Promoting the educational achievement of children and young people in care
Virtual School Headteacher Report 2022-2023 academic year

1.   Purpose of the report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of City of York Virtual School and the 2022/23 educational outcomes of our York children looked after (CLA). It reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for our CLA.

2.   Introduction

2.1   City of York Virtual School champions care-experienced children and young people. We work with corporate parents, carers, parents, early years settings, schools, FE colleges and other professionals to support looked after and previously looked after children so that they:

- Attend a school or setting which best meets their needs;
- Attend regularly;
- Make progress and achieve;
- Have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive;
- Have stability in home, care and education placement;
- Receive good advice and guidance to progress into further education, employment, and training and, where appropriate, university;
- Are prepared for adulthood;
- Receive recognition for their achievement and have their successes celebrated.

> Building relationships with students is by far the most important thing a teacher can do. Without a solid foundation and relationships built on trust and respect, no quality learning will happen.
> Timothy Hilton
> Beck Thompson

2.2 These key areas of work include:

- Ensuring that all initial Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings when a young person comes into care – or has turned 2 and started to attend an early years setting for the first time – are swiftly put in place to ensure that there is a clear plan for the education of the child or young person. A member of the virtual school team attends all initial PEP meetings.
- Reviewing attainment and progress data submitted through the electronic PEP system by education settings on a termly basis to identify levels of need. Advice is provided to target interventions through analysis of data to enable planned support.
- Providing challenge following PEP review submissions to ensure that an appropriately ambitious plan for education is in place according to need and liaising closely with social workers and designated teachers in these cases.
- Providing advice and guidance to designated teachers and quality assuring individual targets and support for our children and young people to accelerate their progress in education. Specific pupil level interventions are funded through Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) and the impact is reviewed as part of the PEP process.
- Strengthening partnership working with senior managers in children's social care to ensure that education is central to any decision taken about our children and young people in care.
- Closely monitoring attendance and suspensions/exclusions and implementing plans to improve engagement.

- Offering support, guidance and training to foster carers, headteachers, designated teachers, social workers and independent reviewing officers to enable them to work together to improve educational outcomes for our children and young people.
- Being proactive in working with social workers to make school applications (where a school move is unavoidable) and supporting the transition into the new educational placement.

3. Structure of the City of York Virtual School

3.1 From September 2018, the Virtual School Headteacher (VSHT) role in City of York Council has been held by Karron Young; initially this was a part-time role (0.6FTE) which became full-time in September 2020. In Sept 2021 Mrs Young also became Head of Service for the Inclusion Service in the city. At that time Dan Bodey, Inclusion Adviser, became Deputy Virtual School Headteacher and he is able to support the virtual school 0.2FTE alongside his other responsibilities towards access and inclusion. Rachel Duffield, Specialist Inclusion and Wellbeing Adviser, works full time for the virtual school providing training, advice and support for schools, carers and social workers on Attachment and Trauma. Kerry Bramwell was appointed in June 2022 as a full time PEP (Personal Education Plan) coordinator and her role includes monitoring attendance and downloading data from the PEP system. The virtual school funds 0.2FTE Educational Psychologist time (Danielle Hoyle) to provide training for schools and strategic support to the virtual school. A fulltime Specialist Learning and Employment Adviser (Sandeep Lota) is also funded by the virtual school to provide independent career advice and guidance to children in care.

3.2 All other employees within Education, Skills and SEND are, in effect, part of the virtual school team in their role as corporate parents – colleagues in school admissions, school effectiveness, school transport, statutory and non-statutory SEND teams, educational psychology, early years and childcare team and the skills team fully support the small virtual school team by prioritising care experienced children and young people within their roles.

3.3 The role of the virtual school is defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018.* York virtual school

oversees the education of all children and young people in the care of York from the age of 2 through to age 18 when they become care leavers. The virtual school also has a statutory duty to provide advice to adopters, and in Sept 2021 a further duty was added by the DfE – to promote the educational outcomes of all children with a social worker. The virtual school team sits within the Education, Skills and SEND team and is line managed by Assistant Director, Maxine Squire.

4. Cohort Information 2022-23

4.1 Data is for statutory school age children and young people who were on the roll of the Virtual School at 31.08.2023. It is presented by gender, school type and location, SEN status, length of care episode and placement stability.

Gender:

Year Group	Boys	Girls	TOTAL	%
Year R	5	5	10	5
Year 1	5	6	11	6
Year 2	5	5	10	5
Year 3	10	7	17	9
Year 4	7	8	15	8
Year 5	9	6	15	8
Year 6	8	8	16	9
Year 7	6	5	11	6
Year 8	9	9	18	10
Year 9	10	10	20	11
Year 10	12	8	20	11
Year 11	14	10	24	13
TOTAL	100	87	187	

Key Stage	Boys	Girls	TOTAL	%
Reception	5	5	10	5
KS1	10	11	21	11
KS2	34	30	63	34
KS3	25	24	49	26
KS4	26	18	44	24
TOTAL	100	87	187	

4.2 The number of children in the virtual school cohort has fallen by one to 187 in the 2022/23 academic year however the percentage of boys has risen to 53% in 2022/23 compared to 50:50 in 2021/22.

School Area:

Year Group	In York Schools	In OLA Schools
Year R	8	2
Year 1	8	3
Year 2	5	5
Year 3	10	7
Year 4	9	6
Year 5	10	5
Year 6	8	8
Year 7	7	4
Year 8	9	9
Year 9	10	10
Year 10	11	9
Year 11	14	10
TOTAL	*109*	*78*

4.3 In 2021/22 there were 116 children and young people attending schools within City of York, this number has fallen to 109 in 2022/23. There were 72 children and young people attending schools in other local authorities in 2021/22, this has risen to 78 in 2022/23. The cohort are on roll in 91 schools across the country.

School type:

Year Group	Mainstream School	Special School	Independent School	Pupil Referral Unit	Accessing some Alternative provision	Awaiting New Provision/ EOTAS	Secure Unit /YOI
Year R	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year 1	10	0	1	0	0	0	0
Year 2	10	0	0	0	1	0	0
Year 3	15	1	1	0	1	0	0
Year 4	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year 5	14	0	0	1	0	0	0
Year 6	16	0	0	0	1	0	0
Year 7	9	1	1	0	2	1	0

Year 8	14	3	1	0	2	0	0
Year 9	16	0	1	1	8	2	0
Year 10	15	0	3	1	4	1	0
Year 11	20	2	0	2	5	0	0
TOTAL	*164*	*7*	*8*	*5*	*24*	*4*	*0*

4.4 We are seeing an increasing number of children and young people across the cohort who are unable to access a full curriculum offer in mainstream classrooms and have started to track carefully the number of requests for support with some form of alternative provision for these children. There is also a rise in the number of children who are educated entirely outside a school setting (EOTAS – educated other than at school).

School placement of children in care by Ofsted rating:

	No current Ofsted rating	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding
% of children in schools	6.0%	1.7%	7.7%	65.8%	18.8%

4.5 The virtual school actively seeks placements in good or better schools. Any decision to place a child in care into a requires improvement category of school/setting must be agreed by the Virtual School Headteacher.

SEN status:

Year Group	EHCP	SEN K	*% of each Year Group with EHCP / SEN K*
Year R	0	1	*10*
Year 1	1	2	*27*
Year 2	2	1	*30*
Year 3	2	7	*53*
Year 4	4	6	*67*
Year 5	5	3	*53*
Year 6	5	2	*44*
Year 7	4	3	*64*
Year 8	6	5	*61*
Year 9	5	8	*65*
Year 10	8	5	*65*
Year 11	7	5	*50*
TOTAL	*49*	*48*	*26% EHCP/26% SEN K*

4.6 52% of the virtual school cohort have either an EHCP or are identified as needing SEN support (SEN K code) in school. 4.3% of children nationally have an EHCP according to statistics released in June 2023. 13% of children nationally were identified as needing SEN support without an EHCP.

Length of care episode:

Year Group	New into care during the academic year 2022-23	In care 12 months or more	Leaving care during the academic year 2022-23
Year R	2	10	1
Year 1	3	7	4
Year 2	0	10	1
Year 3	1	14	1
Year 4	2	18	1
Year 5	1	13	5
Year 6	1	16	2
Year 7	0	11	0
Year 8	2	17	2
Year 9	3	16	2
Year 10	3	18	1
Year 11	8	19	2
TOTAL	*26*	*169*	*22*

4.7 Whilst the overall cohort has remained stable in terms of numbers, the virtual school has to respond swiftly to new care episodes and those leaving care to ensure the cohort tracking, and support required by schools, is timely. Please note that these numbers only refer to children of statutory school age during 2022/23 academic year. There were 269 children and young people in care aged 0-18 on 31.8.23.

Placement moves:

Year Group	Number of children moving placement at least once during the academic year	Number of children in placement 12 months or more at 31.8.23
Year R	1	10
Year 1	0	9
Year 2	2	9
Year 3	3	13
Year 4	1	16
Year 5	2	12
Year 6	3	14
Year 7	2	10
Year 8	2	16
Year 9	6	14
Year 10	5	14
Year 11	4	17
TOTAL	*31*	*154*

4.8 There were only 31 children of school age who moved at least once during the academic year 2022/23 which is a huge reduction compared to the previous year when 65 children moved.

Attendance:

SOMETIMES,
IT ONLY TAKES A SINGLE
TEACHER TO TURN A
CHILD'S LIFE AROUND.

SOME CHILDREN WILL
COME TO SCHOOL TODAY
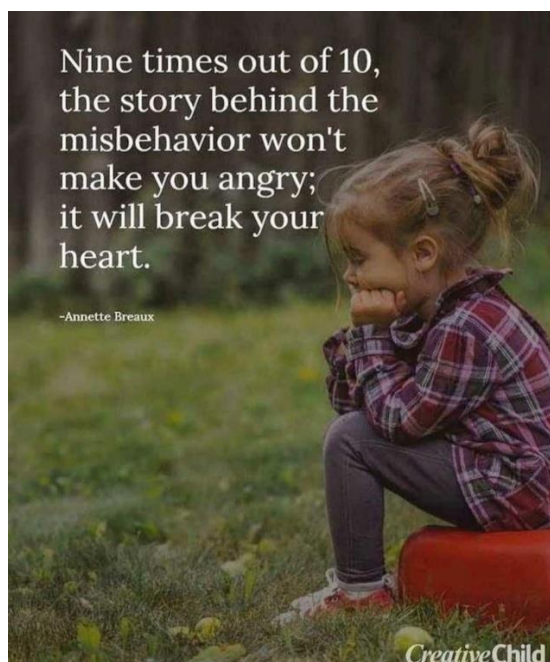BECAUSE OF THAT TEACHER.

BE THAT TEACHER,
EVERY DAY.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Overall	84.4%	86.5%	85.3%	88.9%
Persistent absence	50% **	44% *	27%	22%
Number of children with above 90% attendance	88	110	137	130

** Covid Lockdown and school closures * Covid disruption continued

4.9   All schools promote good attendance: it is a national priority. If a child has lower than 90% attendance they are deemed to be persistently absent from school. Schools report attendance marks to the virtual school via the secure epeponline platform provided by eGov Solutions Ltd. This allows the virtual school to closely monitor any dips in attendance and to work with schools, social workers and carers to identify barriers to school attendance. It is expected that schools create attendance targets within termly PEP reviews for those children and young people causing concern, and put support in place to improve this. There is a city-wide attendance strategy within York with a graduated response to improving attendance and a multi-agency partnership focusing on this key priority for our children and young people.

4.10 Attendance during 2022/23 rose to almost 90% overall which is definitely heading in the right direction and is a reflection of the impact of the PEP coordinator role who acts as attendance officer for the virtual school, liaising closely with designated teachers and social workers. The Inclusion Adviser leads on city-wide attendance as part of his role.

Suspensions/Exclusions:

Nine times out of 10, the story behind the misbehavior won't make you angry; it will break your heart.

-Annette Breaux

CreativeChild

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Suspensions (number of children)	13	12	24	26
Suspensions (number of total days lots)	62.5	68	121	230
Suspensions (number of children with repeated suspensions)	11	8	11	16
Permanent Exclusions	0	1	0	1

4.11 14% of the cohort received a suspension during 2022/23 academic which is a 1% rise on 2021/22. All the children and young people who were issued with repeated suspensions are also SEN (8 EHCP and 8 SEN K). National data for 2021/22 reports that 6.91% of all children in school were issued with suspensions. Rates for pupils with EHCP or SEN K nationally are significantly higher nationally (17.6% EHCP/18.6% SEN K).

4.12 Reducing fixed term suspensions remains a key priority. The virtual school team responds swiftly to provide training and support to schools both in groups and on case-by-case basis. The virtual school Specialist Inclusion and Wellbeing Adviser and the Deputy Head of the Virtual School meet weekly to discuss suspensions and provide bespoke advice and intervention. Advice and/or training is offered to school staff to adopt attachment aware approaches to respond differently to challenging behaviour as opposed to the traditional behaviourist approaches contained within the majority of schools' behaviour policies. Some children and young people require a reduced timetable for a period of time, or access to alternative provision. Any changes to full time classroom teaching are negotiated with the virtual school. It should be noted that the number of permanent exclusions issued to children in care is well below the national average (0.005% of the virtual school cohort compared to 0.08% overall nationally).

4.13 Schools and settings are encouraged to undertake attachment and trauma awareness training delivered by the Educational Psychology (EP) team or external providers. Pupil Premium Plus funding can be used by schools to access training. During 2022/23 fourteen schools accessed whole staff training in attachment and trauma awareness delivered by the EP team. In addition to this, the Specialist Inclusion and Wellbeing Adviser supported many teams of staff around understanding and responding to the needs of individual children and young people who struggle with accessing mainstream classrooms.

5. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

5.1 The social worker should arrange a child/young person's first PEP within 10 school days of the new care status. Timeliness of initial PEPs in York was an area for improvement and to effect a change in performance during the academic year 2022/23 the virtual

school has prioritized ensuring that either the PEP coordinator, or the virtual school headteacher, attends all initial PEP meetings.

5.2 The PEP templates are bespoke to City of York. There are early years, primary, secondary and post 16 PEP templates, which each show the evolving educational journey of the child/young person.

5.3 PEP review meetings take place three times each academic year and it is the joint responsibility of the setting/school and social worker to ensure this happens. All York children and young people in care have a PEP document with up-to-date educational information. Additionally, interim review meetings take place when there are significant issues impacting on the education of the child/young person.

5.4 The consistency of PEPS is achieved through the quality assurance process which is predominantly the responsibility of the virtual school headteacher and PEP coordinator. They read every PEP each term and provide a quality assurance judgment summary and feedback to the setting/school.

5.5 Microsoft Teams enables many PEPs to be held virtually, whilst others are held in the school setting. This hybrid model enabled the virtual school to maintain and develop relationships, and to attend more PEP meetings than capacity allowed in previous years where required. Social workers prefer a hybrid PEP meeting to make efficient use of time, reducing travel to out of area schools. Usually in these cases the school/setting invites carers, children and young people in person and the social worker joins the meeting virtually.

5.6 There is a section where the child/young person's thoughts and feelings are recorded prior to all meetings and the virtual school works together with the social worker and school to respond to their views. Children and young people are always invited to attend their PEP review meeting in person. Many choose to provide their views in advance and prefer not to leave lessons.

5.7 The electronic PEP contract was retendered during 2022 and awarded to eGov Solutions Ltd resulting in budget savings and

additional functionality in terms of data dashboards and analytics functions. Training has been provided to schools and social workers and is ongoing to support this change in electronic platform. PEPs are completed electronically and are quality assured and signed off by the virtual school team. To support pupil aspiration and achievement Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding is also requested through this system and these targets are reviewed during the PEP meetings. The completed PEP is then uploaded onto Children's Mosaic.

5.8   For reporting processes, the virtual school does not usually finalise PEPs until they are completed to a good standard through the quality assurance process. However, there were some instances in 2022/23 where the virtual school 'forced complete' a small number of PEPs which had not been improved following quality assurance feedback. For 2023/24 a new function has been added within the electronic system to alert designated teachers that a PEP requires improvement before it can be signed off by the virtual school.

6.   Outcomes

6.1   Raising attainment and improving the life chances of children in care is the most important priority of any virtual school. The data within this report is for children who have been in care for at least 12 months during the academic year 2022/23. The Annexes accompanying the report show benchmark data for EYFS, KS1, KS2 and KS4. There are also case studies in Annex H with examples of the impact of the work of the virtual school on children and young people's outcomes. Each key stage has a narrative comment below:

7.   Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

7.1   All 3 and 4 year old children are entitled to a DfE funded part-time early education place within an early years setting. Policy initiatives such as funded early education for disadvantaged two year olds and the early years pupil premium for disadvantaged children offer huge potential to improve access to – and the quality of – early education for children in care. The vast majority of children in care aged 2 to 4-years-old access funded early

education and care in York. Where they are not accessing their entitlement, the reason is known and discussed with the child's social worker.

7.2   The early years PEP is initiated as soon as a two year old takes up an early education place. The virtual school, family information service and early years funding team work proactively with social workers to ensure that conversations are held with carers to identify good early years settings with places for two year olds, and that 2 year funding codes are issued to carers/social workers to enable immediate take up of places.

7.3   The virtual school works closely with school admissions and social workers to ensure that applications for school places for Reception are planned well in advance. Where children live outside the city the virtual school provides support for social workers to make applications in other local authorities.

7.4   Outcomes in 2023 analysis shows that children at the end of the early years foundation stage in York did better overall than children in care regionally and nationally. There were 8 children in the cohort in 2023 who had been in care for at least 12 months. 50% reached GLD (Good Level of Development) within the early years foundation stage profile. This compares well to regional (39%) and national (40%) data. However there remains a gap between children in care and their peers; 70% of children in York overall achieved GLD. All of the 8 children in the cohort last year are living with connected carer family members with plans for permanence and a discharge of Care Orders.

8.   Key Stage One (KS1)

8.1   Outcomes at KS1 improved on 2022, particularly in the Year One Phonics Screening check where 86% of the cohort met the standard. Early reading skills have been a key priority for the virtual school and it is especially pleasing to see the results of this focus starting to bear fruit. Overall, in York 80% of children passed the phonics check – our children did better! This compares extremely well to children in care both regionally (65%) and nationally (61%).

8.2   At the end of Year Two, 44% of the cohort achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths combined. Both these measures are better than regional (33%) and national (31%) data for children in care. In York, 56% of children achieved RWM combined.

9.   Key Stage Two (KS2)

9.1   Performance at KS2 is reported as a combination of attainment and progress. Both attainment and progress at KS2 are improving however this is still a priority for the city. Results are better than in 2022 - heading in the right direction. There were 16 children in the cohort in 2023 who had been in care for at least 12 months. Reading: 31%, Writing: 56%, Maths: 56%. This compares regionally – Reading: 52%, Writing: 50%, Maths: 51% and nationally – Reading: 52%, Writing: 43%, Maths: 45%.

9.2   It should be noted that the KS2 SAT Reading paper was particularly challenging for children in 2023 and 6 children did not achieve the expected standard by one scaled score point – were they to have achieved the standard the reading result would have been 63%. The combined RWM result would have been 31%. Instead, it is 19%. This is significantly below regional and national results for other children in care and remains a priority. Given the improving results at KS1, sustaining progress at KS2 is an issue for York children in care. It remains a key priority for the virtual school.

9.3   The virtual school response to these results is to ensure that PEPs provide clear information about each child in KS2 with planned interventions to ensure children make progress throughout each year across KS2. Designated teacher training focusses on high quality targets generally however, it is recognized that there needs to be a more targeted approach. 50% of the cohort in 2023 had identified SEND which adds a layer of additional challenge in terms of attainment for these learners.

10. Key Stage Four (KS4)

10.1 There were twelve young people in the year 11 cohort at the end of the academic year 2022/23 who had been in care for more than 12 months. Three young people have an EHCP:
- 3 young people achieved both English and Maths GCSE at Grade 4 or above;
- 1 young person achieved Grade 4 English but not Maths;
- 3 young people achieved Grade 4 Maths but not English.

10.2 The overall attainment 8 score for the cohort was 27.9 which is higher than regional (23.6) and national (24.8). City of York attainment 8 score for all pupils was 49.2. The virtual school will be commissioning the support of a progress leader (independent provider) to add capacity to our team 45 days over the 2023/24 academic year focussing on improving outcomes in KS4 by responding to data from the PEP reviews and proactively maintaining contact with secondary school designated teachers in between PEPs.

10.4 All of the Y11 cohort had a Post 16 destination planned for Sept 2023. They received support, advice and guidance from their schools, SEND services and the Specialist Learning and Employment Adviser team.

10.5 The virtual school held a celebration event for the class of 2023 inviting all young people who finished statutory school (Y11), or who had completed Level 3/A Level courses in Y12/3 and who graduated from university. This will become an annual event going forward.

11. Summary of effectiveness

11.1 Attainment and outcomes data has improved in all key stages during 2022/23.

11.2 The cohort is well known by the virtual school team. Children and young people's progress is tracked throughout the year and the virtual school responds swiftly to requests for advice, support and training from schools, settings, social workers and carers.

11.3 All children and young people in care have a PEP from age 2 until the age of 18 unless they are in employment; these are reviewed termly by settings, schools and colleges and all PEPs are quality

assured by the virtual school to ensure consistent application of standards. PEP completion in termly timescale is improving and monitored monthly using both the epep system and KPI dashboard.

11.4 The monitoring of attendance by the virtual school is strong and concerns are addressed promptly. Overall attendance for the 2022-23 academic year was 89% which was an improvement on 2021-22 (85%).

11.5 The vast majority of the cohort attend DfE funded mainstream schools. Permanent exclusion and school moves are rare. The virtual school ensures that positive relationships are developed and sustained with all settings, schools and FE Colleges (over 130 different organisations). Stability in education is a key priority and any change of setting always involves the virtual school to provide advice and support.

11.6 The Pupil Premium Plus Policy allows the virtual school to ensure that support for children and young people in care is tailored to their needs. Many children are thriving in their school/setting; making progress and achieving well. The electronic PEP allows for systematic application, authorisation and monitoring of PP+ funding for individual pupils so that support can be put in place swiftly and in response to levels of need.

11.7 The virtual school responds quickly to requests for advice from adopters and has developed good relationships with adopter support groups and individual parents.

11.8 The virtual school, and wider education teams, work together to ensure that the needs of children and young people with a social worker are visible to the education system to promote their educational outcomes and engagement with learning.

12. Priorities for 2023/24

12.1 Continue to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence across the cohorts.

12.2 Develop further strategies to support children through placement moves to address potential barriers to accessing learning with a focus on those children and young people at risk of suspension/exclusion.

12.3 Sustain and continue to improve KS2 outcomes and progress.

12.4 Continue to develop a shared understanding of processes, timescales and expectations across the wider service, in particular surrounding SEND, use of alternative provision and reduced timetables.

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

"OUT OF DIFFICULTIES GROW MIRACLES."
LY Creations

Annex A – EYFSP Benchmark 2023
Annex B – Y1 Phonics Benchmark 2023

Annex C – KS1 Benchmark 2023
Annex D – KS2 Benchmark 2023
Annex E – KS2 Progress Benchmark 2023
Annex F – KS4 Att8/Prog8 Benchmark 2023
Annex G – KS4 Benchmark 2023
Annex H – Case Studies

<u>Abbreviations</u>

CLA – children looked after
PEP – personal education plan
PP+ - pupil premium plus
VSHT – virtual school headteacher
FTE – full time equivalent
SEND – special educational needs and disabilities
DfE – Department for Education
KS1-4 – key stages one to four
EOTAS – educated other than at school
EHCP – education, health and care plan
SEN K – special needs support code
EYFS – early years foundation stage
GLD – good level of development
RWM – reading, writing and maths
GCSE – general certificate of education
KPI – key performance indicator
FE – further education