



WORKING DOCUMENT

**The Virtual School
Annual Headteacher Report
September 2022**

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Virtual School Action Plan | 2 |
| Summary of Outcomes | 3 |
| Virtual School Staff | 4 |
| The remit of the virtual school | 6 |
| The virtual school roll | 6 |
| Where do our children go to school | 7 |
| Admissions | 7 |
| Exclusions | 8 |
| Attendance | 9 |
| Attainment | 10 |
| Pupil Premium plus | 12 |
| PEPs | 12 |
| Celebration Event | 14 |
| Projects and further training | 14 |
| Appendices | 16 |
| Appendix 1: Virtual School and partners | |
| Appendix 2: TIP Making the Difference Board Report Sept '22 | |
| Appendix 3: Training | |
| Appendix 4: LA self-assessment attendance | |
| Appendix 5: VS at a glance | |
| Appendix 6: Provisional GCSE headlines | |
| Appendix 7: August Newsletter | |
| Appendix 8: September Newsletter | |
| Appendix 9: Youth Options Report | |
| Appendix 10: Primary Sports feedback | |
| Appendix 11: Letterbox Club | |
| Appendix 12: Virtual School Reading Challenge | |

Introduction

The Virtual School has been operating since June 2013, although the school does not exist as a physical entity it maintains a roll of all the children and young people of school age who are in the care of Southampton City Council, whether they continue to live within Southampton or reside elsewhere.

The school is responsible for supporting and promoting the educational achievement of all the children and young people, from the time they first enter education until they reach statutory school leaving age. The school is focussed on raising the aspirations of the young people and all the professionals involved with them so they can reach their full potential, progressing into further and higher education and moving into fulfilling and gainful employment.

The Virtual School plays a key role in developing collaborative working with colleagues locally as well as Virtual Schools and local authorities across the country, to ensure swift communication and prompt action to support our young people.

Since September 2018 the Virtual School has also operated an advisory service for previously looked after children (PLAC), in line with statutory guidance

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424242/PLAC-Guidance-2018.pdf)

Since September 2021 the Virtual School has operated an advisory service for children who have (or have ever had) a social worker, in line with non statutory guidance

[Promoting the education of children with a social worker \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014242/Children-with-a-social-worker-Guidance-2021.pdf)

Executive Summary

What OFSTED told us

November 2019

- Leaders of the virtual school understand the importance of their role as advocates for children in care and work efficiently. Funding for these children is used well to improve their education experiences. Leaders provide helpful training that supports designated teachers in schools to have high expectations of children and receive useful help. Schools are effectively held to account for the impact of their work through regular reviews of children's personal education plans. Consequently, children in care in Southampton attain in line with their peers elsewhere in England

May 2021

- Virtual School highly committed and innovative

Virtual School Action Plan

The Virtual School action plan for academic year 2021-2022 had the following objectives

- Support transition, the welcome back plan and the recovery curriculum post COVID19
- Establish a virtual school advisory service for children who have ever had a social worker
- Secure Attainment and Progress
- Raise Attendance
- Inclusion: Reduce Exclusions and Monitoring of Provision
- Participation
- Post-16 Transition and Progress
- Targeted Groups of Children
- SEND Support
- Training and Professional Development

Summary of Outcomes

What we are proud about

- Our children and young people
- Our social workers, independent reviewing officers and parents/carers who continue to promote education
- Our school colleagues who work tirelessly to support our children and young people
- EYFS GLD is better than national looked after children
- Phonics screen, Year 1 working at standard is above national looked after children
- KS1 attainment, is on an upward trajectory in Writing and Maths
- KS2 average attainment is better than national looked after children
- At KS4 we have seen the following increases –
 - 11.2% increase in 9-5 English measure
 - 15.8% increase in 9-4 English measure
 - 10.9% increase in 9-5 Maths measure
 - 10.4% increase in 9-4 English measure
 - 6.9% increase in 9-5 English and Maths measure
 - 12.6% increase in 9-4 English and Maths measure
- Move of participation into the Virtual School with increased opportunities for our children and young people
- Launch of Virtual School advisory service for children who have (or have ever had) a social worker
- Increased national presence of Virtual school in education policy
- Our relationship with the Children's Commissioner

(Disclaimer KS4 results subject to change due to checking exercises)

What are the challenges going forward

- New extension to duties <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker> - this has been further enhanced the remit of the Virtual School
- New attendance guidance - [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
[Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- New suspensions guidance [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- Care review [The-independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-Final-report.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](#)
- Care placement changes, school moves, social worker churn and change of teams
- Requests for special school places and associated financial concerns, alongside severe drift and delay

- Out of area moves – 49% of our children are educated out of area, across 28 other local authorities. 243 children moved schools last academic year.
- Those young people who are not in education, employment or training post 16 (NEET)

Virtual School Staff

The Virtual school for the academic year 2021-2022 was:

The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) took up the full-time post in September 2018. The VSH is a statutory role and all local authorities must have a person named in this role, as outlined in statutory guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf.

The VSH is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Southampton City Councils children for whom we are all the corporate parent, including those placed out of authority. The VSH must ensure that there are effective arrangements in place to work with the broad range of professionals who have a role to play in supporting the education of our children and those previously looked after children (PLAC). Both groups are collectively referred to as care experienced children and young people (CECYP).

The Virtual School Deputy Headteacher (VSDH) is a full-time post and the officer plays a crucial role in negotiating, sustaining and maintaining complex school places. The VSDHT also supports and deputises for the VSH in order for the VSH to fulfil all statutory responsibilities.

Children Looked After Officers (4), term time only (3), part time (1). Their remits are to monitor attendance, exclusions, completion and quality assurance of personal education plans (PEP) and SEND Support, alongside PLAC and early years responsibilities. They support with all training needs for all stakeholders involved in the education and care of CECYP.

Specialist Educational Psychologist to support staff with psychological advice, training for schools and direct intervention, mainly offering assessments for pupils where they have complex needs. This has been a key role in developing and delivering training. This post was successfully recruited to from November 2019. This is a 0.5 fulltime post. In addition, using grant funding for the new extension to duties, we have secured an additional day from the EP service to support the extension. This has proved to be very successful.

Virtual School Officer

The officer has developed the advisory service for children who have (or have ever had) a social worker.

Quality Assurance Apprentice

This role is to scaffold admin tasks within the virtual school, including all participation activities and PEP administration.

Participation officer and participation apprentices

We have 0.5 participation officer and 1 apprentice. It is planned to recruit to the post fulltime (current post holder will be completing her masters fully funded by UCL) and advertise for 2 apprentices during care leaver week.

The work of the team relies heavily on strong and supportive working relationships with staff who also have responsibilities for CECYP, or who play a role in services young people need. These include social workers, admissions teams, the placement team, SEN, the Psychology Service, IROs, BRS and many others both in and outside Southampton and, crucially, the Designated Teachers and staff in schools.

All the posts in the Virtual School, except that of the VSH and participation are funded through the retained element of the pupil premium plus grant, alongside the extended PLAC grant, as allowed under the Conditions of Grant. As a statutory role the VSH post is funded by the local authority.

In addition, we continue to host student social worker 70 and 100 day placements.

Feed Forward Activity

To drive forward the importance of education for looked after children and to increase capacity within the virtual school to further support schools and social care colleagues, the part time CLA officer for PEPs has been made fulltime. This has already been of benefit as the ePEP has been revamped in advance of the new academic year. Additional training for social workers was held over the summer break and we supported the upload of PEPs to care director for social care colleagues.

The remit of the Virtual School

The remit of the Virtual School is subject to the following guidance:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf).

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf)

By working closely with colleagues in social care, schools and staff in local authorities, the Virtual School supports our children promoting high expectations by:

- Attending PEP meetings and quality assuring the ePEP to ensure targets are appropriate
- Training and liaising with designated teachers, social workers, carers, independent reviewing officers and any other relevant stakeholders.
- Offering support and advice.
- Signposting to other services and programmes of work.
- Teaching on a 1:1 basis through the use of external agencies and supporting transitions between schools for targeted pupils.
- Liaising closely with social workers and admission teams to promote the allocation of school places and speedy admission.
- Attending LAC Reviews at the request of IROs.
- Attending disruption meetings (school or care placement) as requested by social workers or Designated Teachers.
- Providing an advisory service for PLAC and children with a social worker.

The Virtual School Roll

Pupil Numbers as of August 2022 were

| Year Group | No of children | % of children with an EHCP |
|------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| R | 12 | 8.3 |
| 1 | 22 | 4.5 |
| 2 | 20 | 5.0 |
| 3 | 24 | 16.7 |
| 4 | 25 | 16 |
| 5 | 34 | 23.5 |
| 6 | 34 | 20.6 |
| 7 | 35 | 40.0 |
| 8 | 40 | 32.5 |
| 9 | 47 | 34.0 |
| 10 | 55 | 25.4 |
| 11 | 44 | 22.7 |

Pupil numbers on the roll of the Virtual School fluctuate considerably during the year. At the time of writing this report (Aug 2022) the roll stood at 391 pupils, aged between 4 and 16. **This is an increase of 10.0% from the previous year.**

[Where do our children go to school?](#)

Wherever possible Southampton seeks care placements within the city and children continue to attend their pre-care schools but, for many pupils, a move of school is inevitable and last academic year **49.0% of our pupils were in education outside the city boundary, (a decrease of 3 % from academic year 2020-2021)**. In addition to schools in Southampton, **our children and young people attend schools in 28 other local authorities, (a decrease of 10 from last academic year)**.

[Admissions](#)

Whenever possible it is the joint policy of the Virtual School and the social care placement team that a child or young person coming into care, or changing their care placement, should maintain the school place they have, in line with statutory guidance and current research around the importance of a stable educational base. http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf

During the year 243 pupils moved schools, which is a 38 % increase on the number of school moves from last year.

In the majority of cases this is because the children and young people have moved care placement which has necessitated a school move. The Virtual School has worked with the data team and we now produce a weekly report which indicates how many school moves a pupil has needed. This information also captures changes in care placement, social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer.

The Virtual School remains the constant for the children and young people to ensure minimal disruption and delay in education.

Feed Forward Activity

- The VSH meets with SLT and ACDS on a regular basis to report on concerns
 - The VS team meet with social care colleagues on a regular basis to ensure parity of opportunity for children and young people
 - The VS has a diverse menu of offsite provision to support our children and young people, if they are out of school at any time – we also work collaboratively with other LA Virtual School and SEND colleagues to ensure minimal drift and delay – **Appendix 1**
-
- The VSH maintains regular communication with the Children’s Commissioner to support any concerns we have around school allocations
 - The VS continues to support carers and colleagues around mediation and tribunal routes
 - The VSH, as chair of the SEVSHT meets regularly with the DfE to identify concerns and areas for development

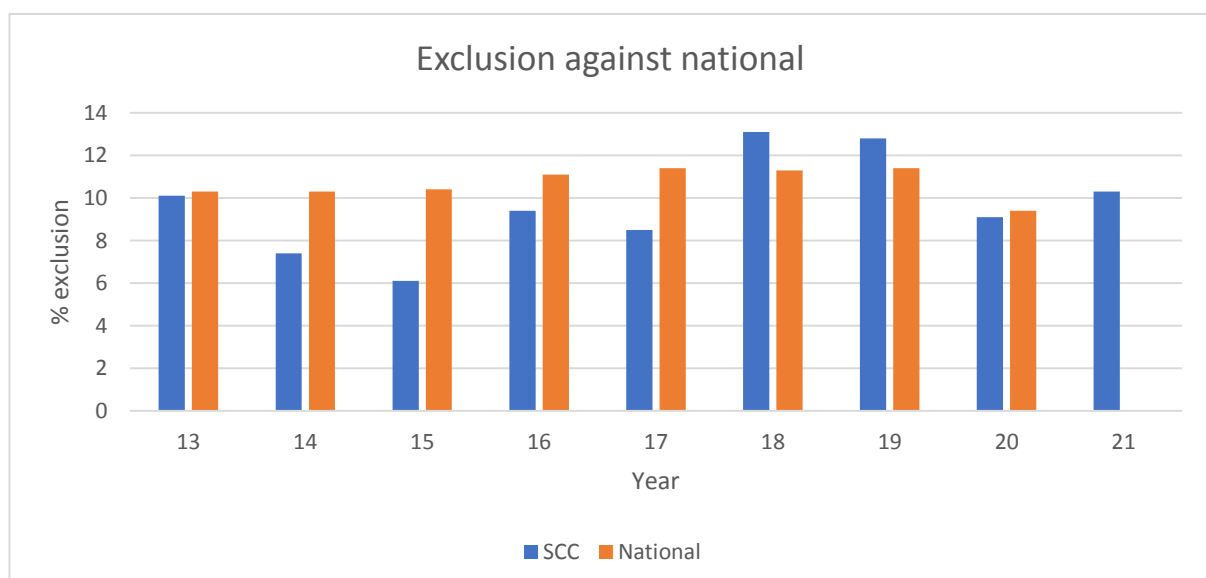
Exclusions

For the year 2021/2022

We successfully prevented the permanent exclusion of 4 pupils.

| No of pupils receiving FTE | | Incidents | No of days |
|----------------------------|----|-----------|--------------|
| In area | 14 | 25 | 37.5 (+24.5) |
| Out of area | 25 | 80 | 135(+26.0) |
| Total | 39 | 105 | 172.5(+50.5) |

10.3% of children on the school roll were subject to a fixed term exclusion. **This is 2% higher than the previous year.**



Feed Forward Activity

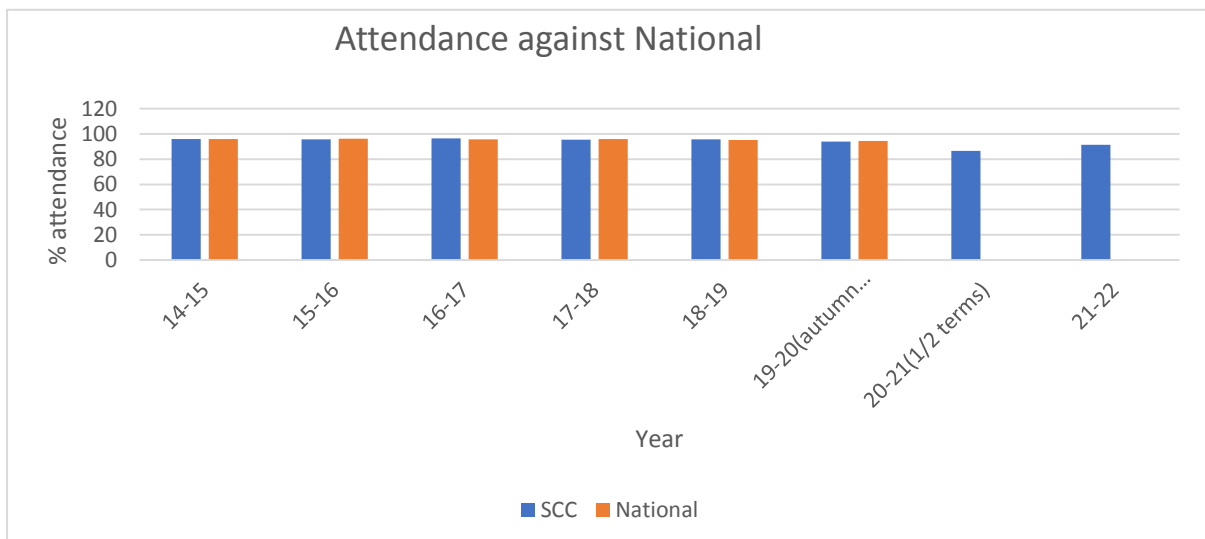
- The VS has a diverse menu of offsite provision to support our children and young people, if they have been excluded
- We continue to support our schools to consider alternatives to exclusion
- We provide a diverse menu of training in recognition that behaviour is a indication of unmet need, this is in line with national evidence around attachment, trauma informed practice and adverse childhood experiences – **Appendix 2**
- Enhanced EP continues to support colleagues navigate alternative solutions – **Appendix 3**

Attendance

Attendance is a key issue in working to close the attainment gap. Attendance data is collected by Welfarecall.

Attendance is checked weekly to ensure it is correctly coded. Abnormal recording or absence is followed up by the Virtual School with the social worker, carer and IRO. The attendance figures are analysed monthly, supported by the Senior Education Welfare Officer. Patterns of absence are followed up directly through phone calls and emails with carers, social workers, schools and IRO's.

| Year | SCC | National |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 2017-2018 | 96.0% | 95.5% |
| 2018-2019 | 95.8% | 95.3% |
| 2019-2020(autumn term only) | 94.5% | 94.5% (autumn term) |
| 2020-2021 | 86.6% (+X/C codes 96.8%) | TBC |
| 2021-2022 | 91.5(+X/C codes 96%) | TBC |

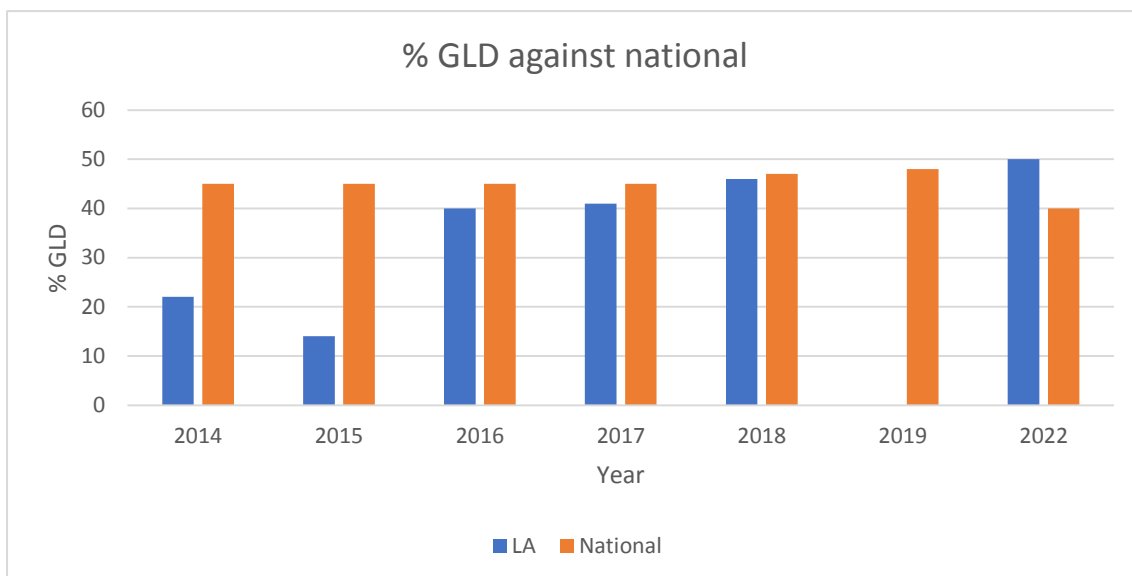


Feed Forward Activity

- The VS has a diverse menu of offsite provision to support our children and young people, if attendance is of concern
- Enhanced EP offer continues to support colleagues improve attendance
- The VS continues to be audited by EWO service to ensure we prioritise good attendance for our children and young people
- The VS contributes to the LA attendance self-assessment – **appendix 4**
- In response to our extension to duties we buy in enhanced EWO support from our grant funding.

Attainment

EYFS



KS1

| Strand | % on/above target |
|---------|-------------------|
| Reading | 40 |
| Writing | 50 |
| Maths | 50 |
| RWM | 46.7 |

KS2

| Strand | % on/above target |
|--------|-------------------|
| RWM | 33.3 |

KS4

| Measure | % of 1yr+ pupils | % of all pupils |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| %9-5 English | 24.0 | 18.2 |
| %9-5 Maths | 16.0 | 12.1 |
| %9-4 English | 44.0 | 33.3 |
| %9-4 Maths | 36.0 | 27.3 |
| % 9-5 English and Maths | 12.0 | 9.1 |
| %9-4 English and Maths | 28.0 | 21.2 |
| % 5 GCSEs 3+ | | 32.3 |
| % 5 GCSEs 4+ | | 23.8 |
| % 5 GCSEs 5+ | | 7.1 |

KS5 news

Number of Pupils 54

| Destination | Number |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Education | 38 |
| Employment | 3 |
| NEET | 14 (UAM, EOTAS, YOI) |

Qualifications received

- Health and social care pass
- Double Distinction* in Health & Social Care and B in Geography
- A* Science B in Psychology Maths E.
- Technical Cert in animal care (Distinction)
- Electrician course
- ESOL/Functional skills/other vocational

University Destinations

AT – St Louis Uni, Missouri, soccer scholarship

LR – Winchester, Sociology

LT – Winchester, Geography

SA – Solent, Sports coaching

NB – Bournemouth, Game design

SJ– Sussex, no course detail

MK – Portsmouth, Psychology

SP – Portsmouth, Biomedical Science

Pupil Premium Plus

The VSH has responsibility and accountability for making sure that there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium Plus funding to benefit children looked after by the Authority. The funding is £2410, of which the Virtual School top slices £800. It is paid termly, in arrears to schools.

The grant must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve outcomes and “diminish the difference” as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher for the school. How funding is to be spent is discussed during the child’s Personal Education Planning meeting and must be used efficiently and effectively. Due to the global pandemic discretion was given to schools to use their allocations more broadly and allocations were allowed to be carried over.

The VSH has no financial oversight of pupil premium plus for PLAC – this is paid directly to schools by central government. Schools should publish an overview of their pupil premium strategy on their website and update this annually.

Feed Forward Activity

- A PEP tracker is in place with oversight from the VSH and DHT to weekly dip sample PP+ spend
- Social care team managers and IROs will be updated monthly with any concerns related to inappropriate PP+ use
- Designated teachers will be contacted individually by the VS and Head teachers will be contacted to confirm that pupil premium plus will be withheld if PEPs are not completed. This will also be communicated in the autumn term mailing sent to all designated teachers.
- Additional recovery funding has been passported to schools in line with conditions of grant [Recovery premium funding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/recovery-premium-funding)
- Additional tutoring support has been put in place identified children and young people through VS specific funding [School-led tutoring for looked-after children: guidance for local authorities and virtual school heads - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-led-tutoring-for-looked-after-children-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-virtual-school-heads)

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

PEPs are the core means by which schools in the person of the designated teacher, social workers, carers, the young person and the Virtual School work together to ensure that they develop a PEP that reviews a pupil’s progress, identifies ongoing needs, develops targets to meet those needs and identifies the support that will be needed. Electronic PEPs were introduced in September 2017 and full training continues to be provided through the virtual school training menu of opportunity. Any school requesting additional support will have a bespoke offer tailored to their needs.

As a virtual school we have also developed a previously looked after child’s education (PLACE) plan.

This document has been produced by Southampton Virtual School as a template schools may wish to use to consolidate support for previously looked after children in line with statutory guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

And in acknowledgement of the following

The DfE's view is that

“Many children from the groups described above will have experienced grief and loss and will have had traumatic experiences in their early lives. 72% of those adopted in 2013-14 entered care due to abuse or neglect. Their needs do not change overnight and they do not stop being vulnerable just because they are in a loving home. Their experiences in early life can have a lasting impact which can affect the child many years after adoption. We therefore believe that teachers and schools have a vital role to play in helping these children emotionally, socially and educationally by providing specific support, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs”.

<https://www.pac-uk.org/department-education-response-main-queries-adopted-children-pupil-premium/>

PEPs are mandatory and must be completed termly and recorded on PARIS. It is the expectation of the VS that the PEP is reviewed by the IRO in advance of the LAC review. During academic year 2021/2022 PEPs were completed as follows:

| Term | % Completion |
|--------|--------------|
| Autumn | 99.4 |
| Spring | 99.2 |
| Summer | 98.4 |
| Total | 99.0 |

This represents an increase of 1.0% from the previous academic year.

Feed Forward activity

- The VSH meets with SLT and ACDS on a regular basis to report on concerns
- A PEP tracker is in place with oversight from the VSHT and DHT to weekly dip sample quality and compliance to time frames.
- The ePEP has been adapted in response to feedback from our children and the professionals around them
- CLA officer for PEPs is now fulltime to ensure completion and quality is sustained
- Post 16 paper PEPs will be implemented alongside the Pathway plan to promote EET activity and engagement
- VSH will communicate monthly with social care managers to ensure social works understand the importance of PEPs, their role as corporate parents and ensuring their attendance.

- A rolling programme of support is in place to support all professionals
- The importance of all of our role as Corporate parent will be underpinned during Love our Children Week and in corporate parenting e learning

Celebration Event

Over 160 children and young people received an award in the following categories

- **The Always Award** (e.g. always ready, always attends, always engages, always completes homework, classwork, always ready to learn, always tries their best, always helpful, always polite)
- **The Taking Part Award** (e.g. engagement in activities in and out of school, active participation in PEPs and target setting)
- **The Over and Above Award** (e.g. consistently goes the extra mile with academic work, friendships, extra-curricular activities)

This was the third year we have hosted the event at Paultons, this year the sun shone brightly for us, and the pop up photo booth proved a hit providing a lovely memento of the day. Hannah and Leon joined us from the participation team, alongside numerous SCC colleagues. We hope to see more nominations next year as we continue to raise the profile of participation.

Feed Forward Activity

Participation celebratory activities will continue to be promoted through the monthly newsletter – **appendices 7 and 8**

A fulltime participation officer has been recruited to support the continued development of our Children in Care Council and care leavers (Southampton Voices Unite, SVU)

Love Our Children Week will be running 26th -30th September

Projects and further training

We continue to deliver bespoke projects to support learning, these include the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Youth Options, Primary Sports, Letterbox club and challenge activities (**appendices 9-12**)

We remain proud that our children receive such personal interaction from the team

Feed Forward Activity

- The VSH is chair of SEVSHT and continues to contribute to national discussion
- The VS will continue to offer termly **DT training** using a blended approach of remote and face to face support. The training menu has been enhanced to include webinars, APPs and an electronic newsletter. A monthly forum entitled 'VS soundbites' has been added to the menu of opportunity
- The team delivered a range of training for both secondary and primary designated teachers, focussing on attachment friendly interventions – this continues to remain an ongoing priority in line with the Virtual School 2022- 2023 action plan
- Corporate parent visits will continue to be undertaken to promote a stronger strategic oversight within schools.
- All schools should have a designated **Governor** for CECYP Training was delivered to designated teachers and governors on reporting to governors and to governors by the VSHT and will continue as part of our action plan
- All new foster carers go through statutory induction training at levels 1+2. This training is supported by the Virtual School.
- Twice annually the team deliver 'Education matters'. The course runs for three days and continues to be delivered by the Virtual School team.

Appendices

Appendix 1

- Virtual School and partners

Appendix 2

- TIP Making the Difference Board Report Sept '22

Appendix 3

- Training

Appendix 4

- LA self assessment attendance

Appendix 5

- VS at a glance

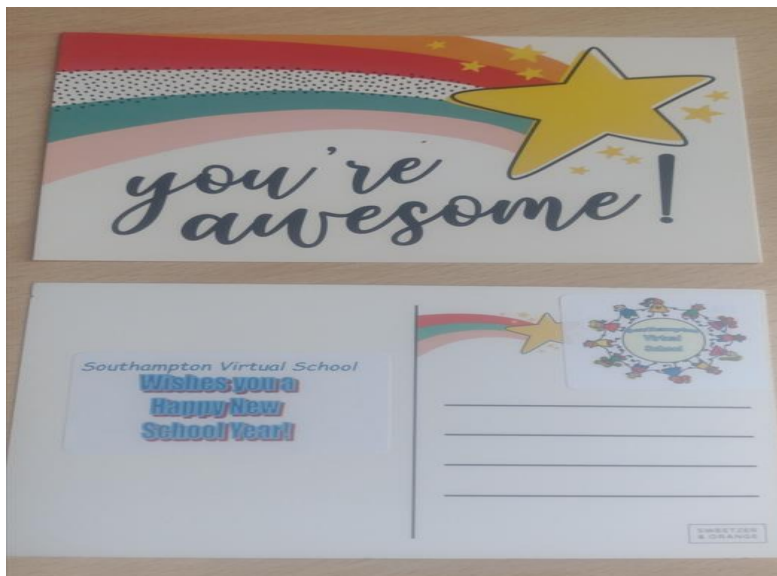
Appendix 6

- Provisional GCSE headlines

Appendix 7

- August Newsletter

Appendix 8



- September Newsletter

Appendix 9

- Youth Options Report

Appendix 10

- Primary Sports feedback

Appendix 11

- Letterbox Club

Appendix 12

- Virtual School Reading Challenge