

Stockport Virtual School & College Headteacher Annual Report 2023-2024



"Look what was sown by the stars At night across the fields I
am not defined by scars But by the incredible ability to heal"

Lemn Sissay, My Name Is Why

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Introduction

Overview

Stockport Virtual School & College exists to support and champion children and young people who may be a child in our care, a care leaver or being supported by a social worker to be ambitious and successful within education, experiencing a first-class educational experience starting at any point and without limits.

This is done in true partnership with all Stockport Family and wider council colleagues, schools, colleges and nurseries, and most importantly with our children and young people, families and carers.

The work and priorities of Stockport Virtual School and the Virtual School Headteacher is informed by a variety of statutory and non-statutory guidance.

This includes:

- Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children
- Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension
- The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children

The Virtual School and College Offer

Stockport Virtual School and College provides a wide ranging and evolving service for the most vulnerable children of Stockport.

For children in our care, we provide holistic educational support from nursery to post 16. We work to ensure that regardless of circumstances, our children and young people have a secure and stable educational placement which meets their needs and supports their aspirations. Our team of Teaching and Learning Coordinators use the PEP process to monitor the attendance, educational targets and outcomes for children and young people in our care and, where issues are identified, intervene and offer support to the team around the child to resolve this. We recognise that children in our care are more likely to experience instability in their school placement and we support schools, social workers and carers to minimise this instability, ensuring any school move is well planned with places being secured swiftly when they are needed as well as supporting to mitigate the impact of any instability should it arise. We offer expert advice and guidance to our social workers, IROs and carers to ensure they feel empowered to be the educational champion for our children and support them to achieve their very best. Where targeted support is needed, we offer direct interventions supported by our team of education support workers or via our commissioned services such as Speech and Language Therapists and Educational Psychology. We work with designated teachers and senior leaders in our schools to advocate for children in our care and ensure that colleagues in schools understand the specific needs of our children and work with us to provide for them in a personalised and inclusive way. We offer a variety of training to school colleagues to support them to achieve this.

For our care experienced young people at Post 16, we have developed a dedicated team to support them in their transition to adulthood. We are committed to ensuring that all post 16 care experienced young people have the support of the PEP process to ensure they have all they need for their chosen educational pathway. Our post 16 team work closely with their teaching and learning colleagues to ensure a planned post 16 pathway is in place before each young person leaves Year 11. If circumstances change the PEP process is used to bring services together to identify the right pathway back to education or employment. We work closely with colleagues in leaving care and careers to identify suitable pathways for our young people to allow them to achieve their goals. Where appropriate we offer additional advice on pathways to university and help our care experienced young people recognise that this is a possibility for them. We run a supported apprenticeship service.

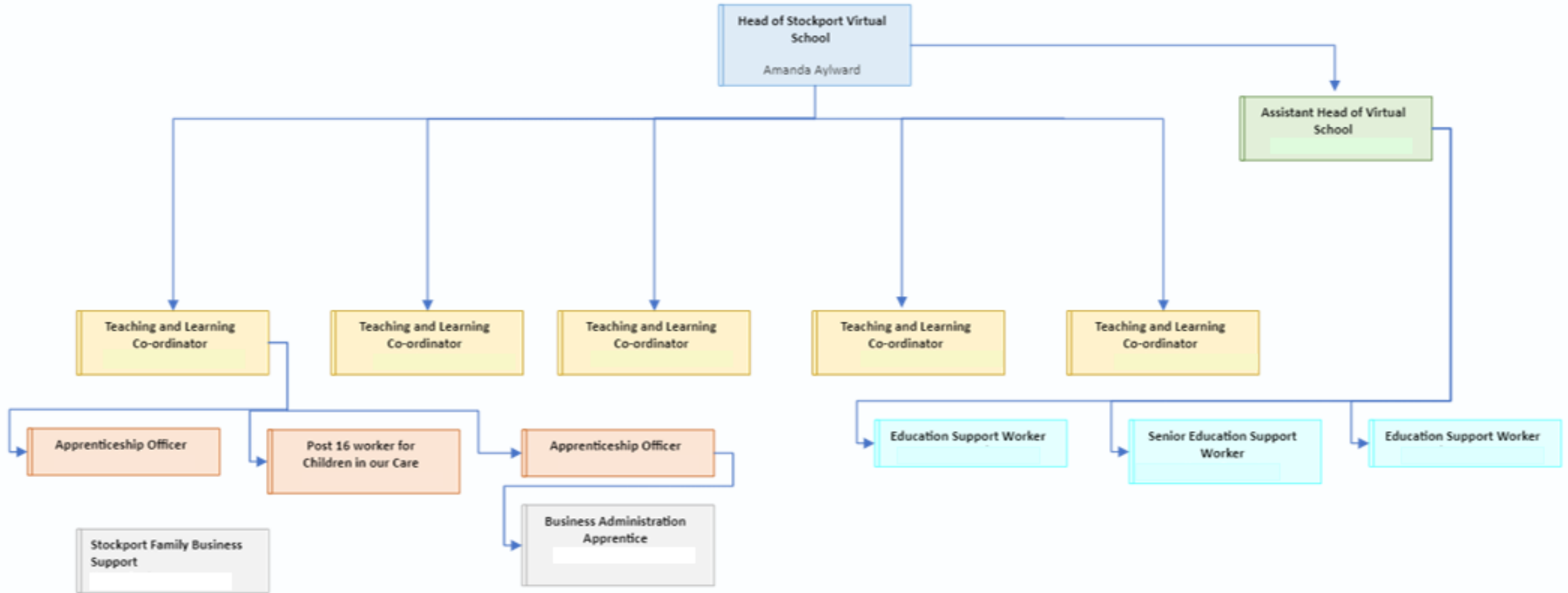
For other vulnerable children and young people and those who have previously been in our care, we have a collaborative approach to support to ensure there is readily available advice and guidance to promote positive educational experiences for all vulnerable children and highlight their specific needs. The Virtual School Head attends a variety of multi-agency panels, to ensure that social vulnerabilities are always considered during educational decision making. We have a dedicated Teaching and Learning Coordinator to add an additional layer of support for carers of children who have previously been in our care. This offer of support is also available to families of children who are being cared for in kinship care arrangements, without designated child in our care status.

At a strategic level, the Virtual School Head Teacher ensures that success for Stockport's vulnerable children and young people who are both in care and supported at other levels, is viewed as the family business by leaders and elected members across the council.



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Virtual School and College Team Structure



What are we most proud of this year?



The consistency and improvement of our PEPs following work with schools and social work teams and investment in an electronic system – thanks to everyone who has adapted and bought into this more substantive and robust process which will improve outcomes for our young people.

Our young people! We work with them every day and they never fail to amaze us with their ambition, resilience and kindness.



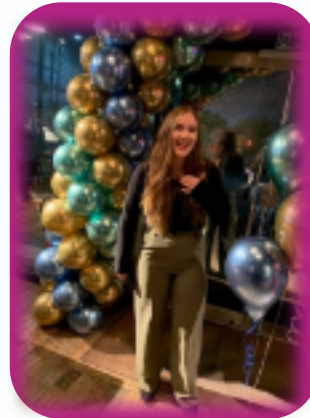
Our Year 11 GCSE results – the best ever!

The tracking and monitoring of all groups within Virtual School and College cohorts alongside the support of tracking with Youth Justice Service cohorts

Successful recruitment and expansion to the team including a dedicated EHCP co-ordinator for children in care, a further supported apprenticeship worker and a supported apprentice within our team.

The relationships we are making with our foster carers and residential homes and our ability to work successfully together to promote the education of our children and their future outcomes.

The multi-disciplinary working within Stockport Family and representation of Virtual School on panels or meetings such as Legal gateway, ICEP, SEND resource panel, adoption subgroups and Youth Justice Board.



We held our first post 16 celebration event following feedback from our fabulous children in our care celebration event to tailor to appropriate age groups. The feedback was excellent and we believe we now have two incredible events a year worthy of our young people in our care.



Executive Summary

What have we delivered?

- Highest GCSE results for a year 11 cohort
- Increase in PEPs held on time 98% for school age children
- Introduced electronic PEPS from age two
- Commissioned designated EHCP Co-ordinator improving timeliness of decisions
- No permanent exclusions of children in our care
- Significant development of VS Post 16 team and Post 16 opportunities
- Partnership work with Trafford Group College to ringfence courses for care experienced young people
- Engagement within different areas of the council with corporate parenting recognising our care experienced children working in the 'family business'
- Successful apprentice appointments within Virtual School team
- Expansion of celebration events
- Secured increasing number of ESOL courses for our separated young people cohorts
- Established policy, processes and resources for our separated young people
- Successful success for life cohort with Manchester University
- Close working with Adoption Counts including participation on working groups and adoption panels
- Training opportunities for Designated teachers, school governors, foster carers
- Teachers in Virtual School members of local school governing bodies and/or delivering extra-curricular activities
- Designated teacher to work with all internal residential homes
- Supported an increased number of extra –curricular activities plus international school trips
- Increased number of apprenticeships available to care experienced, young carers or young people with an EHCP
- Raised the profile of Virtual School and College within Stockport Family and council through reporting and celebrating success



Executive Summary

What have been our challenges?

- Increasing number of children in our care
- Children moving homes resulting in moving school
- Sufficiency of specialist school places
- Children entering our care at an older age
- Children in independent residential care provisions receiving appropriate knowledgeable and aspirational support and guidance
- Increase in UASC creating sufficiency challenges for ESOL provision
- PP+ funding going directly to schools not Virtual School for PLAC and vulnerable cohorts, somewhat limiting ability to proactively and creatively support this group
- Permanent exclusions of children in vulnerable groups other than children in our care
- Suspensions of vulnerable children leading to poor attendance and engagement in schools
- Data systems not speaking to each other (Youth Justice and some attendance systems)
- Prescriptive bail conditions preventing attendance at school

What do we still need to do?

- Maintain and improve outcomes for children in Year 11
- Improve KS2 outcomes
- Embed new roles within post 16 team
- Continue to work with colleagues within the council to provide work experience, apprenticeship and job opportunities for care experienced and SEND learners
- Continue to raise the profile of the whole council's corporate parenting responsibilities for children in care to embed their success as part of 'the family business'



Who are the children in our care - 2023-24?

| NC Year Group | Number of Children in our care | | | Gender | | Minority Ethnicity ¹ | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | LA (Local Authority) | OOA | Total | Boys | Girls | No's | % |
| E2 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 7.7 |
| N1 | 7 | 6 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 38.5 |
| N2 | 15 | 5 | 20 | 14 | 6 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Rec | 12 | 6 | 18 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 16.7 |
| Y1 | 17 | 6 | 23 | 12 | 11 | 2 | 8.7 |
| Y2 | 18 | 2 | 20 | 8 | 12 | 3 | 15.0 |
| Y3 | 17 | 1 | 18 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 11.1 |
| Y4 | 20 | 4 | 24 | 16 | 8 | 4 | 16.7 |
| Y5 | 18 | 6 | 24 | 10 | 14 | 4 | 16.7 |
| Y6 | 20 | 6 | 26 | 14 | 12 | 4 | 15.4 |
| Y7 | 26 | 9 | 35 | 19 | 16 | 4 | 11.4 |
| Y8 | 31 | 6 | 37 | 18 | 19 | 2 | 5.4 |
| Y9 | 22 | 6 | 28 | 17 | 11 | 7 | 25.0 |
| Y10 | 37 | 10 | 47 | 25 | 22 | 10 | 21.3 |
| Y11 | 36 | 12 | 48 | 27 | 21 | 9 | 18.8 |
| Y12 | 34 | 33 | 67 | 43 | 24 | 29 | 43.3 |
| Y13 | 35 | 32 | 67 | 40 | 27 | 24 | 35.8 |
| Y14 | 32 | 35 | 67 | 38 | 29 | 16 | 23.9 |
| Total | 403 | 192 | 595 | 338 | 257 | 133 | 22.4 |

The following slides provide an overview of the demographics of our children in care cohort for the academic year 2023-24.

Green Shading highlights the demographics for those in Foundation Stage, SATs & GCSE cohorts.

Where do children in our care go to school?

| | LA Number | OOA Number | <i>Total Stockport children in our care</i> (Number/Percentage) | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|--|-------------|
| Mainstream | 210 | 50 | 260 | 74.7 |
| PRU | 19 | 0 | 19 | 5.5 |
| Day Special | 42 | 19 | 61 | 17.5 |
| Residential | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0.6 |
| No provision | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1.7 |

Stockport Virtual School and College are committed to ensuring all children in our care can attend a supportive school which meets their needs.

We are proud that 74% of our children attend mainstream provisions and we work with our schools to be inclusive and trauma informed in their approach to ensure that all vulnerable children can thrive alongside their peers.

Where mainstream school is not appropriate we offer support to ensure provision is ambitious and appropriate.

78% of our children in care are educated within Stockport schools, providing us with easier routes to offer support and challenge to ensure the very best for our children in care.

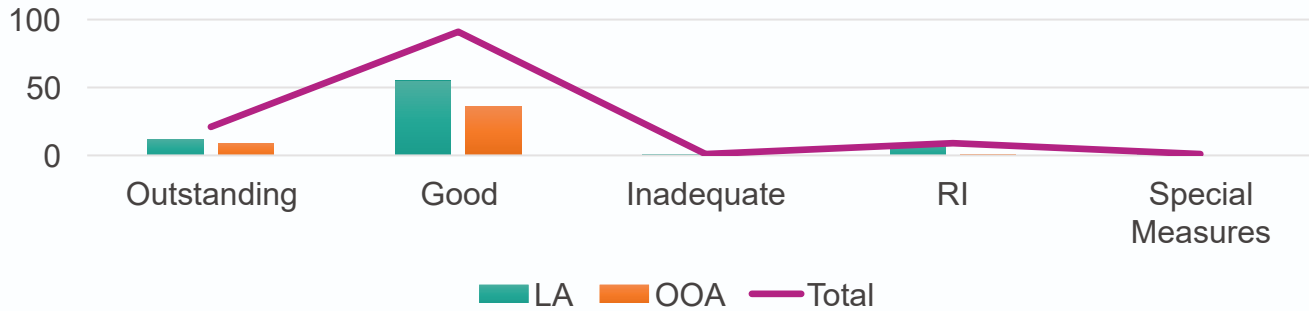
We monitor pupils placed in out of area sschools closely and work with colleagues in schools and other LAs to ensure the barrier of distance does not prevent access to support that is needed.



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Where do children in our care go to school?

Ofsted Ratings of Schools Attended by Children in Our Care - 2023-24



School and Placement Changes for Children in Our Care

The table below summarises the number of school and placement changes for children in our care over a 3-year period. Following a spike in 2022-23, the number of school placement moves has begun to reduce. However, reducing it further remains a key priority as evidence shows that improved school stability has a hugely positive impact on outcomes.

| | 2021/2022 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | No. of Changes | No. of Changes | No. of Changes |
| Change of Care Placement | 103 | 94 | 98 |
| Change of School Placement | 36 | 60 | 52 |

The Virtual School and College actively promote school stability and minimal school movement outside of key phase transfer for all children in our care. We collaborate with social care colleagues to ensure school continuity is considered when care planning decisions are made. Education colleagues from Virtual School and SEND are represented at a fortnightly panel where care placement changes are reviewed and education input and advice is given.

When a new school placement is required, the Virtual School and College actively support social workers and carers to identify the best possible education setting for our young people.

Teaching and Learning Coordinators attend PEPs for children at key stage transfers to ensure informed school applications are made.

Applications to schools with good or outstanding OFSTED ratings are prioritised. However, if a school is identified with an OFSTED rating of less than good, the Virtual School Head Teacher will be asked to confirm that they are satisfied the school is able to meet the needs of the child.

Where children already attend schools that are rated as less than good, attendance at PEPs are prioritised by the team so that additional support can be offered and we are assured that educational support is the best it can be.

Analysis – School placement for children in our care

What we did

- Virtual School representation on decision making panels such as legal gateway, where children may be coming into care are discussed, allowing (where agreed) cases to be allocated to Virtual School and College team prior to care proceedings. This has ensured more timely support of Virtual School Teaching and Learning Coordinators and swifter responses to educational issues for children coming into our care.
- Appointment of dedicated EHCP Co-ordinator to oversee EHCPs for children in our care. This has already seen the reduction of time waiting for school placements when reliant on an EHCP review or consultation.
- Rigour and priority of paperwork submitted to Integrated Care, Education and Placement Panel (ICEP) to ensure the impact of education is always considered in the decision making process, and educational advice and challenge is readily available.
- The introduction of the concept of “No Wrong School.” Three young people have started at placements linked to this programme. Robust analysis of this project will follow next academic year, however early signs are optimistic.

Challenges we faced

- Children and young people moving homes resulting in a forced change of school place due to location rather than educational need.
- Sufficiency of special school placements across the country resulting in delay in securing appropriate, full time, school settings for complex young people.
- Children moving to other local authorities, sometimes leading to transfer of plans , resulting in the need to rely on other services.
- Communication with services outside of Stockport can be challenging and our young people are not always prioritised in the way we are able to when they are overseen by Stockport services.
- Ability to influence decision making in out of area schools when searching for school placements. Delay caused by statutory procedures when directing school places.

Priorities moving forward

- To work with the New Beginnings team to ensure schools are appropriate and consistent for children returning to live with parents.
- Develop “No Wrong School” concept in partnership with the Headteacher at Highfields College.
- Continued focus with social care colleagues, IRO’s and foster carers around importance of remaining at a consistent school wherever possible.
- Continued attendance at key decision making panels such as legal gateway and ICEP.
- Co-production of dedicated policies and practice guidance for changes of schools to ensure consistency of practice across education and social care.



What do you like most about school?

Forest Schools and the lunches.
(Year 10 SEMH Provision)

Sports and P.E. are my favourite subjects at school I am really happy that it's health and sports week this week. I am doing 100 meter race and long jump at the sports day.
(Year 5 resource provision within mainstream)

Learning new stuff and meeting new people
(Year 10 SEMH specialist school)

Swimming in Stockport, boxing/ contact sport, gym membership (Year 9 high school, separated young person)

Food technology and lots of friends
(Year 9 High School)

I enjoyed Forest Schools, I like to be outside learning, I would like to do this more. I like playing in the sand it makes me feel calm and relaxed.
(Year 5 resource provision within mainstream)

My friends, the teachers, the lessons.
(Year 7 high school)

Everything - support. LSA's, classes
(Year 10 high school)

School attendance for children in our care

ANNUAL AVERAGE ATTENDANCE (%) 2023-24

| | EYFS | KS1 | KS2 | KS3 | KS4 | Total |
|-------|------|------|-----|------|-----|-------|
| LA | 95 | 94.5 | 94 | 87 | 75 | 89 |
| OOA | 97 | 96.5 | 92 | 96 | 77 | 92 |
| Total | 96 | 95.5 | 93 | 91.5 | 76 | 90.5 |

The data on the following slides breaks down the school attendance for children in our care who have been in care for a full term at the time of the data capture.

The Virtual School and College closely monitors attendance for all children in our care. We use our live attendance monitoring system Looked After Call to track attendance trends over time as well as to identify short term attendance concerns such as suspensions. This allows us to offer proactive support and appropriate challenge when attendance becomes a concern.

School attendance for children in our care

PERSISTENT ABSENCE (PA) DATA

The persistent absence threshold is met when a child has less than 90% attendance at school. The table below provides a three-year overview of the number of children in our care who have been persistently absent.

| Academic Year | Autumn Term 23 | | | Spring Term 24 | | | Summer Term 24 | | | Annual Average % PA |
|---------------|----------------|-----|-----------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| | LA | OOA | Total number of Children PA | LA | OOA | Total number of Children PA | LA | OOA | Total number of Children PA | |
| 2021/22 | 38 | 13 | 51 | 51 | 23 | 74 | 46 | 26 | 72 | 24% |
| 2022/23 | 48 | 22 | 70 | 57 | 22 | 79 | 69 | 27 | 96 | 28% |
| 2023/24 | 57 | 12 | 69 | 68 | 12 | 80 | 77 | 15 | 92 | 26.7% |

- Persistent absence reduced in the academic year 2023-24, after a spike in 2022-23. However, it is still too high and remains a core priority for the Virtual School and College.
- We are beginning to see the benefits of discrete monitoring of persistent absent students and allocated education support workers to engage students who are missing school persistently, to identify barriers and support them back into school.



School suspensions of children in our care

Fixed Term Suspension

The table below illustrates the number of children in our care who received at least one fixed term suspension, last academic year.

| | Number of Children with a Fixed Term Suspension | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | EYFS | KS1 | KS2 | KS3 | KS4 | Total |
| LA Schools | 0 | 2 | 4 | 22 | 16 | 44 |
| OOA Schools | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 10 |
| Total | 0 | 2 | 7 | 24 | 21 | 54 |

Permanent Exclusion

We are pleased to report that there have been no permanent exclusions in Stockport for children in our care. This is the result of partnership working between the Virtual School team and our designated teachers and headteachers to support proactively when a child becomes at risk of permanent exclusion. The Virtual School Head works hard at a strategic level through attending forums nationally and locally to promote inclusive and trauma informed practice, raising awareness of the impact of exclusion on vulnerable children and seeking alternatives to this.

Fixed Term Suspension

The number of children receiving fixed term suspensions has marginally increased this academic year (from 49-54), with a spike in Key Stage 3 and 4 (which is in line with 2022-23). Whilst we expect more suspensions in secondary schools, it is something which we are actively working to reduce, both at a strategic and operational level.

It is also a concern that we have seen two students at Key Stage 1 receive fixed term suspensions. While this is something which is becoming more common in other GM boroughs, close monitoring and collaboration with our primary schools will be a continued focus to prevent our youngest, most vulnerable children experiencing suspension.

Analysis – Attendance for children in our care

What we did

- Reduced persistent absenteeism for children in our care.
- Commissioned live data system (Looked After Call) to be able to respond swiftly to attendance concerns.
- Introduced a first day response when a suspension has occurred to reduce the length of suspension.
- Attendance at reintegration meetings following suspension to offer support to ensure a positive return to school.
- Collaborative working with Education Welfare Service to support vulnerable children who are not in care cohorts.
- Monitor attendance of discreet groups such as children in residential homes; children with EHCP's, Year 11, children living out of area and children who have persistent absence.
- Assigned education support workers to engage with persistent absence attenders and offer support to get back into school alongside incentives where appropriate.

Challenges we faced

- Suspensions in schools are still increasing, with some children in lower Key Stages being suspended.
- Sufficiency of appropriate SEMH education provision for particularly complex young people.
- Difficulties arising while supporting children who have struggled to re-adjust to face to face education.
- Availability of school places at good or outstanding schools when placing students out of area alongside out of area schools refusing school places and having to go to direction, leading to delay for young people when moving schools.
- Difficulties arising when children with EHCPs move placement leading to a need to change school. Consultation process and sufficiency can mean that it takes longer to identify appropriate school placements, particularly for specialist settings.

Priorities moving forward

- Continued focus on reducing suspensions, both length and those issued.
- Close analysis of trends of suspension and strategic focus where trends appear.
- Establish a 'No Wrong Door' partnership with schools to ensure children who move home can keep consistency within their education.
- Ensure foster carers are working with us to not take term time holidays.
- Work with independent residential schools around prioritising punctuality and attendance.
- Continued weekly monitoring of attendance for discreet groups where attendance has been identified as a concern and focused intervention to improve this.
- Ensuring school attendance is referred to and appropriately supported in CIN and CP plans.
- Further develop work across education and social care so that attendance of children in our care and other vulnerable groups is seen as 'everyone's business'.
- Work with dedicated EHCP coordinator to streamline processes when children in our care with EHCPs move home, to ensure they are back in school quickly.

Children in our care and their SEND

| NC Year Group | Special Educational Need / Disability | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|------------|------|
| | K | E | Total | % |
| N1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| N2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Rec | 8 | 1 | 9 | 45.0 |
| Y1 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 33.3 |
| Y2 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 39.1 |
| Y3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Y4 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 88.9 |
| Y5 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 50.0 |
| Y6 | 9 | 4 | 13 | 54.2 |
| Y7 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 57.7 |
| Y8 | 7 | 13 | 20 | 57.1 |
| Y9 | 12 | 12 | 24 | 64.9 |
| Y10 | 8 | 9 | 17 | 60.7 |
| Y11 | 16 | 15 | 31 | 66.0 |
| Y12 | 12 | 20 | 32 | 66.7 |
| Y13 | 8 | 17 | 25 | 37.3 |
| Y14 | 9 | 24 | 33 | 49.3 |
| Total | 13 | 18 | 31 | 46.3 |
| NC Year Group | 147 | 152 | 299 | 50.3 |

The Virtual School and College team work closely with the Stockport EHCP team and with our schools to monitor children in our care with special educational needs. This table shows the breakdown of children and young people with identified special educational needs and disabilities, and how they are supported

K – are pupils in each year group who are monitored at SEND support.

E – are pupils in each year group who are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan.

This academic year we have strengthened our work with the EHCP team and have commissioned a dedicated EHCP Coordinator for children in our care. This position was taken up in the summer term and has allowed us to improve how we support education for children in our care with EHCPs. We will report of the impact of this role more fully in the next annual report; however, we have already seen early signs of, improved access to advice and guidance specifically for children in care with EHCPs; improved timeliness for annual reviews; positive working relationships across schools ensuring support is timely and appropriate; EHCP representation at key children in our care meetings, to streamline processes and support with quick decision making.

Stockport Virtual School work hard, alongside the EHCP team, to ensure the most appropriate school for all children in our care with an EHCP is identified swiftly, and, where possible, appropriate support is given in mainstream provision to prevent school moves, outside of key phase transfer. This is something which we will continue to work on with our new dedicated EHCP coordinator for children in our care.

What are you
most proud
of?

Postcards sent home by teachers
(Year 9 high school young person
with an EHCP)

The progress I
am making in
lessons.
(Year 9 High
School)

My school reports

I am getting much better at communicating choices
from pictures.
I really love musical activities.
I love it when I can access the hydro pool.
I am doing really well at using my standing frame,
(Year 4 Non- verbal child in specialist provision)

I like English, break time and art. I like
being with my friends and the food at
lunch time.
School dinners are really nice.
I love the school discos
(Year 5 Primary School)

My work and football. I am
starting tomorrow with my
football club and have a
match against my friend
Hamish's team
(Year 4 Primary School)

Trying hard with my
work (Year 5
resource provision
within mainstream)

Settling into a new school where I
don't know anybody and making
new friends
(Year 7 high school)

Analysis – SEND for children in our care

What we did

- Appointed a designated EHCP coordinator for children in our care.
- Virtual School Head attends all SEND panels for rapid representation and decision making.
- Robust attendance tracking and calling for early reviews when non-engagement or attendance to ensure plan and provision is appropriate.
- Dedicated EHCP Coordinator has started to attend PEPs beyond reviews to ensure swift responses to educational concerns which may be linked to a child's SEND.
- EHCP coordinator more visible to social care colleagues and a key point of contact for advice and guidance around SEND.
- Speech and Language Therapist commissioned to assess and work with individual pupils and schools, as well as to offer advice to VS workers.
- Talking mats training provided to education support workers.
- Supported apprenticeship team has moved to within Virtual School and College team. We have doubled the opportunities available to our young people, alongside working in partnership with the council jumpstart scheme for supported internships.
- Virtual School and College Post 16 worker and EHCP coordinator collaboration to swiftly respond to young people who become NEET and offer robust support.

Challenges we faced

- Difficulties which arise when children have an EHCP which is maintained by another local authority, such as delayed identification of school places.
- Difficulties in identifying school places for children in our care with EHCP's who have multiple care placement moves.
- Delay in application for and issuing of EHCPs for children in our care, particularly when placed out of area.
- Access to Educational Psychology advice to support inclusion in mainstream provision and to provide evidence for EHCP needs assessments.
- Sufficiency of appropriate special educational provision places to match particularly complex needs which may include a Deprivation of Liberty Order or bail conditions.
- Mainstream schools struggling to manage more complex presentations and offer appropriate levels of support.
- 40% of children with EHCPs in specialist provision attend schools outside of Stockport, making it harder to influence provision.
- Identifying provision for post 16 young people in our care who are or become NEET.

Priorities moving forward

- Preparation for adulthood, careers advice and Year 12 destination planning through Year 9 EHCP review in conjunction with PEP to be more robust.
- Strategic focus on inclusion in mainstream school for children in our care.
- Further development of the EHCP Coordinator for children in our care role, to support new assessments for children in our care and to consolidate progress on review timeliness and school placements made so far.
- Training for social care and leaving care colleagues on the role of the EHCP team and how services can work together to improve outcomes for children and young people in our care, with EHCPs.
- Consolidate joint work between EHCP Coordinator and Virtual School Post 16 worker to reduce numbers of young people who become NEET.



Children in our care and their PEPs

| | PEP Completion by Term for all Children | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Autumn 2023 | | | Spring 2024 | | | Summer 2024 | | |
| | Total Children in our care | Meeting Took place during term | Paperwork Received | Total Children in our care | Meeting Took place during term | Paperwork Received | Total Children in our care | Meeting Took place during term | Paperwork Received |
| School aged | 303 | 98% | 98% | 317 | 99% | 95% | 283 | 97.5% | 97.5% |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Personal Education Plans

Personal Education Planning meetings (PEPs) are held for all children in our care at least on a termly basis. If educational issues are raised, early or additional PEP, or education planning meetings may be held.

It is expected that designated teachers hold PEPs which include attendance of carers, social workers and any other professional working with a child or young person. It is also vital that designated teachers capture a child's views, wishes and feelings before the meeting and the child is supported to attend if they wish.

We are proud of a consistently high PEP completion and return rate and the Virtual School team work to ensure, if PEPs are missing, they are followed up and completed as a priority. Virtual School Teaching and Learning Coordinators attend PEPs for support and challenge when educational concerns are present or upon the request of schools, social workers or carers.

All PEPs are quality assured by the Teaching and Learning Coordinators allocated to each school and Pupil Premium Plus funding is allocated to support PEP targets. A robust QA process is overseen by our Assistant Headteacher and informs our analysis (next slide)

Analysis - PEPS

What we did

- Increased the PEPs held on time to 98% within school age cohort.
- Increased number and improvement of PEPs held for early years and Post 16.
- PP+ spend systematically linked to targets.
- Group and 1-1 refresher/new starter training for designated teachers and social workers three times a year and on request.
- Termly analysis of PEP meetings held and documents.
- All PEPs received are read and quality assured with opportunities and suggestion for improvement by Virtual School teachers.
- Annual PEP quality assurance audit by Assistant Headteacher.
- Consultation with stakeholders & other local authorities to improve PEP documents and PEP system.
- Developed and improved, early years, school aged and post 16 PEP document.
- Commissioned a new PEP system provider-allowing efficiency through an electronic system (Looked after call).
- Clear procedures to share the PEP document timely within Stockport family (Liquid Logic).
- Improved recording of PEPS on children's social care files.
- Significant increase in the amount of social care input into PEPs.

Challenges we faced

- Low quality targets in some PEPs making it difficult to evaluate impact.
- Inconsistent use of PP+.
- Professionals are not always able to prioritise training, leading to a dilution of messages and expectations.
- Administration and access difficulties when a named person is no longer in post.
- Whilst targets are set in all PEPs, improving, and increasing the quality of quantifiable targets.
- Resources to ensure quality PEP documents are stored efficiently (within ten days of the meeting on Liquid Logic).
- Challenges encouraging young people to attend their PEP meetings.

Priorities moving forward

- Improved quality of PEP targets and where appropriate, matching these across EHCP and SEND support documents.
- Improve the link between PEP targets and attainment data.
- Focus on preparation for adulthood and clear Year 9 planning within the PEP.
- Clear projection of outcomes and demonstration of opportunities to allay any missed learning opportunities prior to coming into care.
- Some considered but subtle planning around overlearning, preparing for any upset or turbulence throughout school life.
- Ensuring use of PP+ is thoughtful and creative and supports learning and outcomes.
- Develop processes for quality assurance of PEPs to ensure it is transparent and useful for designated teachers and drives up PEP standards.
- Encourage greater participation in PEP meetings from our children.

Analysis – Pupil Premium Plus

What we did

- Overhauled the process for PP+ allocation to make it evidence led through the PEP meeting and documents.
- Significant resource went towards 1:1 tuition, however, given the GCSE and A level results this year we think this was appropriate and successful.
- We have increased the awareness and importance of extra curricular activities such as music, dance and sporting activities and we contribute towards these as well as equipment if necessary.
- Therapies such as Lego and animal therapy were contributed towards and considered successful when reviewing PEPs.
- Equipment such as laptops can be bought through PP+ if schools and carers agree this is a priority..

Challenges we faced

- Schools needing additional support for teaching assistant and learning mentors has been increasingly required.
- School trips and holidays are increasingly costly. Whilst there is an expectation for carers to support financially through allowances, there is an added pressure we need to support to ensure our young people don't miss out on opportunities.
- Pupil Premium Plus requests need to be better linked to targets and outcomes within PEP documentation.
- Increased need to fund Education Psychology assessments and growing costs.

Priorities moving forward

- Monitor the impact of school PP+ spending resource on impact via new funding process this academic year.
- More detailed analysis of PP+ spend.
- Work with SEND colleagues to ensure high needs funding and PP+ is not being double funded.
- Support children at SEND support in schools to receive any immediate funding challenges before an EHCP is necessary or in progress.

Headline Outcomes – KS2 Results 2023-24

| | 12 month + cohort who took test (14) and achieved standard | 12 month + /whole cohort (20) who achieved standard |
|--------------|--|---|
| Reading | 57% | 40% |
| GPS | 50% | 35% |
| TA Writing | 64% | 45% |
| Maths | 50% | 35% |
| RWM Combined | 43% | 35% |

This table shows the outcome data for Key Stage 2 assessments for children in our care.

There were six students last academic year who were not entered into the KS2 assessments, for a variety of agreed reasons. As a result, we have displayed the data for both the whole cohort and those who sat the test.

Improving our outcomes at KS2 is a continuing priority.

When reporting outcomes we only include those children who have been in our care for 12 months or more at the time of the assessment.

Headline Outcomes – KS4 Results 2023-24

The table below illustrates the three - year trend of English and Maths crossover results, including provisional, unvalidated data for 2023-24. Last year were our best ever GCSE results by this measure. Our young people also gained some outstanding personal achievements, for which we congratulate them.

| | GCSE results 2022 % | GCSE results 2023 % <i>(first year, non-teacher assessments)</i> | GCSE provisional results 2024 % |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| % Grade 4 in English and Maths | 22% | 17% | 34% |
| % Grade 5 in English and Maths | 13% | 7% | 17% |

One young person who moved suddenly into a residential placement in February so doesn't feature in this data and experienced a lot of trauma and upheaval gained 2 X 7's, 1 X 6, 3 x 4 s and 2 X4's.

An unaccompanied young person gained his ESOL qualifications, sat English and Maths GCSEs and gained 1's and took Russian GCSE and gained a 4!

76% of all Year 11's (including recently into care and separated young people) had confirmed post 16 destinations in August

A young person who struggled to attend school due to high anxiety and safeguarding concerns gained Functional Skills passes in English and Maths and is intending to attend college.

When reporting outcomes we only include those children who have been in our care for 12 months or more at the time of the assessment.



Headline Outcomes – KS5 Results 2023-24

We have deliberately kept this a little vague to respect our young people's privacy....even though we want to shout from the roof tops around how proud we are of them!

"A" Levels
Criminology A
Psychology C
Sociology C
Progressed to University

Applied Business: Distinction
Creative Media: Distinction
Financial studies B
Progressed to University

Art B
Creative Media Merit
Secured full time job in fashion industry

English Language A
Law B
Politics B
Progressed to University

Distinction/Merit/Merit in Veterinary studies
Deferred placement to University

Economics 'A' level gained in 7 months Grade C
Progressed to University

Analysis – Outcomes

What we did

- Year 11 focus group.
Distributed Year 11 cohort between the Virtual School team for more personalised and intensive support.
- Attainment linked to PEP targets.
- Greater use of PEP attainment data.
- More robust attainment data gathering.
- Education support workers deployment and responsiveness under Assistant Headteacher leadership.
- Aspiration work started and recorded in PEPs from KS1.
- Targeted additional tuition available for all.
- Swift commitment to re-sits in Year 12 if necessary.

Challenges we faced

- School moves at crucial times of year.
- Resources to deliver focus group for KS2.
- Particularly complex Year 2 cohort.
- Availability of specialist school placements.
- Sufficiency and quality of ESOL provision.
- Crisis periods at examination times.
- Severe anxiety and lack of self esteem around exams.
- School suspensions.

Priorities moving forward

- Repeat Year 11 focus group.
- Consider focus group for KS2.
- 'No wrong School' established
- Skill UP to support re-sits or missed learning opportunities.
- Exam readiness around anxiety and self esteem.
- Over learning opportunities.
- More analysis and projection of Year 9 cohorts year on year.
- Work with nurseries and early years providers around quality of PEPs prior to starting school.
- Tracking of attendance and suspensions with immediate and long term outcomes

Analysis – Early Years

What we did

- Introduced PEPs from age 2 and raised awareness of children in our care within the early years settings.
- Rolled electronic PEPs out for this age group.
- Developed creative methods for capturing pupil voice for children in Early Years settings.
- Made links with Early Years team to strengthen knowledge and understanding and collaboration when working with this age group.
- 3 sessions of online training for social workers and settings on Early Years PEPs and our new online platform.
- Offered advice and guidance about education for settings and social workers when a child in our care turns 2.

Challenges we faced

- Raising awareness of ePEP platform and the requirement from 2 years of age.
- Lack of monetary incentive* for EY settings to complete PEPs within timescale compared to school-age PEPs.
- No requirement for a designated teacher in private Early Years settings.
- 37% children are currently in private EY settings making it challenging to insist on PEP completion.

**From April 2024 EY PP becomes available for 2 year olds. £387 per year.*

From Sept 2024 this will extend to 9 month old babies.

From Sept 2025 from 9 months to school age will benefit from 30 hours a week early year provision.

Priorities moving forward

- Continue to raise awareness of Early Years PEP process amongst social care colleagues and the need for these with or without a setting.
- Strengthen links with EY team
- Admin support for EY as numbers increase week by week*
- Develop 'ready for school packs' for every nursery child, going up to school. To include a pack of phonics cards and something personalised to support their school transition.
- Plan for roll out of Early Years PEPs to include younger children, in line with the changes to 30 hours free childcare changes.
- Develop training video to support settings, nurseries, parents and carers to understand the PEP process, the ePEP and PEP terminology.

What is important to you in the future?

Being happy and having a good life (Yr 7 Specialist Independent School)

Going to College and University.
I want to study criminology
(Year 10 High School)

Work with young people or animals (Year 10 SEMH specialist school)

To be happy and enjoy doing things I am interested in (Year 10 Special School LA provision)

Get a good job in the police force, play Basketball at a professional level (Year 10 high school)

I want to be a mechanic and a footballer - I loves cars, modifying cars, I have a car game on my PlayStation and you can buy cars and customise them and drive round. I would need to go to University to study mechanics (Year 4 Primary School)

Being a footballer playing for Stalybridge Celtic. I want to be centre orward or on the wing (Year 3 Primary)

Horse riding and doing well in my GCSES (Year 7 High School)

To be a chef (Year 5 resource provision within mainstream)

Analysis – Post 16

What we did

- Increased offer for all care leavers up to the age of 25 with a designated education post 16 officer and 2 supported apprenticeship officers.
- Two successful apprenticeship positions within the team.
- Ringfenced courses at Stockport college for care leavers.
- Successful work experience placements for care experienced young people with The Christies.
- Work experience leading to employment at a prominent legal business through Match My Project.
- Partnership working with Jumpstart.
- Increased tuition provided at Post 16 for English, Maths GCSE resits and for support with 'A' level pathways
- University visits and application support.
- Partnership with Spring Forward to enable our older learners to attend independent sixth form provisions.
- Integral part of Care Leaver Covenant.
- Improved and robust tracking and monitoring of EET and NEET cohorts alongside leaving care team.
- Increase in quality and number of completed PEPs for post 16 cohort.
- Collaboration with EHCP coordinator for children in our care to jointly run PEPs and EHCP reviews for NEET young people with EHCPs and use this as a platform for securing provision.
- First Post 16 celebration event held at The Light Cinema.
- First 'in person' Success for Life cohort since the pandemic.
- Superb partnership working with the council Senior Leadership Group around work experience and working in the 'family business'.

Challenges we faced

- Increased number of separated young people which has impacted on sufficiency of ESOL provision
- We have significantly increased our offer to cover all care leavers who may need our support until the age of 25 which has stretched our resources.
- Ensuring our young people are work or college ready.
- Moving from areas out or into Stockport when leaving school and losing existing relationships or connections.
- Home movements coinciding with college enrolment, presenting challenges with securing Post 16 destinations.
- Sufficiency of Post 16 provision able to meet the needs of Post 16 care leavers with EHCPs where mainstream is not appropriate.
- Ensuring employers are trauma informed and as flexible as possible.

Priorities moving forward

- Commence 'Skill Up' pilot providing an opportunity for Post 16 learners who do not have English or Maths GCSE equivalent to obtain these.
- Increase work experience opportunities to support for preparation for adulthood.
- Take part in the Success For Life pilot with Manchester University.
- Further develop work with EHCP coordinator for children in our care to reduce number of NEET care leavers with an EHCP.

Analysis – Vulnerable children other than in our care

What we did

- Virtual School Head sits on Youth Justice Board and meets monthly with YJS service leader and BI analyst to analyse data.
- All children and young people on remand up to age 18 have a dedicated Virtual School worker. PEPs are completed and where children cannot attend particular schools due to relationships or bail conditions, VSH works with other local authorities to secure education provision.
- Virtual School Head attends legal gateway planning meetings to ensure any children who may be becoming cared for are allocated swiftly into the team.
- Virtual Headteacher sits on Secondary Panel for Inclusion to ensure movement of children with a social worker into PRUs is monitored and supported alongside the Education Welfare Service
- Virtual School Head attends SEND finance panel to ensure knowledge of vulnerable children attending specialist provisions is shared.
- VSH Representation on the adoption panel for approving adopters and VSH Representation on the Adoption Counts Sub-Board – a range of issues arisen including education.
- VS attendance at Connected Carers meetings.
- Collaborative work with fostering service and kinship carer lead
- Virtual School Head attends and reports to rapid reviews within the safeguarding team.
- Attendance scrutiny and work alongside Stockport Family Early Help teams and Education Welfare Service.
- Virtual School Headteacher attends Stockport Schools Secondary Heads and supports transition or exclusion support advice directly with Headteachers.

Challenges we faced

- Data systems across different services not always speaking to each other.
- Increasing level of need and wider support of vulnerable groups to be encompassed into the service.
- Time out of school when a transition occurs to permanence.
- Funding - doesn't come into VS anymore but rather goes directly to the schools.
- Getting the right information to the schools at the right time – promoting the technicalities of the Census.
- Identification of status and the recording of PEP if association with this process is wanted.
- Accountability in terms of PPP.
- Time – amount of time to dedicate.
- Basic communication – for example getting hold of people; ensuring that everyone is on the same wavelength.
- Sometimes there is conflict between schools and parents – usually opinions on PPP.
- Graduated response and SEN.
- Turnover in staff and professionals.
- Currently there is not much input from young people.
- Escalation and support for LA colleagues to understand the needs of the cohort and solving issues in a timely manner.

Priorities moving forward

- Virtual School and Adoption Counts inaugural conference
- A Separated Children working group to be formed including, Virtual School; Separated Children social workers; Careers and Education Advisor; link from the Ethnic and Diversity Team. The group is to work towards a standardised approach and process to ensure that all professionals working with Separated Children can share education resources and appropriate information.
- Make more use of social media, (X – previously Twitter) to establish links between VS and other services (e.g. Adoption Counts).
- Training for Governors – to highlight the whole of the statutory and non statutory guidance, which governs the Virtual School and highlight the role for governors in relation to this.
- Language changes which have been implemented need to be updated into the entirety of the website



Analysis – Extra Curricular Activities

What we did

- Designated Virtual School team member working with internal residential homes to ensure all children have access to extra-curricular activities they may wish to pursue. This team member attends residential team meetings to support staff and children around any educational issues.
- Examples of current activities are cycling, guitar lessons, DJ classes, boxing and art classes.
- Offer of a tutor within our internal residential homes to support with homework.
- Work experience placements sought and brokered by designated Virtual School team teacher.
- Match My Project used to source work experience opportunities.
- Extra-curricular activity for every child recorded in the PEP
- Developed strong links with Stockport County who provide opportunities for extra-curricular football training etc. And provided tickets for matches at Edgeley Park and even Wembley!
- Funded enrichment activities e.g. trip to India, ski trips and cooking experiences with Food Sorcery in Manchester city centre
- Success for Life in conjunction with GM Higher

Challenges we faced

- Sourcing work experience opportunities suitable for under 16's (Year 10).
- For some children who have family time after school they may not be able to attend activities or clubs.
- Transport to activities and work experience.
- Robust safeguarding procedures for organisations not associated with a school or alternative provision.
- Opportunities being made available for young people particularly in independent residential homes.
- Ensuring children and young people are aware of opportunities within their communities and have access, encouragement and support to attend them.

Priorities moving forward

- Encourage work experience opportunities to be taken during school holidays where possible.
- Ensure children and young people in independent residential homes are afforded similar opportunities and experiences to those in our own residential homes and in foster care.
- Use designated teacher training networking to encourage maximising extra-curricular opportunities for children in our care.

Analysis – Training

What we did


- Designated teacher inductions and network meetings 3 times per year.
- Social worker induction to PEPs and Virtual School.
- PEP training for social workers and designated teachers around using electronic pep system.
- Training around virtual school for school governors.
- Training for foster carers around education and PEPs.
- Delivered training for Early Career Teachers in partnership with Brighter Futures.
- ELSA training for ESWs, Trauma, Safeguarding, and all mandatory training.
- Liaising with other teams regarding shared opportunities
- Facilitated and sources online training around trauma and exclusions with outside agencies such as KCA and 'Speak from your chest'.
- Internal training program to develop skills across the team. Such as North west and National Virtual School courses and conferences.

Challenges we faced

- Ensuring training is giving consistent and relevant advice and messages from all partners.
- Engagement in sessions – ensuring all stakeholders have the time and different opportunities to pick up messages.
- Targeting appropriate and most influential and senior colleagues within schools to ensure messages are consistent throughout schools.

Priorities moving forward

- Develop learning resources and redeliver up to date online training.
- Develop smaller training snap shots, around key topics, to share with those who need them (eg. PEP/ Exclusion/Attendance)
- Widen training opportunities to include independent foster carers and residential placements.
- Offering additional training for Education Support Workers on PEPs and assessment data.



Direct support
Feedback

How has this helped you?

She listens to me and understands
what I have to say (Year 7)

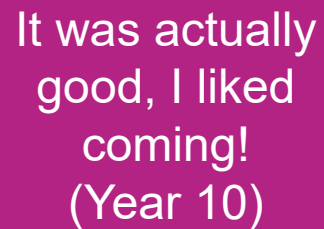
Maths and reading and speaking
(Year 5)

What did you like about
your direct support
worker?

She is nice and caring
(Year 7)

Nice, Fun
(Year 2)

She is really nice and
helps me get to higher
levels
(Year 5)



It was actually
good, I liked
coming!
(Year 10)

How useful was this support?

Helped with being confident (Year 10)

Played, feelings, lovely time (Reception)

I got better at counting in my amazing head (Year 8)

Great for helping me prepare for exams and making me
feel less stressed (Year 11)

Helped me read better and listen to my teacher (Year 2)

Wider Commissioned Services

Speech and Language Annual Report

Stockport Virtual School Speech and Language Therapy November 2023 – July 2024

I started working with the virtual school team in November 2023, following a gap in their Speech and language therapy (SALT) provision between July 2023 and November 2023, and at the time the caseload consisted of 7 children and young people who were awaiting support or assessment.

Between November 2023, and July 2024, the following aims were identified as the priority for the year:

- Providing assessment and support for children in our care with significant SLCN, whose needs can not be met by the community speech and language therapy team.
- Emphasis on early identification and intervention, encouraging referrals from primary aged children, but also accepting High School aged referrals where further support is needed.
- Supporting schools with identifying SLCN in children in our care, as research tells us around 62% of children in our care have unidentifed SLCN.
- Supporting schools and designated teachers through training at DT network meetings.

Providing assessment and support for children in our care with significant SLCN

I have worked with 12 children and young people between November 2023 and July 2024. At the end of term 1 will have an active caseload of 6 children and young people, with capacity for 2 new referrals. I have also provided advice and support/signposting to Teaching and Learning Coordinators for children and young people who are not on an active SALT caseload.

My direct work with children has included assessment and report building, with the emphasis being on creating an environment where the children and young people feel secure and listened to, and providing them with opportunities to discuss and share their opinions on their SLCN and what they would like support with.

Where appropriate, children and young people are then offered a block of 8 weeks of intervention delivered fortnightly. Schools are requested to provide a teaching assistant to attend the sessions, observe activities modelled by the SALT, and deliver carryover activities to encourage optimum impact, and overall, this has worked well this year. Schools are provided with resources to continue with work between therapy sessions so children and young people can make the best progress they can. This approach has allowed me to equip school with the skills to support the children and young people's speech and language skills in the longer term and in the education environment.

Early Identification and Intervention and supporting schools to identify SLCN in children and young people in our care

This year I have created 3 speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) checklists for 3-4 year olds, primary age and secondary age, with a view to all children being screen for SLCN on entering the care system.

I have also provided new referral forms to accompany these so TLC's/referring teachers do not need to duplicate forms however, they enable the necessary consents to be documented and provide the most appropriate referral information.

Designated Teacher training

This year I have provided training three times a year to a wider audience through the DT network meeting, focusing on understanding and identifying SLCN, as well as specific intervention strategies such as using visuals in the classroom, which have been very well received.

Priorities for 2024/2025

- Continue with developing the priorities from this 2023/2024.
- To offer follow up consultation to widen impact.
- Training offer for more school staff/class teachers/care home workers/carers



Education Support Workers Report

Three education support workers (ESWs) are employed within Stockport Virtual School. They are line managed by our Assistant Headteacher and deliver specific support throughout the academic year to children in our care. All ESWs are ELSA trained and this is a big focus of their work, improving attendance and engagement within schools. There is a rapid response element to the work where the workers are flexible and are able to adapt swiftly to emerging needs (i.e. for a child just coming into care or experiencing a particularly challenging experience) ESWs support with the PEP process and are instrumental in the running of the Celebrating Success Event held annually. Click the icon for the report from Debbie Marshall, Assistant headteacher on this area of Virtual School work.

DIRECT SUPPORT ANNUAL REPORT

Direct Support by the Virtual School Education Support Workers (ESWs)

2023-2024

| | Number of sessions | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------|----|-------|
| | Primary | % | Secondary | % | Total |
| Total no of sessions provided | 300 | 52 | 270 | 48 | 570 |

Numbers of Stockport children in our care (CIOC), Reception-Year 11, who are educated or residing in Stockport who have received direct support during academic year 2023-24.

| Year Group | Stockport CIOC educated / residing in Stockport | | | Number of sessions | SEND Support | EHCP | Total | % |
|------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | | | | | |
| N | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 100% |
| R | 1 | 1 | 2 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 100% |
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 52 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 75% |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 97 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 100% |
| 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 50% |
| 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 28 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 54 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 100% |
| 6 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 30 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 40% |
| Total primary | 11 | 9 | 20 | 300 | 9 | 6 | 15 | |
| 7 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 61 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 80% |
| 8 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 29 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 60% |
| 9 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| 10 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 74 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 66% |
| 11 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 96 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 75% |
| Total secondary | 10 | 20 | 30 | 270 | 12 | 10 | 22 | |
| Totals | 21 | 29 | 50 | 570 | 21 | 16 | 37 | |

Incidence of SEND = 74% (37 out of 50)

Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*