
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/CITY Schools	70	58	38	36	152	188	85	43	83	61	27
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/OOC Schools	67	54	51	57	158	149	139	34	60	64	54
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Monthly	4	1	5	4	1	1	4	0	9	10	3
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Cumulative	4	5	10	14	15	16	20	20	29	39	42
No. of LAC with less than 25 hours education per week	13	19	12	14	11	14	16	15	14	8	7
% of LAC reported by school via PEP on trajectory to meet target set by school	73%	72%	70%	60%	58%	59%	60%	70%	66%	66%	65%
% school age Children in Care with current Personal Education Plan (Statutory school age only) (VH info)	98%	98%	98%	97%	98%	96%	98%	97%	97%	98%	98%
% of PEPS QA'd as 'on target'	44%	47%	50%	51%	62%	65%	65%	65.00%	71%	77%	77.00%
% of PEPS QA'd as good or outstanding	16%	17%	18%	26%	22%	14%	15%	15.00%	12%	9%	9%
No. of PEPs quality assured by Virtual Head	7	49	31	47	127	205	129	129	134	125	86