

**Annual Report of
the Virtual School
Headteacher
Academic Year
2021-2022**

Thurrock Council
Released under FOI

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Summary of the Annual Report 2021-2022

The period of reporting is from September 2021 to August 2022.

There are certain key aspects to this report which can be highlighted as part of this summary. These being:

- Overall attendance has improved this year 21/22. Attendance of Thurrock Children Looked After overall was 91.8%. Absence data shows that 3.5% was unauthorised and 4.8% of absences were authorised. Comparisons with national CLA data shows that our unauthorised data is 2.2% lower than national. This is also reflected in the percentage of pupils with persistent absence (PA). This means that their attendance rate was below 90% for the academic year. For Thurrock CLA, 32 pupils or 20.4% were deemed as a persistent absentee. This is 3% below the national figure.
- National data for Autumn 2021 shows that PA rates were 23.5% for all pupils. Nationally there has been an increase in persistent absence (i.e below 90% attendance). The complete attendance data nationally will be available in March 2023.
- Fixed term exclusion rates have decreased significantly this year as an impact of our behaviour intervention work.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA in this reportable period.
- The number of children in care for our cohort has decreased during the academic year compared to the previous year.
- There has been a reasonably stable rate in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children at 11%. This is down 1% from the previous year.
- There were 196 school age pupils at the end of the academic year. In total 92 pupils (46.9%) were categorised as having a Special Educational Need or Disability. Of these 92 pupils, 56 pupils (61%) have an Education and Health Care Plan and 36 pupils (39%) have SEN support.
- 83.6% of pupils attend a school graded good or above. This has decreased from last year's figure of 87.6%
- Interventions have been targeted to maximise impact on learning and development for all age ranges
- The use of 1-1 tuition for key year groups has resulted in good attainment levels at key stages 2 and 4. This is an effective intervention to support progress and attainment.
- The Year 1 phonics screen has had excellent success again this year with over 80% reaching the 'working at' standard. This has been due to the resources we have sent to the home for Nursery pupils through to year 2 to promote phonics and reading.
- Attainment data is showing that Thurrock CLA continue to perform at a high standard compared to national CLA and have high rankings for our performance.
- Case studies have highlighted some of the impact that our work has had this year on the educational lives and outcomes of our children and young people.

1. **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to detail the work of the Thurrock Virtual School for the academic year 2021-2022 and forms parts of the statutory reporting processes. This report is used as part of Annex A documentation which is presented to OFSTED in times of inspection.

2. **The Role of the Thurrock Virtual School**

A separate document is available named the Roles and Responsibilities of the Virtual School. This details the roles and actions that are taken in line with our statutory duties. The specific duties can be found in the Department for Education (DFE) document: Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children [February 2018].

In addition to this, new guidance was provided by the Department for Education in June 2021. This related to the extension of duties of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) to develop strategies to support the educational outcomes for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). This non-statutory role came into effect in September 2021. The document relating to this is 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker. Virtual School Head role extension' (DFE: 2022)

Staffing of the Virtual School 2021-2022

Mrs Keeley Pullen – Virtual School Headteacher

Mrs Grace Page – Virtual School Operations Co-Ordinator (left Thurrock in October 2021)

Ms Rebecca Prince – Early Years and Primary Education Adviser

Ms Gemma Lilley – Secondary Education Adviser

Miss Lee-Anne Jenkins – Post 16 Education Adviser

Mrs Tina McGuinness – Administrator for the Virtual School

Mrs Mary Ward – Project Manager for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) – started employment in October 2021

Mrs Mikaela Seddon - Virtual School Operations Co-Ordinator (started employment 27/6/2022)

Mrs Laura Dawson – Educational Psychologist (with the Virtual School for 2 days per week)

3. **Mission Statement**

At the core, is the aspiration to ensure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to learn effectively and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they are able to make informed choices about their futures from a range of options. This range will be at its widest when children succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school.

The Virtual School believes that every child and young person has a right to a childhood and has the right to a first class education that enhances their life chances as an adult. We believe that Children Looked After and Young People (CLA/YP) should be given every opportunity to aspire to be the best they can.

The Virtual School provides additional support, advice and guidance over and above the universal services that all Thurrock children and young people can access. In addition we provide information advice and guidance for Previously Looked After Children/Young People. In 2021-2022 we have also begun to develop Thurrock wide strategies which will be targeted at supporting Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

We believe there should be no educational gaps between attainment and potential and there should be a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards.

The main outcomes we want for our children and young people accord with the Thurrock Children and Young People's Plan and are that CLA/YP:

- value themselves and grow up to be fair, tolerant and supportive, learning to respect others and enjoy the respect of others;
- are engaged in and are challenged by high quality education and enjoyable learning experiences;
- are able to show resilience and cope with change;
- are not disadvantaged by circumstance, poverty, disability or race;
- seek out and engage in opportunities for self-improvement, with the guidance and support of multiagency teams;
- achieve recognised and appropriate qualifications in line with their academic potential, so they access a wide range of training, employment and further education opportunities when they leave school, allowing them to take an active and full role in society as adults.

To achieve this, The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools, carers, educational settings and social care to create a high quality educational experiences for Children Looked After and Young People.

4. **Guidance Documents Developed by the Virtual School**

- Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Schools
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Colleges
- Thurrock Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Anti-Bullying Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- PEP Protocol for Social Workers and Designated Teachers – Schools, Colleges and Early Years
- PEP Flowchart for Social Workers
- Quality Assurance Process Flowchart
- Quality Assurance Criteria for PEPs
- Completing Attainment on EPEP
- EPEP and Target Setting
- Roles and Functions of the Virtual School
- Phonics Resources Packs for Foster Carers
- Quality Assurance Process of Education Provision
- Social Worker guidance for high quality PEP minutes
- Child Missing Education Policy/Process
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Previously Looked After Children Policy
- Pupil Premium Spending Strategy Document 2021/2022
- Tuition Policy
- Laptop Policy

Additional Documents:

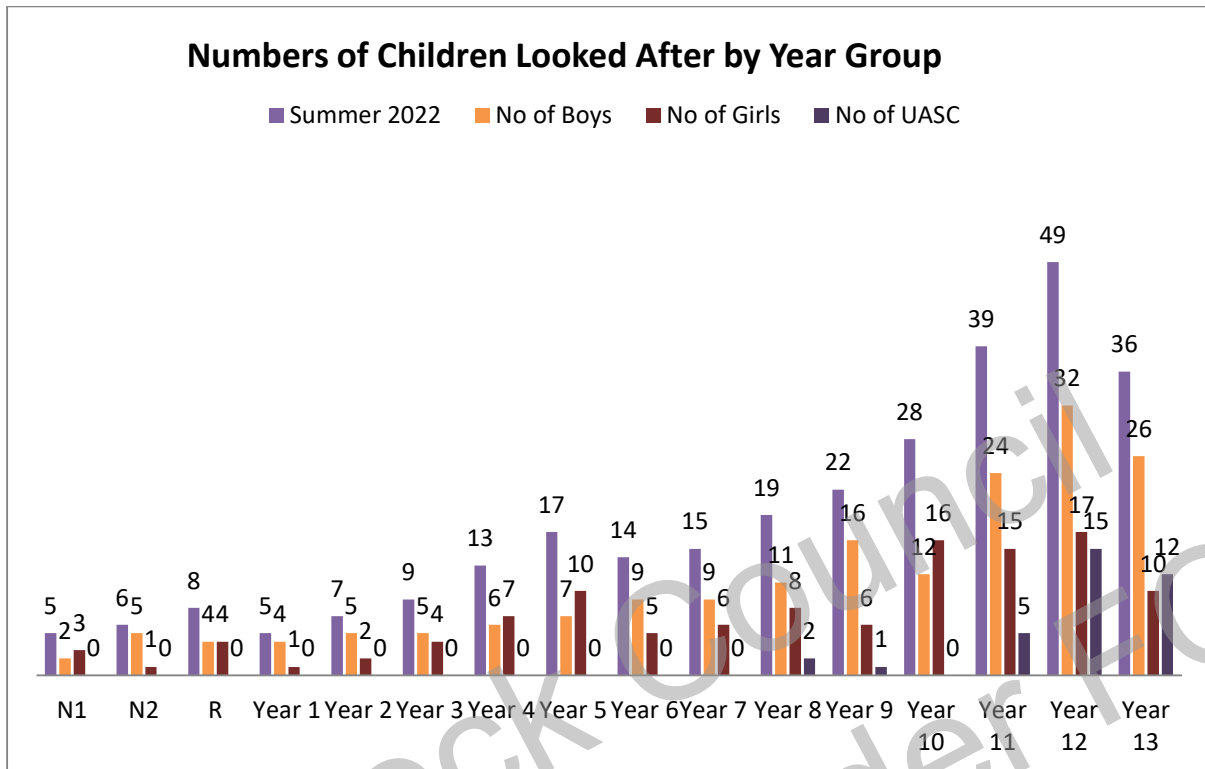
- School Improvement Plan 2021/2022
- Headteacher Termly Reports for Governors 2021/2022
- Phase Teacher Termly Reports for Governors 2021/2022
- 3 year Strategic Plan 2021-2024

5. **Corporate Parenting Committee**

The Virtual School Headteacher [VSH] is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for the educational achievement of Children Looked After [CLA]. The Committee exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together so that CLA/YP in Thurrock get the best possible service that can be offered. The Committee promotes the role of all Councillors as corporate parents and provides the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people. This committee meets quarterly and managers from different sectors of social care and education present reports and recommendations as part of a cycle. This process acts as a measure of accountability and supports the development of strategy and policy for meeting the statutory requirements for children in care.

Current Contextual Data

Number of Looked After Children by Year Group [Updated July 2022]



At the end of the academic year 21/22, the number of pupils aged 3-18 years in the Virtual School cohort were 292. This has decreased compared to the previous year. During the academic year, 8 pupils left care and 40 entered care.

16 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) entered care during this academic year and in total there were 35 UASC. This equates to 11% of the cohort which was a decrease of 1% from the previous year.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Numbers have remained fairly consistent with the previous year. In order to support our UASC who were school age, we provided them with online English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL], IT equipment and 10 weeks 1-1 ESOL tuition package to support education. There were 5 young people who stayed with Thurrock care services. There were additional young people who came into Thurrock but these were distributed to other local authorities as part of the sharing protocol.

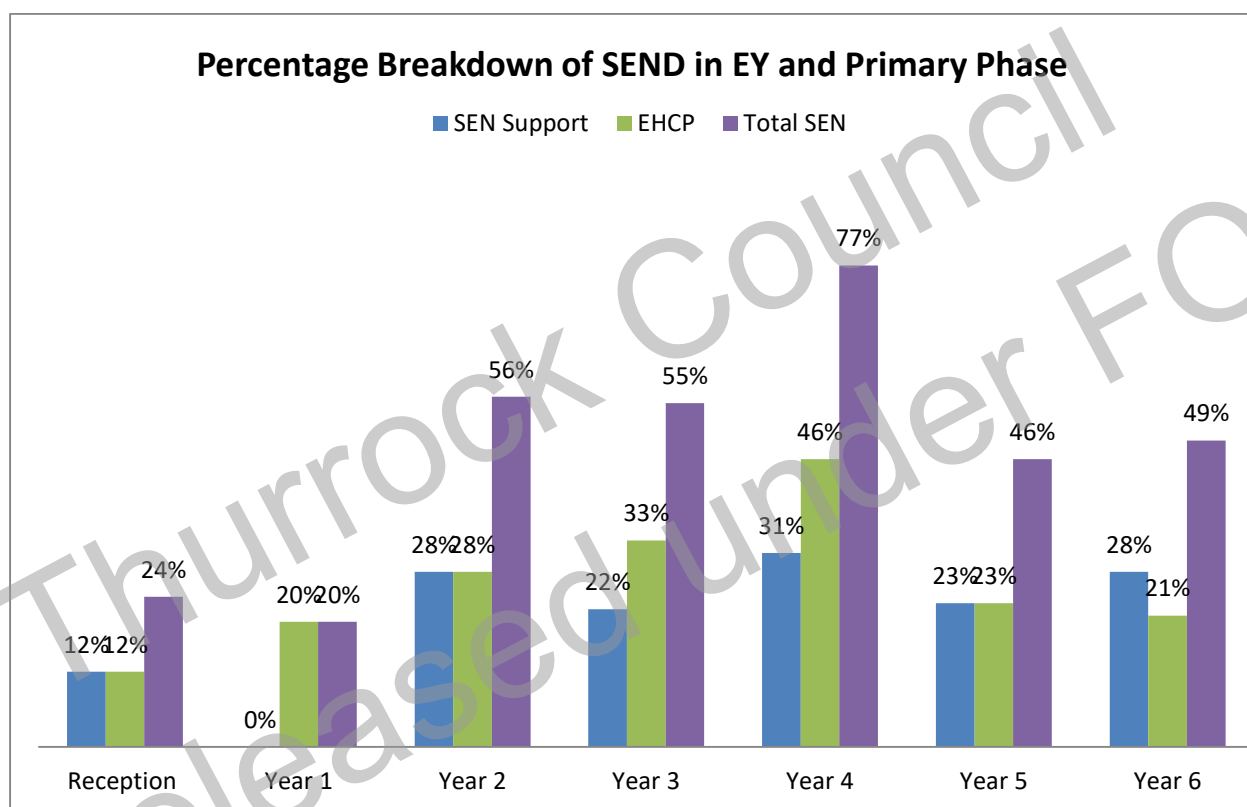
College applications were made to ensure that there was post-16 provision to support the young people. These young people who have transitioned into Year 12 have obtained college places and they are completing ESOL in Years 12 and 13.

Number of CLA with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)

This data is maintained throughout the year and is used to target specific actions, interventions, support and challenge. By strategically looking at this data, we are able to pinpoint areas of need and check that educational provision is supporting the individual needs of these pupils.

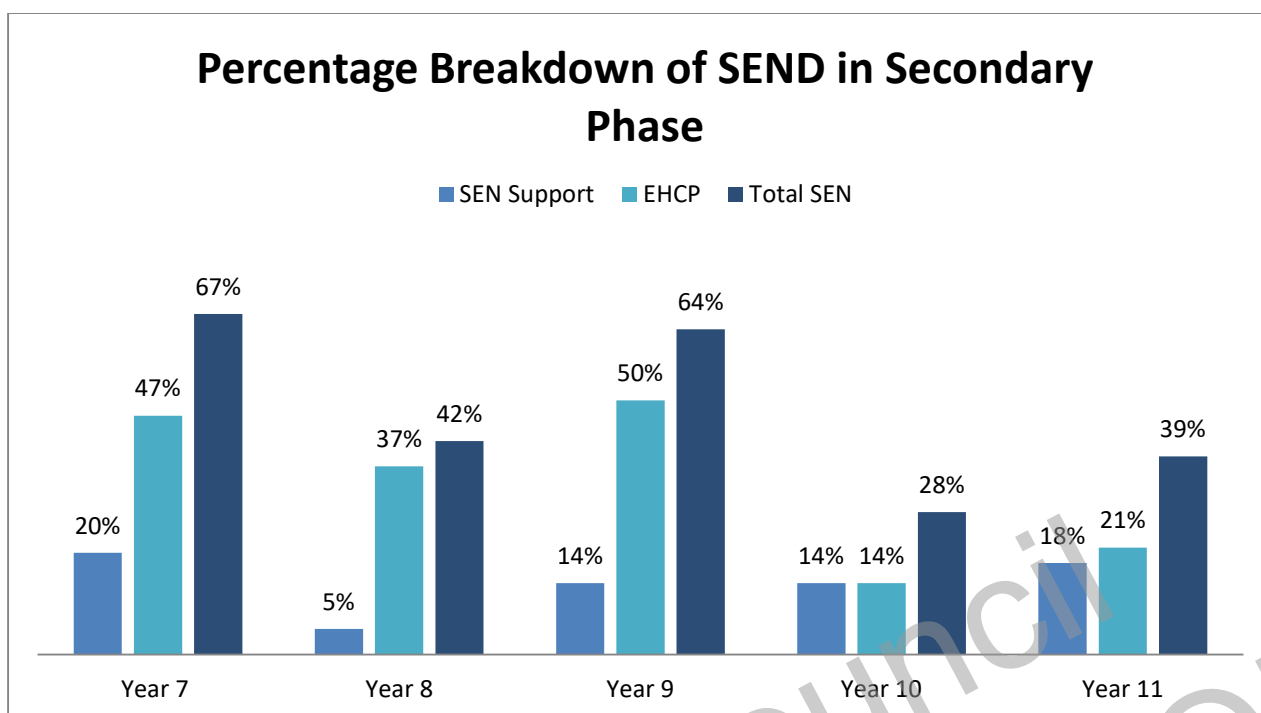
Primary Phase Data for SEND

In total there were 73 pupils from Reception through to Year 6. Of that, 19 pupils (26%) have an Education Health Care Plan and 18 pupils (24.6%) are categorised as needing additional SEN Support.



In total 37 pupils or 50.6% of the primary cohort has currently been identified as having a special educational need. This figure has decreased compared to the previous year. This is also 5% below the national CLA with SEND figure of 55.5%.

The largest group in Primary phase with SEND was in Year 4. We have looked at needs and are going to target their Year 5 tuition (extra tuition which is funded through Pupil Premium Plus) to start sooner in the following academic year 22/23. This tuition will remain until the end of Year 6 in 2024. The current Year 5 also started their tuition early in preparation for when they reach Year 6. This begun after February half term in 2022 and will remain in place until the end of 2023.



Of the 123 pupils in Years 7-11, 55 pupils have been identified as having SEND. This equates to 44.7% of the Key Stage 3 and 4 Phase. There are 37 pupils (30%) with an EHCP and 18 pupils (14.6%) who have SEN Support. The highest volume of pupils in each year group was in Year 7. Particular attention was paid to the transition of these pupils into secondary schooling and what their needs were and how they could be supported in their new setting. Pupils in Year 9 have also seen a high rate. With this in mind, we have made the decision to start the Year 10 tuition earlier in the year in 22/23 so that those who need additional support can be boosted to support them to reach national age related expectations.

SEND Data Overall for Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

There were 196 school age pupils at the end of the academic year. In total 92 pupils (46.9%) were categorised as having a Special Educational Need or Disability. Of these 92 pupils, 56 pupils (61%) have an Education and Health Care Plan and 36 pupils (39%) have SEN support.

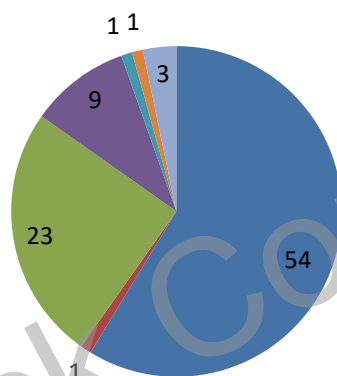
Primary Categories of Need Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

It is important that the categories of primary and secondary need are ascertained during any Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting to ensure that the right targeted support is provided by their educational establishment or by additional services.

Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) are prevalent categories of need. This can usually be attributed to being as a result of previous trauma and adverse childhood events that our pupils have experienced. It is essential that this is highlighted with the professionals working with the children to ensure that provision matches need.

Primary Categories of Need for Compulsory School Age Pupils Year R to Year 11

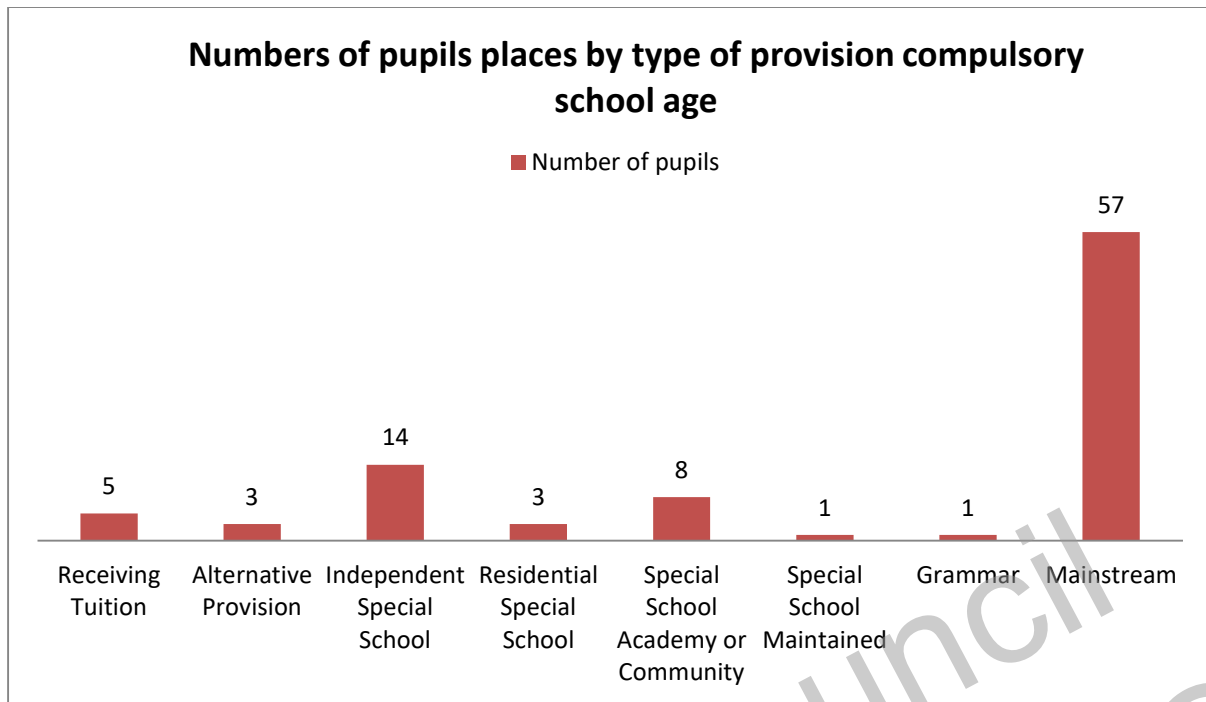
- Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)
- Physical Sensory (PS)
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Physical Disability (PD)
- Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)
- Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)



Primary Category of Need for School Age Pupils	Number of Pupils
Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)	54
Physical Sensory (PS)	1
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	23
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	9
Physical Disability (PD)	1
Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)	1
Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	3

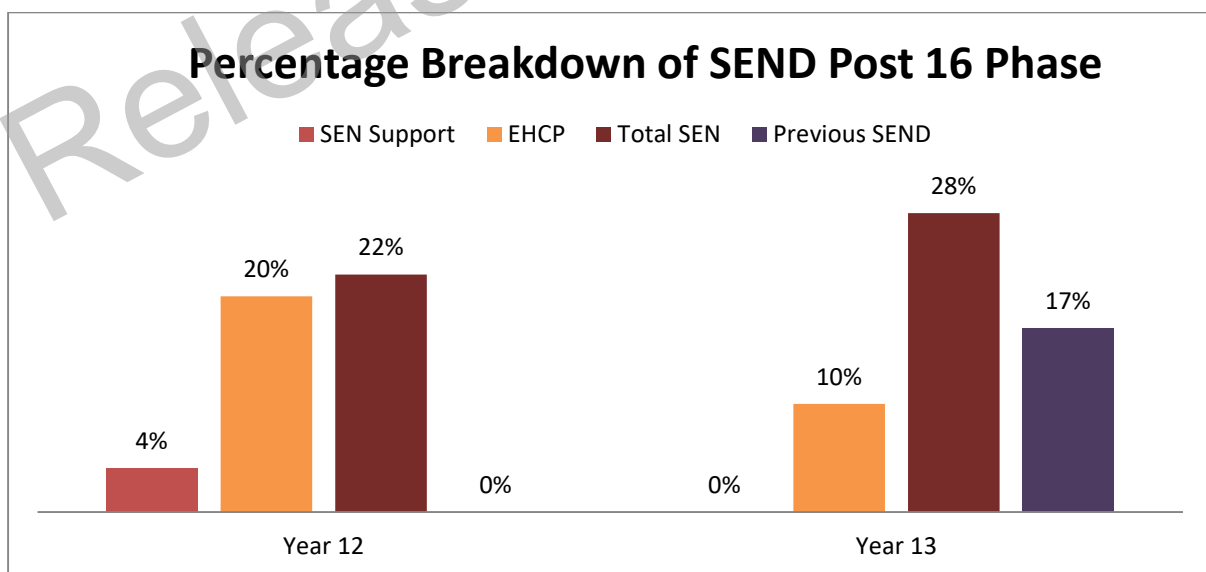
Type of Placement Attended by School Age Pupils who have an Identified SEND

Below is a table detailing the type of provision for the pupils with SEND. It can be seen that 57 pupils (61.9%) of this group are attending a mainstream school. There are some whose needs are very specific and require specialist support in a setting which is matched to these needs. These are either as part of a day school or residential special school. There is a mixture of pupils attending 52 week and 38 week per year education settings. In addition, there are some pupils receiving tuition whilst awaiting a school place and a small number are in alternative provision to support their behavioural and SEND needs.



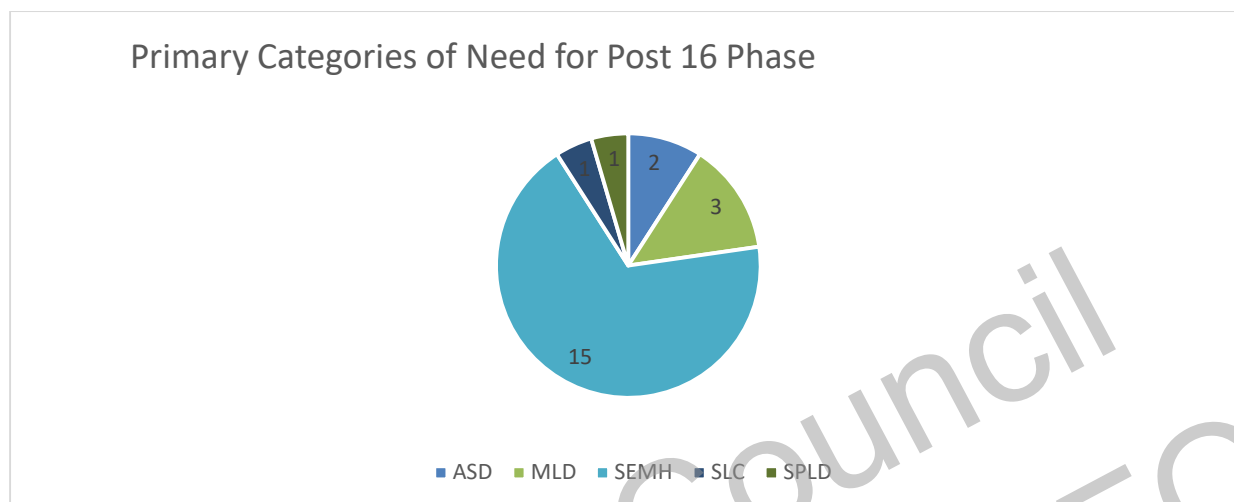
Post 16 Phase

For those young people with SEND who are in the post 16 phase, years 12 and 13, they move to the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Team. The Virtual School work closely with this team to support transition and educational placements when these young people have left school. We still continue to monitor their education as well as ensuring there is a review of the Education, Health Care Plan and that this supports the next steps for our young people. For many of our young people, they are able to manage within a mainstream college setting with smaller classes and targeted support. However, some young people do require continued intensive support for their needs and as such they would attend a specialist placement.



In summary there are 22 post 16 young people (including those who are 18 years old) who are currently on the Virtual School SEND register. This equates to 25.8% of the post 16 cohort. 14 pupils (16.4%) of the total cohort have an EHCP and are having services provided to support their needs.

Post 16 Phase Categories of Need



Phase	Category of Need	Number of Pupils
Post 16	Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	3
	Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMh)	15
	Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	2
	Speech, Language and Communication (SLC)	1
	Severe, Profound Learning Difficulties (SPLD)	1

Overall Actions to Support Pupils with SEND

There are a number of actions we have taken during this year to support our SEN cohort:

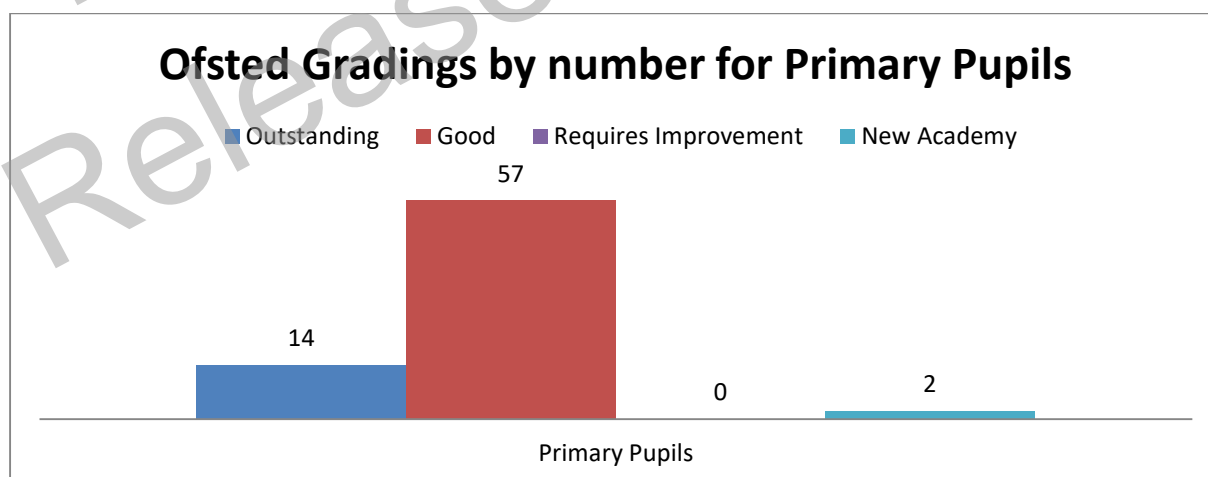
- Our educational psychologist continues to work with the Virtual School for two days per week. This is to provide training, challenge, support and assessments where necessary to meet needs. This has led to more consultations with schools and social care where needs and strategies have been identified.
- Completion of provision maps for all pupils with SEND to check that interventions are meeting need. By doing this we are able to address any gaps in provision and look at ways to maximise progress.
- Promoting greater aspiration for our pupils. This enables schools to be focused on ensuring that our pupils are striving for accelerated progress.
- Focusing on academic and social, emotional and physical progress. This means we can celebrate all aspects of our children/young people's development.
- Using specific assessment programmes to look at evidencing pupil progress in addition to the Personal Education Plan.

- Use of the Boxall profile system (where appropriate) to provide an assessment tool for SEMH needs and to provide strategies for interventions
- Use of the Access to Inclusion toolkit with schools to support those children and young people who have behavioural difficulties and/or trauma and attachment needs which may be a barrier to learning and engagement. This system enables practitioners to use strategies to support our children and young people in their education setting.
- The impact of these systems has been that the Virtual School has been able to provide teaching strategies used by education practitioners to be more effective and to support pupils to overcome their barriers to learning.

School Placement of CLA by OFSTED classification July 2021

It is important that our CLA/CP attend a school that is graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. Therefore, we track the grading of each school and educational establishment that our pupils attend. If a pupil has to change school, we do our utmost to ensure that applications are made to schools that are rated good or above by Ofsted. However, we only ever place a pupil into a school that has a grading of Requires Improvement if there are no other possible solutions. For example, if a child was placed into a stable care placement but schools in that local area were graded as below good. Although our first priority would always be to find a good school. There are situations where a pupil may be in a good school that then receives a poor Ofsted grading. We would not automatically move a pupil if they were happy and making good progress and if they were being well supported. However, we ensure that schools are closely monitored every term to check that pupil progress is good. The data below illustrates the gradings of schools our pupils attend.

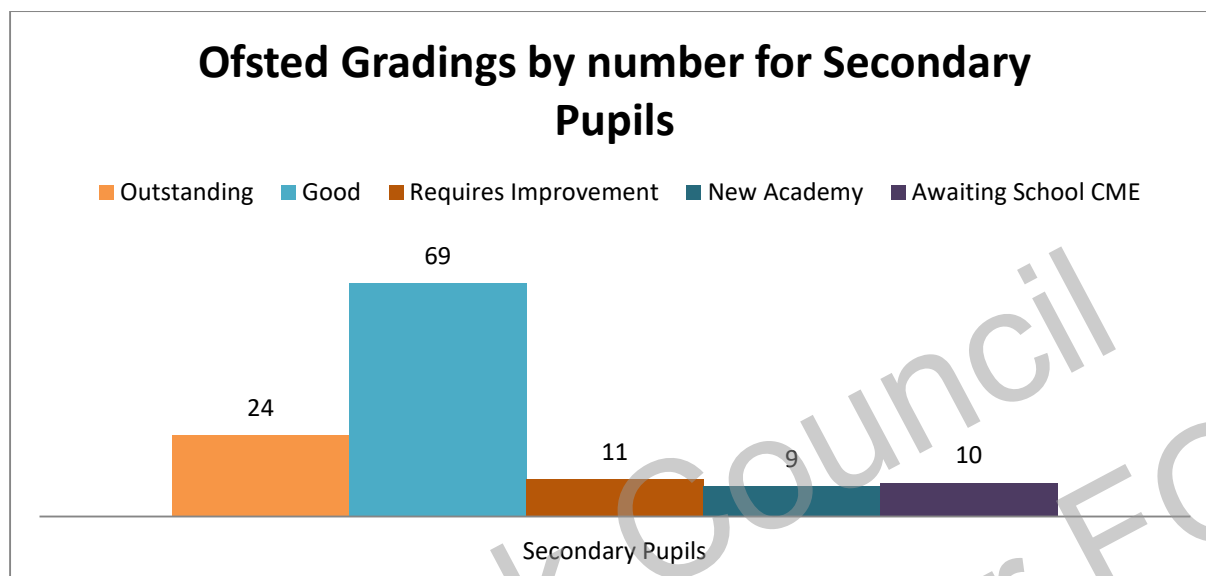
Primary Phase



The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Primary phase who are attending different graded schools.

This equates to 78% attending a school rated GOOD, 19% attending an Outstanding school and 2.7% attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. **In total 97% of our Primary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

Secondary Phase



The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Secondary phase who are attending different graded schools.

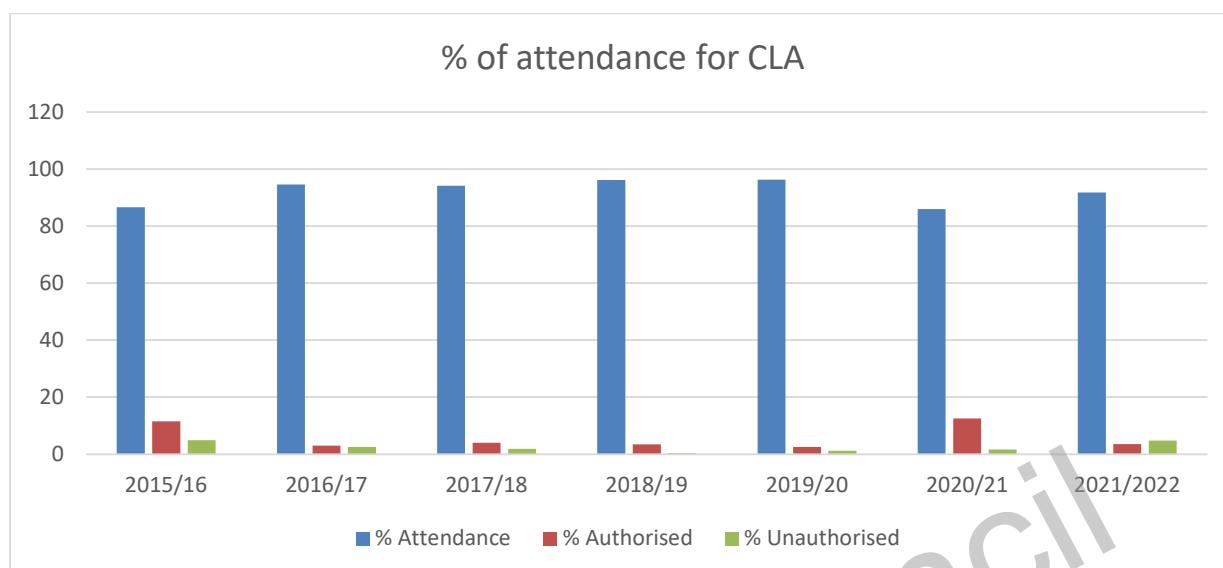
This equates to 56% attending a school rated Good, 19.5% attending an Outstanding school, 8.9% attend a school with a Requires Improvement grade and 7.3% are attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. **In total 75.5% of our Secondary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

Overall School Ofsted Grading Year R to Year 11 is:

- 83.6% of pupils attend a school graded good or above. This has decreased from last year's figure of 87.6%
- 64.2% attend a good school, slight reduction from last year's 70%
- 19.3% attend an outstanding school, an increase from 17.6% last year
- 5.6% attend a school that requires improvement, this has decreased from last year's data which was 10.6%
- 0% of pupils attend an inadequate school, this has reduced from 2% last year
- 5.6% of pupils are attending a school which is awaiting an Ofsted grade due to recent academy conversion
- 5.1% are receiving tuition in the home due to waiting for a school place.

The Virtual School attends the PEPs for all pupils placed in schools less than good and provide additional challenge and support for schools where applicable.

7. Attendance



	% Attendance	% Authorised	% Unauthorised
2015/16	86.6	11.49	4.91
2016/17	94.6	2.9	2.5
2017/18	94.1	4	1.8
2018/19	96.2	3.4	0.4
2019/20	96.3	2.5	1.2
2020/21	85.9	12.48	1.62
2021/22	91.8	3.5	4.8

The attendance figure of 91.8% represents attendance of school age pupils across the academic year. Authorised absence decreased from the previous year which indicates that less time was taken for sickness and there were no forced school closures due to Covid 19. However, unauthorised absence has increased due to increased persistent absence of 35 pupils. Persistent absence is counted when a pupil has an attendance rate of less than 90%.

Nationally there are more incidences of persistent absence. In addition to this, national attendance rates have declined and so we are in line with national trends. The impact of Covid 19 has meant that pupils are now refusing to go to school and some are preferring to learn at home.

As a result of this the Virtual School have been working intensively with our pupils who have had persistent absence and worked creatively with social workers to try to encourage better attendance. For example, by commissioning specialist provision and vocational learning experiences for pupils who are refusing academic/more conventional schooling.

Every pupil who had low attendance had an action plan to improve their engagement with school. We had some successes but there were some pupils that were very hard to motivate and engage.

We are putting attendance high on our agenda for school improvement for the year 2022/23 and looking at developing Emotional School Based Avoidance training and advice which can be used by schools, social workers and foster carers.

We are currently waiting on national data from the Local Authority Interactive Tool to look at our rankings across all local authorities for attendance and persistent absence. This data will be reflected in reporting to Governors as soon as this is available.

8. Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA for over a ten year period. Wherever possible we encourage schools to avoid fixed term exclusions [FTE]. In the academic year 2021/22 FTE have reduced.

Data from 2021/22 shows that we had 42.5 days of exclusion for school age pupils. This equates to 85 sessions.

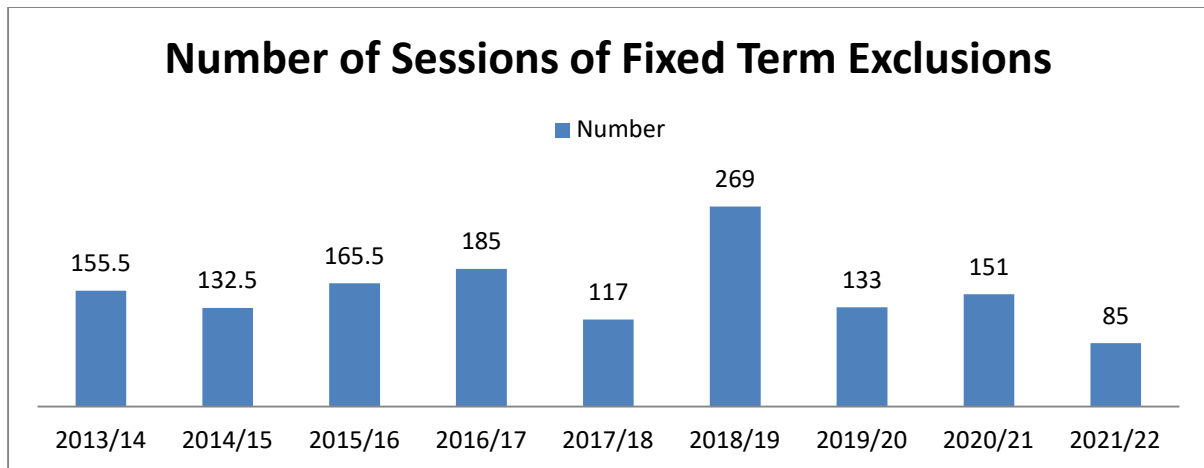
There were 12 school age pupils out of the CLA cohort have experienced a fixed term exclusion (FTE) during the course of the year. **This equates to 6.1% of the total school age cohort and has decreased by 4% the previous year.**

There were some incidences this academic year of some new into care having a FTE both before and after becoming looked after. It would seem that this behaviour could have been communicating a more significant need relating to their home life and then responding when becoming looked after. The Virtual School works with schools to reduce FTE, however, some of our pupils are participating in activities that would warrant the need for exclusion. We have managed to negotiate alternatives to exclusion off site through measures such as:

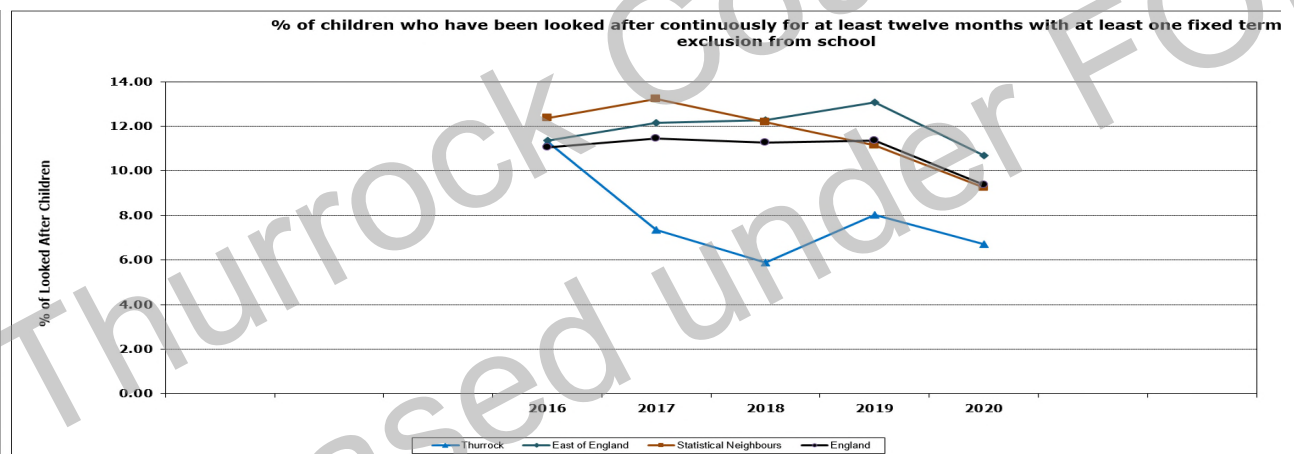
- Internal support
- Action plan meetings when excluded
- Alternative provision
- Managed moved

As a Virtual School we have planned clear actions to continue to reduce FTE. These being to:

- Continue to monitor FTE and continue to actively reduce the amount through support and challenge
- Use of the Access to Inclusion Toolkit to enable schools to better understand the underlying cause of the behaviour
- Provide of intensive Trauma and Attachment training to key schools that has experienced high levels of exclusion. This has led to a significant reduction in excluding behaviour and a re-framing of their behaviour policies.



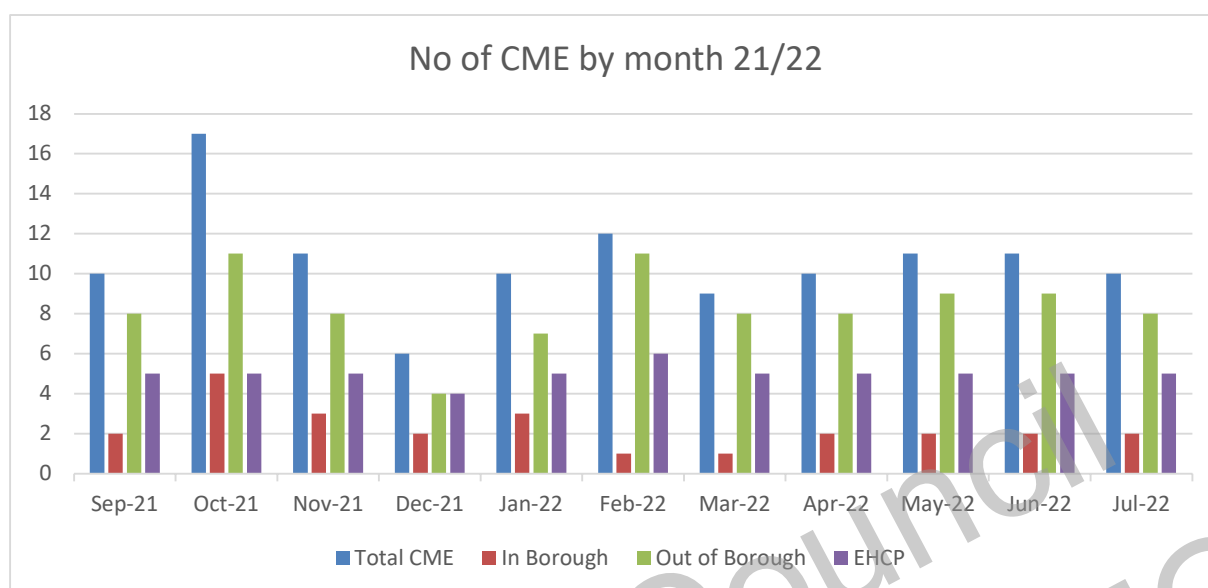
The Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) data for the 4 year period 2016-2020 (the latest set of published data) shows that Thurrock CLA for 12+ months continued to have exclusion rates below the national averages for CLA. This is illustrated in the LAIT graph below. It also ranked Thurrock as 19th in the Country for lowest FTE rates.



9. Children Missing Education [CME]

The Local Authority carefully monitors any child missing education for those CLA/YP placed in and out of borough. The Virtual School produces weekly data for any child who is missing education due to lack of a school place or through extended absence. This data is shared and discussed in Directors Management Team monthly. Monthly CME data is available and provided to Governors on a termly basis. The Virtual School takes action which is individualised to meet the needs of the pupils and where necessary, works with the Admissions Team, Inclusion Manager and SEN Service teams in Thurrock and other boroughs to secure school places or alternative provision. For pupils who are without an educational placement, a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting is held to plan actions for how to secure education provision. Wherever possible the Virtual School provides tuition through commissioned tuition services whilst a student is between educational placements. The biggest challenge for securing education is when those pupils with an EHC Plan

move out of borough and an alternative provision is sought. The consultation processes and changes of local authorities do not enable action to be completed in a timely manner. This matter is discussed weekly at SEN Priority Panel.



The diagram highlights a fluctuation of figures and this very much depends on the profile of pupils coming into care and whether they have education prior to becoming looked after or if they have to move away from their school due to placement availability in borough.

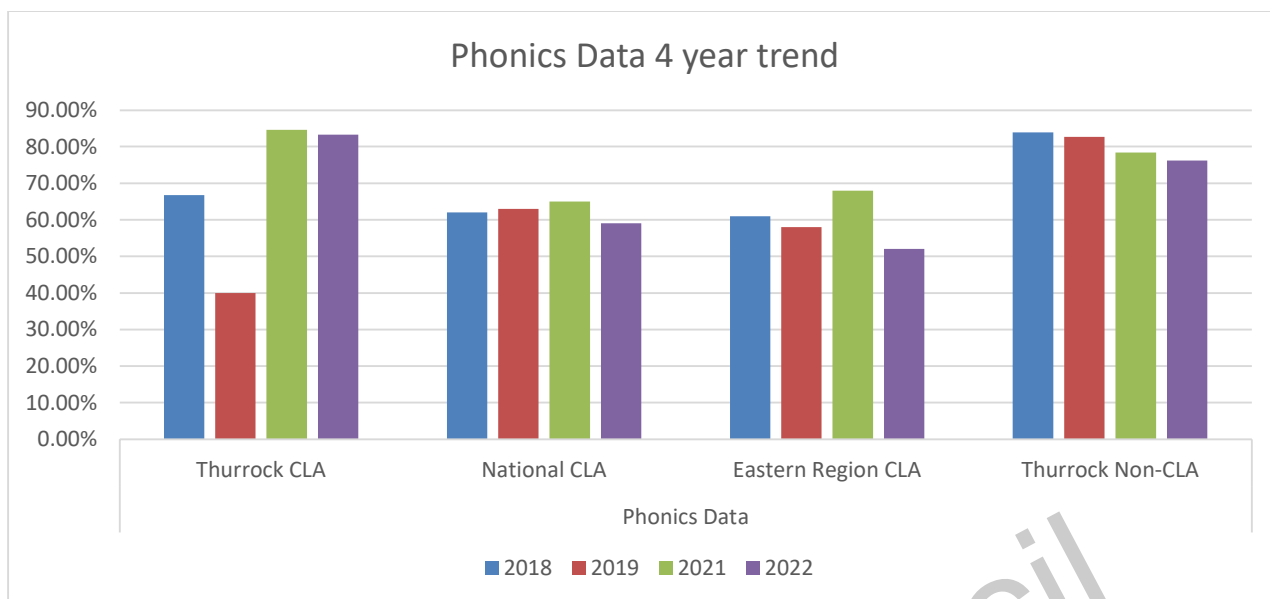
10. Attainment Data of CLA

Due to the cancellation of all testing and exams for the year 2020 and 2021, there was no official attainment data to report. The academic year 2021-2022 saw the reintroduction of formal testing and exams and results we based upon these rather than teacher assessment.

2022 Phonics – Year 1 Pupils aged (5 and 6)

4 year 2 pupils re-took their phonics tests in 2022. Matched data in NCER database shows that 100% of these pupils passed. This table highlights the comparison between pupils looked after to Thurrock, national and eastern region CLA data and compares it against the performance against all Thurrock pupils and national non-looked after pupils.

	Thurrock CLA	National CLA	Eastern Region CLA	Thurrock Non-CLA
2018	66.70%	62%	61%	83.90%
2019	40%	63%	58%	82.70%
2021	84.60%	65%	68%	78.40%
2022	83.30%	59%	52%	76.20%



In 2019 we started to expand our offer of phonics packs and practical resources to Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils. We also used PP+ top slice to purchase additional resources for pupils in the early years and KS1. These included phonemes, diagraphs, trigraphs etc which would help to boost what they could do in the home.

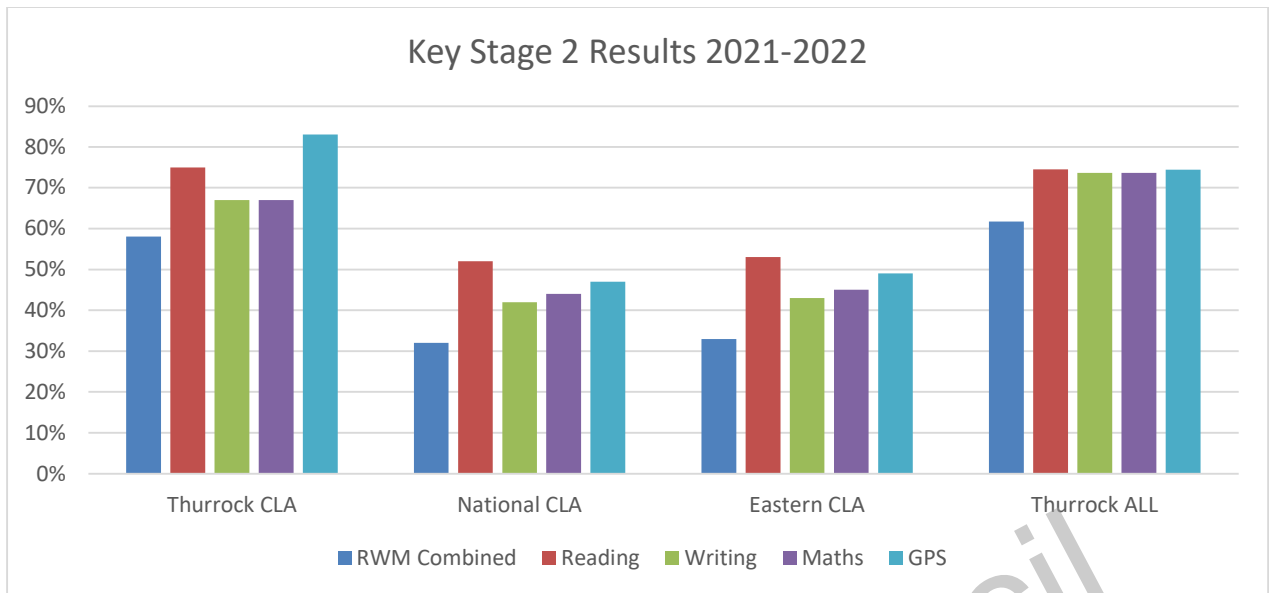
The vast improvements in data began to show. We believe that this is a direct result from using the resources we provided as well as asking schools to track phonics scores and school based interventions within the Personal Education Plans of these key year groups.

Key Stage 2 Data (This is for pupils in Year 6)

Formal testing took place in May 2022. The Local Authority Interactive (LAIT) does not yet have the data for comparisons and so the data detailed below has been extracted from the Department for Education matched data using a data tool called NEXUS/NCER.

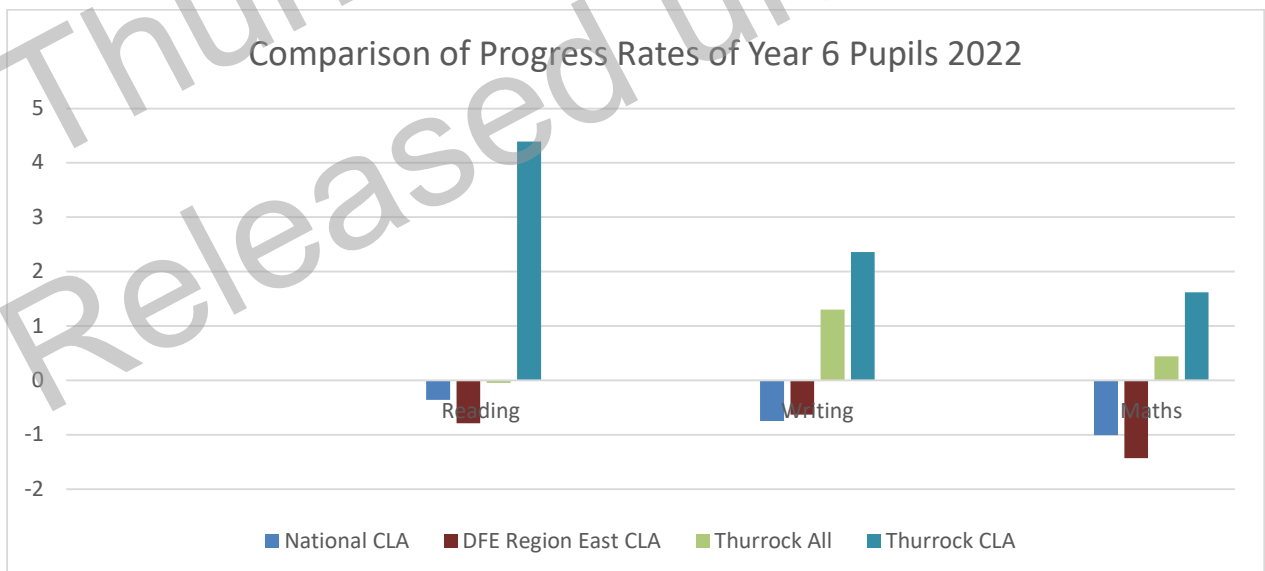
NCER KS2 Benchmark (CLA) (Keypas) 2022 | Keypas | Matched pupils only

Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*			READING			WRITING TA			MATHS			GPS				
		≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	
NCER National (CLA)	3,830	100.0%	32.0%	1.0%	100.9	47.0%	52.0%	13.0%	42.0%	3.0%	99.1	54.0%	44.0%	7.0%	100.3	52.0%	47.0%	11.0%
DfE Region - East (CLA)	290	100.0%	33.0%	2.0%	101.4	47.0%	53.0%	15.0%	43.0%	4.0%	99.3	53.0%	45.0%	8.0%	100.8	50.0%	49.0%	13.0%
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	2,542	0.6%	61.7%	9.2%	104.7	24.3%	74.5%	27.0%	75.0%	17.2%	104.2	25.2%	73.6%	23.2%	105.5	24.7%	74.4%	29.6%
Virtual School - Thurrock	12	100.0%	58.3%	8.3%	104.5	25.0%	75.0%	33.3%	66.7%	8.3%	101.5	33.3%	66.7%	16.7%	104.7	16.7%	83.3%	16.7%



The graph shows how well our Thurrock CLA have performed compared to CLA across the country. They have also closed the gap in reading and Grammar Punctuation and Spelling against all Thurrock pupils and are only 3% away from Thurrock all pupils for Reading, Writing and Maths combined.

Our CLA also accomplished very good rates of progress. Progress is measured against their previous attainment when in Key Stage 1 and then measured against the attainment achieved in Key Stage 2. Good rates of progress are above the baseline which is 0 points. This is illustrated in the graph below.

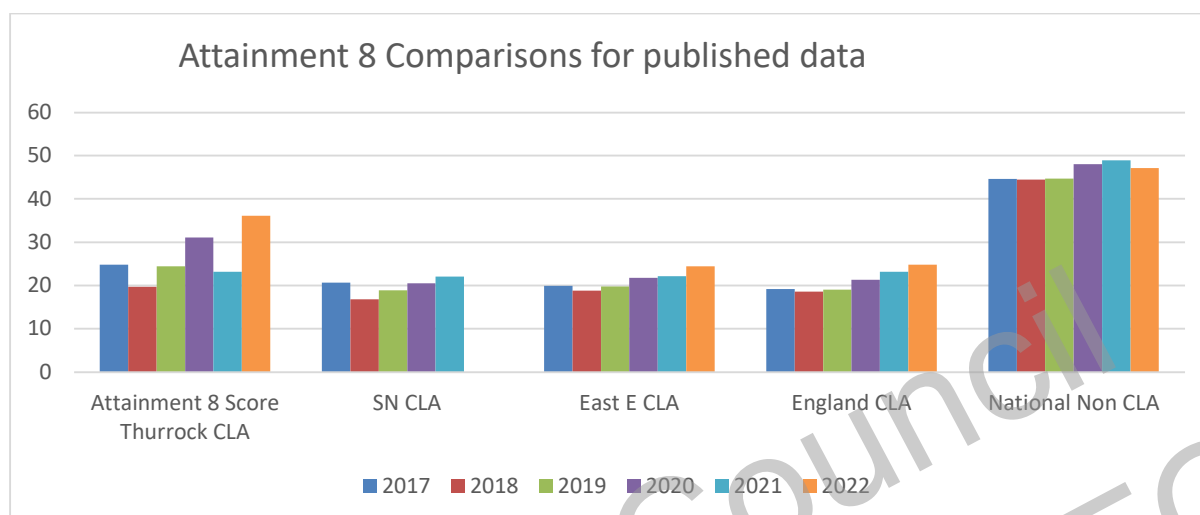


Thurrock CLA made better rates of progress than National and Eastern region CLA and better progress than that of all Thurrock children. The Virtual School team commissioned the use of extra tuition for our pupils. We used government tuition grants which enabled us to extend the amount of tuition we would usually provide with the Pupil Premium Plus top slice money. This tuition has enabled our pupils to

make accelerated progress and provide them with a good footing to starting secondary school.

Key Stage 4 Data (Year 11 GCSE)

Attainment 8 Score



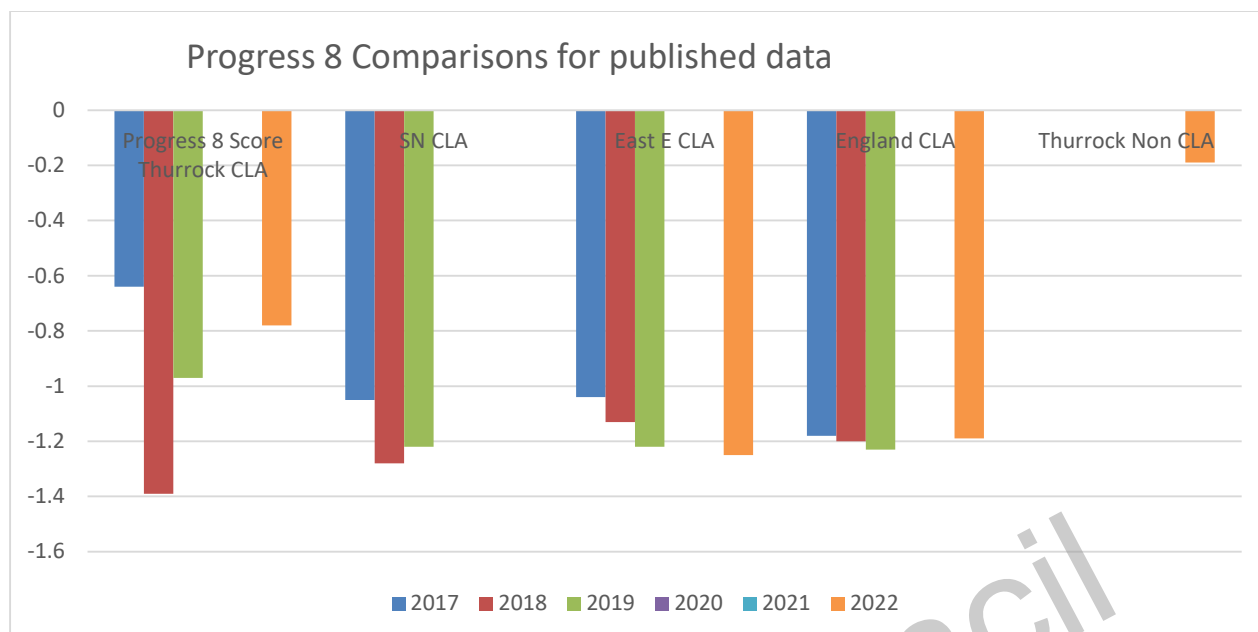
The above chart shows the improved performance of Thurrock CLA since 2017. We need to bare in mind that the size of the cohort fluctuates and we have seen an increase of UASC entering Year 11 and the majority of these young people are not able to sit GCSEs.

However, we have achieved our highest attainment 8 score since 2017 and for 2022 it was 36.1. Attainment 8 data would suggest that we are doing better than CLA with our statistical neighbours and nationally against CLA cohorts. We are also starting to close the gap against non-looked after pupils.

Progress 8 Scores

	Progress 8 Score Thurrock CLA	SN CLA	East E CLA	England CLA	Thurrock Non CLA
2017	-0.64	-1.05	-1.04	-1.18	-0.07
2018	-1.39	-1.28	-1.13	-1.2	-0.19
2019	-0.97	-1.22	-1.22	-1.23	0.03
2020					
2021					
2022	-0.78		-1.25	-1.19	-0.19

There is no data for 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. However, the data that is represented for 2022 would show that our Progress 8 score is improving since 2018.



Key Headlines for Key Stage 4 Data

Whole cohort statistic (Including those not entered for GCSE's due to reason such as SEND and all those currently in care)

23% of the cohort Passed Combined Maths and English Grade 4 or above

13% of the cohort passed combined Maths and English Grade 5 or above

44% of the cohort passed English Grade 4 or above

23% of the cohort passed English Grade 5 or above

23% of the cohort passed Maths grade 4 or above

16% of the cohort passed Maths grade 5 or above

GCSE Entries Statistics (Relating to the cohort entered for GCSEs)

80% passed English Grade 4 or above, 45 % passed English GCSE Grade 5 or above

45% passed Maths Grade 4 or above, 30% passed Maths GCSE Grade 5 or above

45% passed Maths and English Combined at Grade 4 or above, 25 % passed Maths and English Combined at Grade 5 or above

In care for 12 Months +, Whole Cohort (Including those not entered for GCSE)

46% passed English Grade 4 or above, 24% passed English Grade 5 or above

24 % passed Maths Grade 4 or above, 15% passed Maths Grade 5 or above

24% passed Maths and English Combined at Grade 4 or above, 12 % passed Maths and English Combine at Grade 5 or above

In care for 12 Months +, and entered for GCSEs

80% passed English Grade 4 or above, 45 % Passed English Grade 5 or above

45% passed Maths Grade 4 or above, 30% passed Maths Grade 5 or above

45% passed Maths and English combined at Grade 4 or above, 25 % passed Maths and English combined grade 5 or above

More comparative data will be made available using the LAIT document and further published data.

11. **Summary of Actions for all Key Stages to improve 2023 data**

What are we doing to improve academic performance?

- Provision of Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to those aged between 3-9 years old
- Provision of 1-1 tuition throughout Year 11 in maths, English and science
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for Year 10 pupils starting in the spring term of year 10
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 5 starting in the spring term of year 5
- Provision of 1-1 tuition in maths and English throughout year 6 for this year group
- Conducting termly school visits for key year groups of children and those who are not making expected progress
- Creation of action plans for those pupils who are not making progress
- Provision of tuition for those requesting it in Year 12 to support the transition into post 16 learning
- Evidencing the work of the Virtual School through PEPS, visit notes and case notes
- Development of SEND support materials to further improve the outcomes for this group of children
- Development of a range of interventions for certain year groups and needs
- Continuing the interventions and key actions developed over the previous years to build upon good practice and successful outcomes
- Provision of phonics resources for N2 through to Year 2 pupils
- Provision of kindles upon request to promote reading
- Provision of maths resources for Year 4 and 5 to support multiplication testing.

12. Case Studies

Case studies provide some insight into the individual work that is completed by members of the Virtual School to improve outcomes for children and young people. Each phase leader provides a case study for the Governing Body every term as part of our reporting and accountability mechanisms. These can be seen in reports to Governors.

Here is a sample of some we have collected over the year

Secondary Phase Adviser

Background: Two Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) arrived together, they were brothers, one was 16 years old and one 13 years. I attended the Personal Education Plan meetings. Both young people have had a very traumatic journey to the UK, fleeing persecution in their country. The younger brother was visibly traumatised, holding teddy bear and the hand of his brother throughout the meeting. He became upset when school was mentioned, began crying and shaking, young person had never left the side of his mother at home, never attended school and was kept at home at all times, he has lost his primary care giver and was very upset at the thought of going to school and leaving his brother's side.

Action: I reassured him that we would take it slowly, we would try school when he felt ready and we would arrange it in a way that he felt safe. Began introducing tuition, both boys asked for tuition together, but this wasn't appropriate due to age difference, I organised for tutor to take both boys separately but allow the sibling to remain in the room, this worked really well and we built up confidence to eventually having tuition with the other out of the room. When he was more settled in placement and felt safer we began to look at schools, organised school visits and virtual tours with brother by his side. By this time the older brother has started college and reassured his sibling that he would always return and was having positive experiences in college. Needs were shared, a new school was identified, and gradual start arranged.

Impact: He is now attending school on his own with English as Additional Language intervention, supplementary tuition remains in place and the young person is doing well and is gaining in confidence and independence.

Primary Phase Adviser

Background: The young girl came into care in Feb 2020 just before the pandemic at 9yrs and 7mths old. Due to the where the foster placement was located, she started at a new school. At this point (Year 4) she had a reading age of 7yrs and 10 months and was working at a high Year 1 low Year 2 level. This is below national expectations. She has witnessed significant trauma and neglect and had been out of school for over a year. She has always had a thirst for learning and was excited

about going to school. By the Spring term of the following year she was working at the top end of Year 4 level emerging Y5. She was making good progress. She was not on track to reach age related expectations.

Action: Tuition was put in place from Easter in Year 5 through to Year 6 (May 22).

A Personal Education Plan meeting was held in May 2022 just before SATs whereby the predictions for SATs were looking like she may not get the age related expectation results and was working in a high Year 5 and a low Year 6 level for writing and Maths and a low to middle Y6 level for Reading but was still very close.

However, her results from national testing showed that she reached expected standards for her age and stage.

Results	Reading- 101 - Expected	Writing- Expected	Maths- 108 - Expected	GPS- 109 Expected
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Impact: Significant confidence in her learning and her ability to learn and try things out. Has a thirst for learning and is engaged in all areas of her learning. Is inquisitive and happy. Has now settled well into Y7. From her starting point, her baseline was working at over two years behind her peers. Has made accelerated progress. Settled in placement and in school.

Post 16 Adviser

Background: A young man came in to care in April 2017 and was quickly moved to a residential site where education was provided on site in the form of a small school for children and young people who had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). He was very settled in this placement and an enhanced transition took place for post 16 education and he successfully transitioned into an outdoor based course for his first year of post 16. However, his placement broke down in June of 2022 and he was moved to another placement. Due to this, he was also unable to complete his course and was frustrated by this and stated that he didn't want to engage in any further education.

Action: There were a number of intensive meetings and varying forms of communication which took place between myself and a college that I had identified. I believed that the college could meet his needs. I was able to source a college placement which could support him. I then had to convince the young person that that this was a positive step. I worked with the social worker, and we visited the young person to discuss the benefits of education and reintegration back into college. We then jointly visited the college for a tour, supported with enrolment and provided support and reassurance relating to the day-to-day routine.

Impact/Outcomes: The young man started college and is receipt of an education. There has been a significant improvement in his confidence, and he is much happier.

We will be reviewing progress in November 2022 when he was the annual review of his EHCP.

13. **School Improvement Priorities**

These are detailed in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is updated at the start of every academic year. Priorities are identified and actions are detailed related to targets and actions which form the basis of the Virtual School's work. The aim of this document is to promote the raising of educational outcomes for all of our Children Looked After and Young People. This is reviewed every half term and reports to the Governing Body detail progress towards each priority. These can be found in additional documents which are produced termly for the Governing Body.

Key Priorities for 2021-2022 were

To improve achievement of all pupils by:

[KP 1] Increasing the use of diagnostic/screening tools to meet needs and ensure that interventions match academic, social and emotional needs

This has been developed across the course of the academic year and is being used for pupils that have the greatest need. We have been using a tool called Access to Inclusion (AIT) which enables professionals to plot the behaviours of the child/young person onto an assessment grid. This then provides professionals with an insight into the type of attachment style the C/YP may have. It then develops a programme of support and interventions which could be used to help behaviour and enable the pupil to be more settled at home and in the school.

This has worked very well with the pupils who have been assessed and we have also extended licences to all Thurrock schools as we feel that this tool can support a range of needs of all pupils.

For some pupils we have also been using the Boxall Profile which is based on assessing Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) aspects of behaviour. This has provided us with a different option and suggestions, although we have had more success with using the AIT as this is more user friendly for teachers and other professionals.

The impact of these tools has been that there is a greater common understanding and language to support our pupils and the SEMH needs.

Schools have felt more confident to try strategies of support which have gone further than the usual ones which may have traditionally been used.

It has also seen a reduction in the number of Fixed Term Exclusions.

[KP 2] Continuing to embed processes of quality assurance of educational provision

Staff have been working with a range of schools and settings across the academic year both face to face and virtually. We have approximately 138 different education settings that we work with across the year. Every school is rated by us depending upon the quality of the Personal Education Plans as well as the educational offer that they provide. A range of factors such as aspiration, use of additional funds and behavioural support are also included in the criteria that we assess against. We then target our intervention, support and challenge depending upon the rating given for that setting.

We have a clear focus relating to pupil progress and so we provide more support and challenge when pupil progress is not in line with expectations.

On the whole we have excellent relationships with schools and settings, and this enables us to advocate for our children and young people. We have found that this critical friend and supportive approach enables schools to trust our judgements and listen to our advice.

This model has meant that more schools and settings have been RAG rated Green due to the targeted work we have completed.

[KP 3] Continuing to provide support and challenge to all professionals to ensure that provision meets need and accelerates pupil progress

This key priority is closely linked with KP 2. Our work involves liaising with a range of professionals. We provide challenge to professionals if we have evidence which shows that educational success is not being prioritised.

Much of the scrutiny we do is through the quality assurance of the Personal Education Plan. This enables the team to look at areas for development for the child/young person and to check that provision is supporting needs and driving pupil progress.

Our day-to-day work involves working with carers, schools, social workers and other partners to enable plans and actions to be focussed on educational matters. We also have formal ways to do this by attending panels such as placement panel, emotional well-being panels and children missing education meetings, as well as attendance at strategic groups. We also provide written guidance, policies and training to enable all colleagues to understand our processes and our vision for improving outcomes.

[KP 4] Focussing on pupils who may have persistent absence and explore strategies to overcome barriers to attendance

We have worked extensively with our children and young people who have had poor school attendance. We have triangulated strategy with carers, schools and social workers to encourage good attendance and remove the potential barriers. Every

case has been unique and we have had some successes. However, there have been some pupils who have been very resistant to physically attending an education setting and so we have had to work creatively with their placement to source appropriate educational experiences.

Every pupil has an action plan for attendance and every pupil is contacted by their school and the Virtual School to check that they are safe. It has also been very important that the young person has been 'kept in mind' and knows that there are key adults that are concerned for their welfare.

We have planned to look at emotional based school avoidance and focus on this issue for the forthcoming academic year. This is a national issue in light of the pandemic where pupils are now refusing to attend school and they may have emotional and mental health reasons for doing so. Therefore, this remains a big focus for us moving forward.

[KP 5] Developing a strategy to address the new requirements around supporting children with a social worker CIN/CP

A new staff member joined the team in October 2021 with the sole responsibility for developing a strategic approach to improving outcomes for children with a social worker. This is a trial project that is being funded by the Department for Education. Much of the work completed in this academic year has focussed on:

- Informing relevant teams and professionals within Thurrock about the expectations of the new duties
- Sourcing the relevant data relating to Children With a Social Worker (CWSW). This being for example, attendance, attainment, exclusion
- Analysing data for patterns, strengths and areas for development
- Establishing contacts and working parties from schools and social care to have a joint working approach
- Liaising with a range of professionals in a different way. We have many established relationships in place relating to our CLA work but needed to look at the broader aspect of CWSW via their Children in Need or those subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Provision of training in the form of trauma and attachment for all schools
- Purchasing resources for Thurrock schools which supports them to assess and intervene for those pupils with SEMH difficulties. This has been with the Access to Inclusion Toolkit
- Working creatively with the MASH team to establish better understanding between schools and the MASH processes
- Working with social care and school and health partners to re-write the threshold document
- Attendance at 0-11 and 11-25 Strategy Groups to promote the new duties and develop strategic ways of working linked to the new duties
- Working with national and eastern region virtual schools to look at best practice and developing strategies with the most impact

We recognise that there is still a lot to accomplish with this. We are hoping that this will become statutory, and that greater guidance will be provided to schools and other professionals from the Department for Education (DFE) which will enable our expectations to become statutory rather than voluntary. We have employed another member of staff to support with this project who will be starting with us in the autumn term 2022. This person has worked with the Virtual School and social care before so has many relationships already embedded. Additionally, it will provide extra capacity to visit every Thurrock school personally to provide a consultancy approach.

[KP6] Continuing to focus on the needs of, and provision for, SEN pupils to support learning and development

This year we have embedded a range of processes to track pupil progress for SEND. We have been using B Squared for this as well as looking at the social and emotional aspects of learning.

Every pupil with SEND has a provision map which details the support that is received within school and with wider services. We have used this to track interventions and check that they are supporting need and driving progress.

In addition to this, our termly progress data tracking sheets are updated to measure progress and if pupils are not making sufficient progress, this is followed up by a member of the VS team.

Many specialist education settings are using their own assessment methods to evidence progress e.g. milestones and so it is essential that VS staff speak with settings to gauge progress. In addition, we attend every annual review of an EHCP where possible and we link very closely with Thurrock SEND team to joint casework pupils.

There are two designated case workers in the SEND team who manage the EHCP work linked to our Looked After Children. We implemented that to ensure that there was good communication processes between SEND, social care and ourselves. This has worked very effectively.

14. **Allocation and Impact of the Pupil Premium**

The management of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children Looked After is detailed in the DFE guidance [Pupil premium grant 2021 to 2022: conditions of grant and Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities](#).

The Pupil Premium Plus Policy details the rationale and method behind the allocation of this funding.

Settings receive £1,800 which is released in three equal installments of £600 every term. The Virtual School Headteacher tracks spending on a termly basis in line with the quality assurance process of Personal Education Plans (PEP). This tracking

centers on how this money is used to raise the achievement of the child/young person and assesses if funds are being used appropriately. This process, alongside the PEP process is supporting the pupil to have targeted support and intervention which directly affects and plans for his/her academic and overall school achievement with a personalised approach. It is enabling the Virtual School to be updated on progress data and enables discussion with the school to center on appropriate intervention. This system promotes accountability and improved dialogue in how to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the gap. [Separate Pupil Premium documentation is available on request].

Overview of Spending by the Virtual School

The Virtual School received PP+ funding for 231 pupils aged from Year Reception to Year 11. This figure is based upon the SDA903 census return by social care. This was 20 pupils fewer than the previous year. The Virtual School top sliced £545 per pupil for the academic year and used this to provide resources to support the most vulnerable in the cohort. This equates to the top slice being £125,895 for the year 21/22.

A minimum of £352,800 was distributed to schools based upon the number of eligible pupils and extra funded support. This may have been more for schools that required extra funding and was dependent upon individual cases. Of the pupils who were without a school place, they were provided with additional tuition which exceeded the £2345 per pupil. We also ensured that once they had a school place, pupil premium plus was paid to the new school.

When a pupil enters care at any point in the academic year, the educational setting immediately starts to receive PP+ funding for the term the pupil entered care. In some cases, the pupil may require additional funding for specific needs and to support the transition into care. This is allocated from the top slice. When a pupil moves school, the PP+ funding follows that child/young person to ensure that needs are met in their new setting.

When a pupil leaves care during an academic year the school/educational placement receives the remaining amount of PP+ up to the sum of £2,345. This is to cover any shortfall in funding in the interim between leaving care and being eligible for PP+ funding for being Previously Looked After [PLAC].

In line with our Pupil Premium Plus Policy, schools are able to claim for additional funding to meet the needs of the pupil in excess of the allocated £1,800. This is used to support those pupils who have high needs and need significant intervention to remain in school. This has proved to be a very successful use of the top slice as this has ensured that we have had zero permanent exclusions.

All of pupils who attended a school and were eligible to receive the funding were provided with the allocation of £1800. This was dependent upon the conditions of

grant. For example, pupils in specialist independent schools would already have EHCP funding as well as school fees and so they would be double funded. However, each application is carefully considered and if PP+ can support learning then we would allocate it.

Additional income was obtained for Children with a Social Worker. This was £100,000 but this funding was not to be allocated to individual children. The intended use for this money was to support the development of strategy to raise educational outcomes across Thurrock for CWSW. This grant has also been provided for the financial year 22/23.

An additional grant of 'catch up' tuition funding was also provided by the DFE and this was £20,792. This money went towards our tuition costs.

There was also £30,000 to support the information, advice and guidance role that we fulfil for Previously Looked After.

In total interventions that were used to raise educational outcomes were £207,495.

Spending Overview of Pupil Premium Plus using top slice and additional grants and Virtual School core budget

Resource	Cost	Justification of Spend
Letter Box Book Trust Reading Materials for Nursery to Year 4	£10,281.78	To promote reading activities in the home. Foster positive relationships in the home via games and joint activity. Make CLA feel special to have own post
Activity Day for CLA at Grangewaters (contribution from VS)	£994.50	This was a social care led event using our local council run outdoor and adventurous activities centre. Gave our CLA lots of fun opportunities to explore the outdoors, building relationships, developing resilience and confidence to try to new experiences.
Commission of AC Education to Provide Trauma and Attachment to schools via an 18 months intensive consultancy approach	£48,763.80	This training is being provided to Thurrock schools to support all Thurrock pupils and not just those who are looked after or for Children with a Social Worker. Not all schools have taken this offer up yet but there are a few that are able to start the programme in the next academic year 22/23. We were also able to part fund this using the CWSW funding as well as PP+ top slice.
Trauma and Attachment Books and the Access to Inclusion user licence	£10,931	This provided training and support materials for our out of borough schools that we work with as well as all Thurrock schools. Training was provided to schools across 3 days. We have more of this planned in the forthcoming year.
Provision of IT resources for Children/Young People	£18,854.68	These resources which include software and virus protection have been used to support the

Looked After		education of pupils. This enables them to complete online tutoring, home work and school led projects.
Tutoring	£119,611.60 We obtained an additional £20,792 from the DFE for catch up tuition. This was all spent and allocated to key year groups.	This tutoring involves the employment of 1-1 tutors who either work face to face or virtually with a range of our pupils across the year. The impact of tuition has been seen with the progress and attainment data for our key year groups. In addition to this we ensure that when a pupil is missing education (i.e with no school provision) tuition is used to support education whilst a provision is found. Additionally some of our Year 12 and 13 pupils have received tuition to help with exams or new courses. Our UASC pupils are also provided with online learning materials and tuition to support their learning of English.
Commissioning of Open Door Mentoring Services	£16,000	This service is used to support individual pupils with mentoring based upon needs. This is an intervention which is bespoke and works on different areas such as conflict resolution, gangs, self-esteem, choices etc. This is reserved for 10 pupils per academic year but we can commission more if necessary.
Equipment for pupils – dictionaries for UASC, Functional Skills workbooks for UASC, phonics packs for Nursery to Year 2 ages ranges, maths resources for Year 4 and 5, revision resources for year 10 and 11.	£912.37	Pupils are supported with the relevant materials they need to support home learning and revision. This is to support achievement in testing and home work.

Although the total amount of intervention funding exceeded our top slice amount, we were able to utilise some funding obtained in April 2022 when the new financial year started. We were also able to use some funding from the Children with a Social Worker grant as this is aimed at supporting all Thurrock schools and pupils. The PP+ is allocated across a financial year but we use the funds across an academic year. This means we are able to allocate resources to schools and pupils according to need. It is essential that all of this money is allocated because Thurrock would be obliged to pay back any underspend at the end of a financial year. The Virtual School Head is committed to spending this money carefully and that it has the maximum amount of impact on pupils as possible.

The majority of funding this academic year was spent on 1-1 tuition for pupils. This is funded at between £48 and £55 per hour of tuition, depending upon the tuition provider and the type of provision package.

Our tuition offer was:

- Year 5 tuition English and maths starting in February 2022
- Year 6 tuition for English and maths from September 21-May 22 – they had started their tuition in Year 5 the previous academic year
- Year 10 tuition English and maths and science starting in February 2022
- Year 11 tuition for English and maths from September 21-May 22 – they had started their tuition in Year 10 the previous academic year
- Tuition for any UASC without a school place in line with our Children Missing Education policy.
- Tuition for all pupils who were missing education. 15 hours per week to support learning until a school placement was secured.

As parting of the reporting process, The Virtual School Head submits spending overviews to the Governing Body of the Virtual School to detail the planned intent of top slice spending.

15. Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans

The Personal Education Plan [PEP] is a key document to support the child's/young person's education. Where possible the Virtual School attends specific PEP meetings. It is also important that the Virtual School attends PEP meetings for particularly vulnerable students or when a potential issue has been identified. For example, concern with progress. The VS team is responsible for Quality Assuring [QA] every PEP. Compliance data is shown in the table below. This shows that PEP compliance remained above 90% throughout the year, except for February which saw a decline in compliance. Some PEPs were out of timescale due to absence of staff in schools or in social care.

PEP Compliance Data for Academic Year 2021-2022

Month	Overall Compliance	Early Years - N2	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Sep-21	93%	67%	93%	98%	87%
Oct-21	91%	83%	97%	95%	80%
Nov-21	97%	83%	99%	96%	84%
Dec-21	95%	83%	100%	98%	84%
Jan-22	95%	83%	100%	98%	84%
Feb-22	86%	98%	93%	80%	75%
Mar-22	90%	100%	92%	86%	82%
Apr-22	93%	100%	93%	94%	82%
May-22	96%	100%	93%	98%	80%
Jun-22	97%	100%	76%	96%	82%
Jul-22	98%	100%	94%	96%	84%

Quality of Personal Education Plans

In addition to the PEP compliance data the Virtual School track the quality of PEPs. Every Personal Education Plan document is quality assured for each pupil for each term. We have a clear quality assurance framework which is shared with social workers and the schools/colleges.

PEP quality has remained a focus for improvement, and we have provided training, support and challenge to attempt to mitigate the production of a poor quality PEP. PEPS are only graded RED (poor quality) if there are no minutes or young person's views.

Month	Overall Good Quality %	% Amber	% RED	Awaiting Grading
Sep-21	65%	8.00%	21%	6%
Oct-21	67%	12%	19%	3%
Nov-21	74%	9%	12%	5%
Dec-21	71%	11%	13.00%	5%
Jan-22	74%	10%	11%	5%
Feb-22	76%	12%	12%	0%
Mar-22	79%	11%	10%	0%
Apr-22	80%	10%	10%	0%
May-22	82%	10%	8%	0%
Jun-22	74%	13%	13%	0%
Jul-22	76%	12%	12%	0%

Where a PEP has not been graded, this means it is waiting to be closed by the team before officially graded.

What Next?

- Quality of PEPs remains a focal point for improvement. In the forthcoming year the VS will continue to provide PEP training and support to social workers, schools and colleges
- Pupil Premium Plus funding will be withheld from schools if the education section is not completed to a high standard
- In the following academic year, the team will be changing the format of Quality Assurance (QA) by putting the QA document within the PEP rather than as a standalone document. There are also some changes to the PEP minutes which will come into effect in September 2022. There will also be a thematic approach to quality assurance which will focus on certain aspects of the PEP rather than the whole document

- PEPs will still be scrutinised every term for the quality of educational targets and how they are linking to Pupil Premium Plus applications.

16. **Post 16 Update**

The Virtual School supports pupils who have left Year 11 and are moving onto the next stage of their education. Pupils take a variety of paths either through level 1, 2 or 3, FE or HE qualifications. Others combine apprenticeships with obtaining qualifications. Every pupil is supported appropriately to create the next step that is suitable for them. Conversations regarding post 16 pathways are discussed in Year 10. Transition conversations and post 16 aspirations are looked at as early as Year 9 and then finalised before the student leaves Year 11 and they are supported with applying for college positions and courses. All pupils should receive a careers interview before leaving school and our CLA also have access to careers advice via the Inspire Youth Hub team. After the students receive their qualifications, they are further supported to apply for places again if they were unsuccessful with their original choice and all can access support from the Virtual School 16+ Education Adviser if necessary. Such activities that are supported include applying for a bursary, receiving additional tuition, interventions and attendance at disruption meeting with colleges and employers. Further Education Personal Education Plans are put in place for every student, even those without an educational placement. The Virtual School works closely with the aftercare team to support pupils in Year 13 and beyond.

University Students

Although the Virtual School does not hold responsibility for these students we still like to support our young people as they leave care and head off to university. This is in the form of IT resources and vouchers for their living costs as they leave Year 13. It remains the aspiration of Thurrock Council that as many care leavers as possible can access higher education if they choose to.

17. **Not in Education Employment or Training [NEET]**

The Virtual School closely monitors any post 16 young person who has CLA status and who is NEET. They are monitored at least fortnightly and the Post 16+ Education Adviser works with the young person, social care, personal advisors and local colleges and businesses to create the best possible opportunity for the young person to be placed in education, employment or training. NEET data is provided to the Virtual School Governing Body every term as part of the Headteacher's report.

Not in Employment Education or Training [NEET] Strategy Meeting

Each month the virtual school team meet with social workers for NEET young people to discuss the cases. There is an action matrix which is created to detail all actions planned and then evaluate the impact of these. A representative from Inspire Youth Hub attends this meeting so there is a co-ordinated approach wherever possible.

The aftercare team manager is also invited as well as the service manager of CLA. This approach enables discussion and actions to be prioritised to support the young person back into EET.

Barefoot E Learning for NEET Young People

This is an online course package which is used in addition to the offers provided by Inspire. Our young people are given this as an option to access a variety of academic and vocational courses which they can choose depending upon interests and their chosen next steps. Feedback from our young people has been that they have found this interesting and manageable to do. It has given them the confidence to try new things and to access this learning at their own pace. The total cost for this was £1,200 for the year and this has already proven to be beneficial for many students as an access back into education.

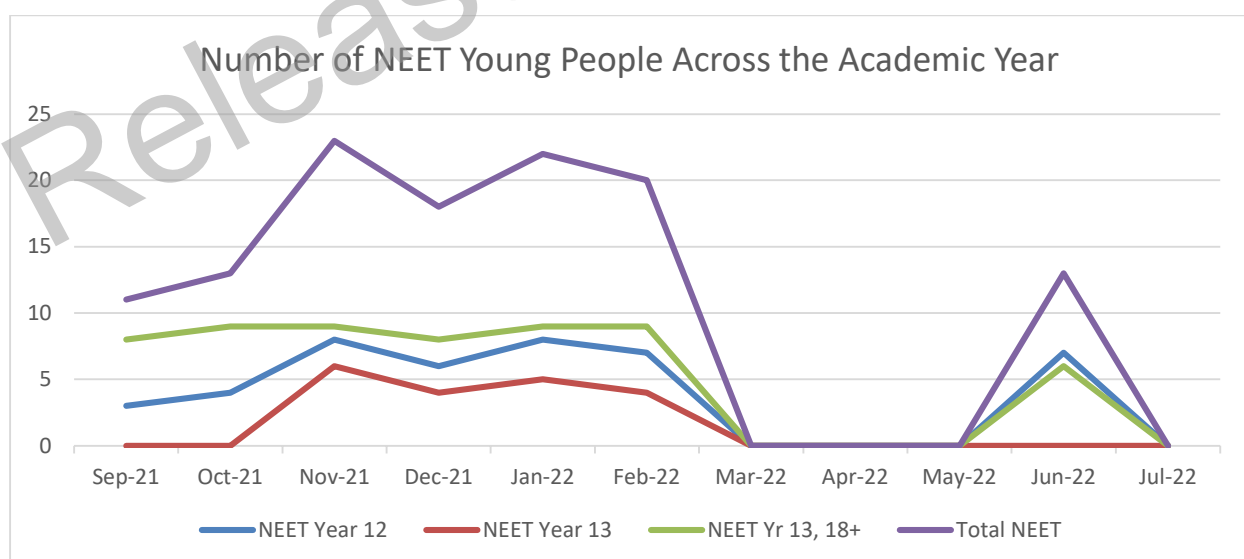
Contact with NEET Young People

The post 16 adviser contacts every NEET young person every week/fortnight. Some young people require more contact than others and so this could be several times per week.

Not in Education, Employment or Training Data

These figures include those who have recently come into care and those who have recently left care due to being 18 years old. If a pupil becomes 18 during Year 13, the Virtual School still monitors and supports alongside the aftercare team.

Strategies for NEET support are noted above in this report. Some NEET young people have been involved with re-engagement activities throughout the year and this has meant that they can complete some training and tuition.



What Next?

- Ensure that all NEET pupils continue to have a NEET action plan which is reviewed every month
- Provide challenge to semi-supported accommodation key workers to ensure they are promoting EET to our young people
- Liaise with social care to check that mental health and well-being is being supported
- Collection of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores to check mental health is being supported

18. **Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

There continues to be a demand for the Virtual School team to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. We currently have 11% of our cohort classified as UASC. The regional sharing protocol arrangements have enabled young people to be transferred to boroughs with fewer numbers than Thurrock. The number of UASC coming into Thurrock has not reduced and as some of our previous UASC have left care, Thurrock Local Authority are distributing fewer young people to other boroughs. This year we have continued to support the educational needs of these young people. This has included 1-1 tuition of school age pupils and the provision of online learning packages to all young people. The priority with all is to obtain school or college placements as soon as possible to promote the learning of English. We have also created stationary packs, provided dictionaries in native languages and Entry Level 1 and 2 materials to support with ESOL and basic maths and English. These have been well received by our young people. Our older UASC pupils continue to do well in their colleges and schools and those who have been with us for over 12 months are making good progress with their English.

We also saw that there was a need for our Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to be adapted into different languages so that our young people could access this. We require all of our pupils to have up to date SDQ scores and so we needed for them to answer their own set of questions to triangulate against the scores from other professionals.

What Next?:

- Embed the use of assessment materials for our young people so that we can track English progress more easily – especially for those without a school/college placement
- Support settings to use this assessment material

19. **Virtual School Governing Body**

The Virtual School Governing Body [GB] was formed in the autumn term 2016. Meetings are held once per term. The Governing Body is used to hold the Virtual

School to account and ensure that the team are maximising positive outcomes for CLA.

The members of this GB 2021/2022 were:

Chair: M Lucas [Assistant Director of Learning, Skills and Inclusion]

Headteacher: K Pullen [Virtual School]

In Borough School Representative Secondary: Dr S Asong [CEO Ortu Academy Trust]

In Borough School Representative Primary: M. Curtis [HT Somers Heath Primary School]

Out of Borough School Representative Designated Teacher: J Leamon [Dartford Grammar School for Girls]

Alternative Provision School Representative: M. Hunnisett (HT/CEO The Olive Academy)

Education Representative: A Winstone [Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND]

Post 16 Education Representative: K Kozlova-Boran – Service Manager Learning and Careers

Social Care Representative: L Froment – Service Manager Children Looked After Services

Staff Governor: members of the VS team take turns to attend.

The purpose of the Governing Body [GB] is to hold the VSHT to account and to ensure that clear and regular lines of reporting are in place. The VSHT prepares a range of documentation for the GB to approve and to question the strategy and decisions made by the VSHT.

In addition, the VSHT reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee on a regular basis.

20. **Staffing**

In terms of staff, one of our staff members left Thurrock in October 2021. The process of recruitment took a long time. A replacement for this team member started with us in late June 2022. Having one fewer member of the team placed significant strain on the team. In addition to this the Virtual School Head has had a period of long-term sickness which meant that the team had additional tasks. They were supported by the strategic lead and assistant director.

The recruitment of a member of staff to project manage the new additional duties of Children with a Social Worker has enabled the VSH to separate duties so that the management of our CLA and PLAC work is maintained alongside a new programme which is being developed for CWSW. With the additional £100,000 grant that has been provided we have been able to present a business case for an additional full time staff member to work alongside the project manager to drive forward the CWSW agenda.

21. **Additional Strategies to support the educational progress of Thurrock Children in Care**

Working in Partnership with other Teams in Thurrock Council and out of borough councils.

The Virtual School works with a range of teams within Thurrock to enable the best possible outcomes for our CLA and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). These include School Effectiveness, Social Care, Special Educational Needs including Educational Psychologists, Fostering, Health, Admissions and Education Welfare. This cohesive approach works together around the child/young person to create a supportive, knowledgeable level of service aimed at serving the best interest of the CLA.

The Virtual School also works with the relevant teams in other boroughs for our CLA who are placed out of borough. Actions to work with a range of partners included:

- Provision of training to Designated Teachers
- Provision of training to social workers
- Phone call support for foster carers, social workers and teachers
- Frequent liaison with educational establishments
- Provision of training, information advice and guidance for professionals and parents linked to Previously Looked After Children
- Attendance at the Children in Care Council when invited

Additional Services [commissioned by Virtual School in 2021-2022]

Welfare Call – to monitor the attendance of our CLA

EGov Digital Solutions – an electronic platform for Personal Education Plans

Fleet Tuition Service – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Prospero – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Teaching Personnel – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Equal Education – for provision of 1-1 tuition

TLC Live – for provision of 1-1 tuition

Open Door – Provision of 1-1 mentoring for pupils

Currys PC World – Provision of Digital Technology to support learners

Literacy Book Trust – provision of reading materials to pupils

National College – Provision of CPD for staff and provision of safeguarding materials, advice and guidance for foster carers and schools

Barefoot Learning – online courses for NEET young people to access a variety of training online linked to enabling them to be ready for work or education

Flash Academy – online learning materials for UASC pupils. This translates their own language and supports the learning of English vocabulary

22. **Professional Development of VS Staff**

As a Virtual School we take professional development very seriously as it enables us to reflect on our practice and improve our service. Our team have continued to access a range of online courses during the academic year. For new members to the team, they have complete all necessary training and induction modules as required by the council.

23. **Author of this report**

Keeley Pullen BA [Hons] PGCE NPQH

Headteacher of the Virtual School for Thurrock Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Submission date to Corporate Parenting Committee 4th January 2023

Submission date to the Virtual School Governing Body March 2023