WIRRAL

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 25th September 2023

REPORT TITLE:	**WIRRAL VIRTUAL SCHOOL**
REPORT OF:	**DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION**

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the Wirral Virtual School and its operating model. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to have a virtual school Head (VSH) who monitors looked after children, previously looked after children and those children with a social worker as if they were in one school, the virtual school.

In June 2021, the role of the VSH was extended to include non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker as well as looked after children.

This role includes identifying the local authorities looked after children and those with a social worker, and being the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve their educational experiences and outcomes.

The Virtual School are responsible for managing pupil premium funding for the children they look after and for allocating it to schools and alternative provision (AP) settings.

The Virtual School are also responsible for managing the early years pupil premium (EYPP). This will be distributed to early years providers that educate looked-after children who are taking up the free early education entitlement for 3- or 4-year-olds.

This report is aligned to the Wirral Plan 2021-26 priority: Working together for brighter futures for our children, young people, and their families.

This affects all wards but is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to note and comment on the current operating model and the approach taken to promote the education aspirations of young people with involvement in social care.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People & Education Committee have the opportunity to monitor, review and challenge performance in relation to the Wirral Virtual School and a greater understand it's role in working with education providers and social care colleagues in overseeing the education provision of looked after children.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Wirral Local Authority to have an effective Virtual School to support the educational outcomes of looked after children.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) must maintain an up-to-date roll of looked-after children who are in school or college settings, and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress.

3.2 Inform head teachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked-after by the VSH's local authority.

3.3 Ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP.

3.4 Ensure the educational achievement of children looked after by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.

3.5 Report regularly on the attainment, progress, and school attendance of looked-after children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

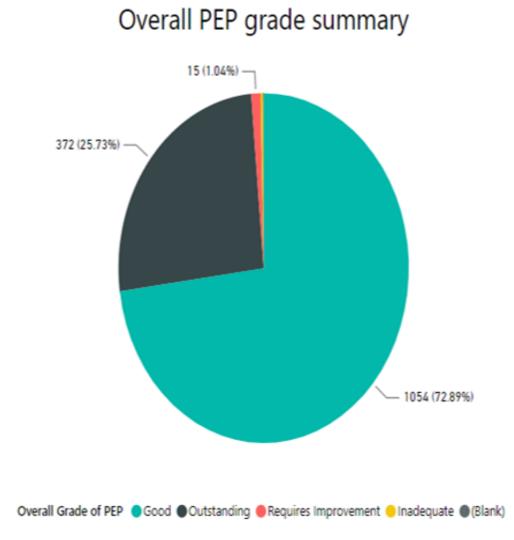The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

3.6 All looked-after children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. The PEP should be initiated as part of the care plan. It is an ever changing record of support is needed for looked-after children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs and raises aspirations. The PEP should be used by all professionals support a looked-after child's educational journey. The Wirral Virtual School has responsibility for timely completion and quality assurance of the document. The document will have the involvement of the child's carers.

3.7 The PEP should cover the full range of education and development needs for the child, covering the following but not exhaustive; Access to a nursery or other high quality early years provision that is appropriate to the child's age; On-going catch-up support for those who have fallen behind with school work; Provision of immediate suitable education where a child is not in school; School attendance and, if necessary, behaviour support; Support to achieve their age expected attainment based on the conclusion of each key stage; Careers advice and guidance and financial information about further and higher education, training and employment.

3.8 To support the PEP, looked-after children are eligible for Pupil Premium + (PP+) funding to supporting any additional activities identified in the PEP. Attached to this report in Appendix 1 is the overview of the financial expenditure of The Wirral Virtual School that was shared with the school forum in June 2023.

3.9 The virtual School has responsibility for monitoring the oversight of education provision for all looked-after children has responsibility for. The following table gives a break of the looked-after children for the academic year 21-22, the virtual school had an oversight for 621 pupils across the education system.

Figures by Year Group														
Year	F2	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Total	21	32	37	33	27	29	54	41	43	51	51	62	35	11
OB	5	9	5	6	3	3	12	5	4	12	7	13	6	4

CLA with Special Educational Needs			
	K Reg	EHCP	Total
R/F2	2	0	2
Y1	4	2	6
Y2	12	6	18
Y3	10	7	17
Y4	12	3	15
Y5	12	6	18
Y6	9	16	25
Y7	10	15	25
Y8	17	7	24
Y9	12	11	23
Y10	7	12	19
Y11	10	12	22
Y12	4	6	10
Y13	0	3	3
Total	121	106	227

3.10 The distribution of looked-after children on a school roll increases as age increases, with the largest year group of 62 in year 11. In relation to SEND the proportion, of looked-after children of proportion of cohort is 20% vs the whole school percentage of 4% of pupils with an EHCP.

3.11 In relation to quality of PEP completion for the academic year 21/22 the following pie chart gives an oversight of the quality assurance system in place.

Overall PEP grade summary

15 (1.04%)

372 (25.73%)

1054 (72.89%)

Overall Grade of PEP ● Good ● Outstanding ● Requires Improvement ● Inadequate ● (Blank)

3.12 The Virtual School grade each PEP on receipt from schools, they will edit and work with schools to make improvements immediately. This ensures PEPs are all of a good quality in accordance with Ofsted criteria The only time PEPs are accepted lower than good is when they arrive too late in the term to allow communication.

3.11 In relation to outcomes for Wirral's Looked-After Children, the following analysis shows the performance over a three-year trend.

Early Years: GLD

	2018	2019	2022
Virtual School	61.5	57.7	44.4
Nat. CLA	46	48	41
LA	70.5	69.3	62.9
National (All)	71.6	71.9	65.3
CIN	44.8	46.4	29.2
CP	59.1	42.1	34.6

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	+15.5	+9.7	+3.4
LA	-9.0	-11.6	-18.5
National (All)	-10.1	-14.2	-20.9

Phonics

	2018	2019	2022
Virtual School	64.3	73.7	58.1
Nat. CLA	63	64	60
LA	80.8	81.8	77.3
National (All)	82.5	81.9	75.5
CIN	20.8	53.8	62.9
CP	58.3	69.6	60.0

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	+1.3	+9.7	-1.9
LA	-16.5	-8.1	-19.2
National (All)	-18.2	-8.2	-17.4

Key Stage 1

KS1		2018	2019	2022
RWM	**Virtual School**	50	42.3	26.5
	Nat. CLA	37	38	29
	LA	62.6	60.9	48.7
	National (All)	65	65	53.4
	CIN	24.1	32.0	26.7
	CP	42.9	25.0	22.7

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	+13.0	+4.3	-2.5
LA	-12.6	-18.6	-22.2
National (All)	-15.0	-22.7	-26.9

Key Stage 2

KS2		2018	2019	2022

RWM	Virtual School	19.4	48.6	32.6
	Nat. CLA	35	37	32
	LA	60.1	60.3	52
	National (All)	64.4	64.9	58.7
	CIN	40.0	22.9	9.7
	CP	17.6	33.3	20.7

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	-15.6	+11.6	+0.6
LA	-40.7	-11.7	-19.4
National (All)	-45.0	-16.3	-26.1

Key Stage 4

KS4		2018	2019	2022
English and Maths 5+	Virtual School	7.1	3.6	12
	Nat. CLA	8	7	13
	LA	45.9	45.6	47.2
	National (All)	43.3	43.2	38.7
	CIN			8.1
	CP			14.3

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	-0.9	-3.4	-1.0
LA	-38.8	-42.0	-35.2
National (All)	-36.2	-39.6	-26.7

KS4		2018	2019	2022
Attainment 8	Virtual School	19.2	18.7	31.8
	Nat. CLA	18.8	19.1	26.4
	LA	48.8	48.4	48.7
	National (All)	46.5	46.7	49
	CIN			14.7
	CP			17.7

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	+0.4	-0.4	+5.4
LA	-29.6	-29.7	-16.9
National (All)	-27.3	-28.0	-17.2

KS4		2018	2019	2022
Progress 8	Virtual School	-1.58	-1.49	-0.67
	Nat. CLA	-1.24	-1.28	-1.01
	LA	+0.03	+0.01	-0.03
	National (All)	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03

CIN			-1.52	
CP			-2.26	

Differences: Virtual school vs	2018	2019	2022
Nat. CLA	-0.3	-0.2	+0.3
LA	-1.6	-1.5	-0.6
National (All)	-1.6	-1.5	-0.6

3.12 In relation to early years performance, the cohort is the smallest and therefore comparisons can be difficult. The Wirral cohort performs better than the national cohort, but outcomes have fallen between 2019 and 2022. When analysing phonics outcomes, the Wirral remains broadly in line with national figures, a significant fall has taken place since 2019. In relation to Key Stage 1, the Wirral outcomes have fallen significantly between 2019 and 2022. This mirrors the national picture for looked-after children, but the fall is larger on Wirral. A similar picture to Key Stage 1 is mirrored in Key Stage 2, with a significant drop between 2019 and 2022. That said, Wirral children achieved a higher percentage than the national looked-after figure. Finally, in Key Stage 4, Wirral looked-after children have performed higher than national comparisons for both progress 8 and attainment 8.

3.13 Given the oversight shared and the clear operating responsibilities of the Wirral Virtual School, the following priorities have been identified for the year ahead.

3.14 To promote the educational outcomes for children with a social worker by taking the following actions;

To make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.

To promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.

To level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

3.15 To improve the academic progress of children with a social worker:

To closely monitor progress of all LAC on a termly basis and challenge coasting results during the Spring and Summer Terms and hold schools to account for termly progress.

To continue to help schools set challenging targets in relation to each pupil's progress and attainment.

To ensure that vulnerable children receive immediate and appropriate catch-up support that is rigidly delivered, monitored, and evaluated and detailed in the PEP.

To share good practice across the authority through Designated Teacher meetings, school visits, email and website.

3.16   To improve attendance and exclusion of children looked after;

To monitor attendance of CLA on a weekly basis and liaise closely with all parties across   the authority to ensure poor attendance is addressed immediately.

To monitor attendance of other children with a social worker on a half termly basis in collaboration with Attendance Team.

To challenge parents, foster carers and social workers and colleagues in the authority to address poor attendance and bring about immediate improvements.

To ensure children in care are in education especially those with EHCP.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1   The financial implications for the Wirral Virtual school are scrutinised by the Wirral Schools Forum on an annual basis, the report of the must recent is attached in appendix 1. The Wirral Virtual School has to account for all grant and council core funding that is utilised to support the education oversight of young people with a social worker.

4.0   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1   There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, this report demonstrates how the Local Authority fulfils its responsibility in fulfilling the role of the Virtual School Headteacher – which is a statutory post within the local authority. They are responsible for the educational progress of Wirral's looked-after children

5.0   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1   There are none arising from this report

6.0   RELEVANT RISKS

7.1   There is a risk in relation to the local authority not fulfilling its responsibility of the position of the Virtual School Headteacher and oversight of educational performance of children with a social worker. The effectiveness of this will be assessed as part of the next OFSTED inspection of Wirral Children's Services (ILACS).

7.0   ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1   The feedback we are receiving from Wirral Schools is positive about the role of the Virtual School team. The Virtual School Headteacher will share updates at relevant forums and the team will visit all schools with a looked-after child during the spring term of the academic year. In addition, the team work collaboratively with social care colleagues to take relevant actions where required to support looked-after children.

8.0   EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1   Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

10.0   ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1   There are no environment or climate implications arising from this report

11.0   COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1   There are no community wealth implications arising from the report

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wirral Schools Forum Virtual School report – 22/23

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

1. Exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Revised Guidance for virtual school heads and designated teachers

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

Children, Young People & Education Committee	21 June 2023