

## **Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

# **The Virtual School**

### **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

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### **Purpose of the Report**

The Virtual School Annual Report provides an overview of the work of the Virtual School and reports the educational outcomes for Oldham's children looked after (CLA).

### **Executive Summary**

*The Following summary is taken from the Virtual School annual report 2018 – 2019.*

The report provides an overview of the Virtual School in 2018 / 2019. It establishes that the scope of the work undertaken by the Virtual School has developed significantly under new leadership, that reported outcomes for children who are looked after compare favourably with national averages and that inclusion is the key priority in the coming year. These themes emerged in the Ofsted report of the inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) including the Virtual School in January 2019. Whilst inspectors found that the overall effectiveness of Children's Services requires improvement to be good, they referred to the Virtual School as follows:

*"24. Stronger leadership of the virtual school over the last 12 months has supported improved educational provision for many children in care. Pupils, and the schools they attend, have benefited from a strong focus on educational attainment and progress. The Virtual School effectively tracks the progress that pupils make from their starting points and this allows for more accurate assessments of pupils' progress, which continues to improve."*

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*25. All children have a personal education plan (PEP) that is subject to quality assurance by the virtual school team. Work is ongoing to improve the effectiveness and standards of these documents. The head of the virtual school manages the use of pupil premium well through the PEPs. Funding is only released once effective targets to improve educational outcomes are identified by the school. Schools put the pupil premium plus funding to good effect for additional classroom support, extra tuition and for a wide range of enrichment opportunities and pastoral support."*

Increased staffing within the Virtual School team has enabled the development of PEP / ePEP processes, quality assurance and targeted Post 16 provision. In the last academic year, the Virtual School engaged with key partners across education, children's social care and wider agencies to develop understanding of the educational needs of CLA. The Pupil Premium Plus funding (PP+) allocation for schools is now released subject to completion of good quality PEPs with clear details of use and impact of the funding.

Following the introduction of the new statutory guidance in September 2018, the Virtual School continues to ensure that partners in education and social care understand the new duties and associated roles and responsibilities. The team provides advice and guidance about meeting the educational needs for previously looked after children who attend an Oldham school.

The Virtual School integrates its work with teams across the Education & Early Years Service. Closer working alongside our colleagues in the SEND team is improving practice. The Virtual School is represented at weekly EHCP panel meetings to provide oversight for CLA. During the Summer Term the Designated Teacher Forum and the SENCo Development session were combined to strengthen links and create understanding of the educational needs of CLA who may have unmet SEND. In future the VSH will commission a designated SEND officer for Oldham CLA. Wider inclusion issues are addressed by the Virtual School providing training opportunities for education and social care colleagues in understanding of the needs of CLA, with a focus on SEMH. This included online training on attachment and trauma, training for members of governing bodies, DT/SENCo Forums and training to develop resilience in children and young people.

The most recently validated data (from 2017 /18) confirms that attainment and progress for CLA (OC2 cohort) is ranked within the top 25% nationally at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4.

In Key Stage 2, the Oldham CLA OC2 cohort showed significant improvement in outcomes in 2017 /18, with 43% achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths. This was an improvement on 38% from the previous year. There was a similar picture in the progress measures with significant improvement in Reading, Writing and Maths. In Reading and Maths, Oldham CLA OC2 cohort on average made better rates of progress than National (all), CLA National and Oldham (all) and in writing made better progress than National (all) and National CLA. Ranking 15<sup>th</sup> (Reading), 32<sup>nd</sup> (Writing) and 26<sup>th</sup> (Maths) nationally for average progress between Key Stage 1 and 2.

In Key Stage 4, the Oldham CLA cohort is in the top 12% nationally for grades 9 – 4 in English and Maths and remains above National CLA as in the previous year. There is a significant improvement in both Progress 8 at -0.77 and Attainment 8 at 3.30, with national rankings of 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively.

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Promoting attendance and reducing exclusion are priorities for the Virtual School with its partners. It is concerning that the overall absence and persistent absence rates for the OC2 cohort increased between 2017 and 2018 and are now higher than CLA nationally and regionally. CLA attendance data is now tracked by the Virtual School and informs case work for the Education Support Officers. Of further concern is an increase in the % of CLA receiving at least 1 Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE). National data shows that Oldham CLA (OC2) exclusion rate is now higher than the national cohort, regional and statistical neighbours for CLA. Fortunately, the most recent locally collated data for the full CLA cohort shows the green shoots of a slight decrease after 2017. There have been no permanent exclusions of Oldham CLA.

### **IMPACT OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL 2018 / 2019**

- In 2018 attainment at Key Stage 2 ranks 20<sup>th</sup> (out of 151) nationally for % of CLA achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths
- In 2018 attainment at Key Stage 4 ranks 19<sup>th</sup> (of 151) nationally for the % of CLA pupils achieving grade 4 or above in English and Maths GCSE and the Oldham OC2 cohort rank 7<sup>th</sup> (out of 151) for Attainment 8
- In 2018 progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 improved and ranks 12<sup>th</sup> (out of 151) for P8.
- Improved quality of PEPs for school age children, with better tracking and monitoring through a better ePEP system and providing training and support to key partners.
- Improved provision for CLA with SEND through provision of support to schools and Social Workers in compiling EHCP submissions
- 'Collaborative Framework' for Oldham
- No Permanent exclusions.

### **Recommendations**

The following priorities are taken directly from the annual report and in response to support the inclusion and educational needs of CLA.

### **PRIORITIES FOR 2019 /2020**

In response to the ILACS inspection outcomes, the Virtual School Team are:

- Phasing the introduction of the Post 16 ePEP to enable rigorous tracking and quality assurance of PEPs and educational engagement and outcomes in Years 12 and 13.
- Integrating partnership working across educational services, children's social care and wider agencies to ensure that the educational needs of CLA are understood and addressed.
- In partnership with the LSCB and partner agencies, deliver Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Children (TSCC) Pilot for CLA.
- Work with partners to develop provision for identifying and supporting individual needs with a specific focus on SEMH.

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- Work with partners to develop 'Whole School' approaches to understanding trauma and attachment difficulties.
  - Develop admissions and transfer protocol for CLA with Oldham Secondary schools, Admissions and Inclusion team.
  - Develop Virtual School handbook to support partners across schools and social care.
  - Develop partnership working with Oldham Secondary Headteachers regarding provision for CLA by attending OASHP meetings
  - Embed the new governance structures for the Virtual School
  - In partnership with the North West Virtual Schools, NAVSH and NWADCS contribute to the development of Peer Review Processes to include the remit of the Virtual School.
  - Commission Speech and Language Therapist (0.6) for CLA
  - Explore further options for commissioning Educational Psychologist support
  - Appoint Engagement Officer and PEP Officer to further develop the work of the Virtual School Team.
  - Commission designated EHCP Officer for Oldham CLA (Educated both in and out of borough)

## **The Virtual School Annual Report 2018 – 2019**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 Each year the Virtual School produces an annual report outlining the educational outcomes of Oldham's children looked after and the work of the Virtual School over the previous academic year.

### **6 Additional Supporting Information**

- 6.1 The additional progress report provides an update on the development points that have been identified in the report.

### **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 In November 2019 the Virtual School Headteacher presented the annual report to the Corporate Parent panel, Children in Care Council and the Virtual School Governing body. The report was presented and approved with key issues, development points discussed.

### **8 Appendices**

- 8.1 Oldham Virtual School Progress Update: September 2018 – January 2020.