

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	14 th November 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report for Halton Children in Care
WARD(S)	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the Board with the Headteacher of the Virtual School's annual report on the education outcomes and achievement of Halton Children in Care.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:

- i) note the information provided; and**
- ii) accept the Headteacher of the Virtual School's annual report as an accurate account of the performance on the education outcomes and achievement of Halton Children in Care.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Please see the attached report for the detailed data, analysis and summary of the work of Halton Virtual School during the academic year 2021-22.

3.2 The work of the Virtual School has continued throughout the academic year and the full annual report does provide detailed analysis of how Halton Children in Care have performed against each of the individual key performance indicators, also a summary of the Virtual School's progress towards it's identified key priorities for the academic year 2021-22 and identifying the priorities for the Virtual School in 2022-23.

3.3 As this is a covering report it only provides a summary of the overall performance of the children and young people and a summary of the Virtual School's performance for 2021-22.

3.4 Children in care overall performance against key education outcomes

Halton Virtual School operate an 'At Risk Register' so that we can track and prioritise those children and young people in care who are at risk of not

achieving good educational outcomes. On the At Risk Register good performance is considered to be when a child in care:

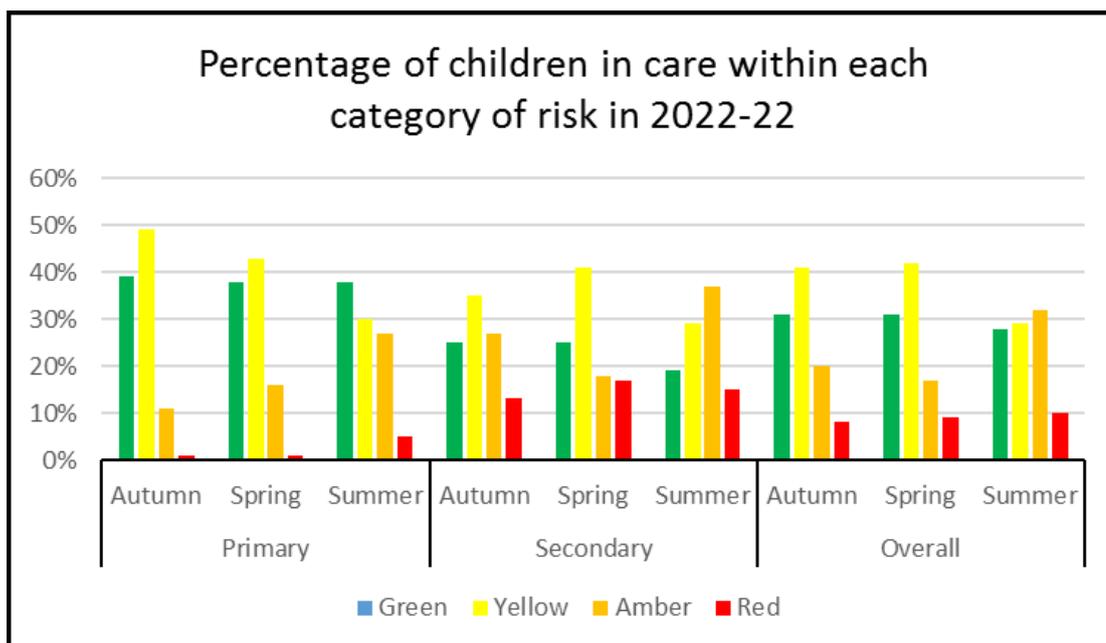
- Is making at least expected progress across all key subject areas in their phase of education.
- Is currently or likely to achieve age related expectations in all key subject areas
- Has attendance that is above 95%
- Has had no fixed term exclusions
- Is accessing their full educational entitlement
- Has not had any time off school roll

A child will be flagged in the following way against these criteria:

	Has no flags against any of the key performance indicators
	1 flag - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations OR is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	2 flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations AND is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	3 or more flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations AND is not achieving 2 or more other performance indicator

Positive performance is a reduction in the percentage of children who are flagged as red and an increase in the percentage of those flagged as green.

Positive performance is a reduction in the percentage of children who are flagged as red and an increase in the percentage of those flagged as green. The chart below shows the percentage of children in each of the risk categories across the academic year. As can be seen, the number of young people being flagged as green across the academic year has remained stable. This is because of the collaborative work lead by the Virtual School and including schools and Children’s Social Care. This collaboration has helped to mitigate the risks of children and young people not achieving good educational outcomes in challenging circumstances.



3.5 Summary of performance against Key Priorities

- = Good Performance
- ≈ = there is some improvement but there is still concern
- × = an area of underperformance

Priority	Achieved	Analysis
To continue to mitigate against the risk of lost learning and to increase the percentage of children who are achieving good educational outcomes.	≈	Outcomes at KS4 were positive in comparison to previous years. PEPs (Personal Education Plan) (Personal Education Plan) and the use of School Led Tuition Grant expanded the provision of tuition to tackle areas of lost learning.
Close the progress and attainment gap between Halton children in care and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on achieving the higher grades in Key stage 4.	■	Improvements were made across all performance criteria. Performance on the combined measure at Grade 5+ also improved. There has been an increase in the number of Children in Care in Halton achieving 5 GCSEs including the combined English and maths at grade 5. This will continue to be a priority focus for the next academic year.
Continue to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.	≈	The percentage of PEPs graded good or better has increased, particularly within the early years. The quality of targets within Post 16 and a NEET PEP are now required.

Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.	X	This has not been actioned in 2021-22 but is identified as a priority for Spring 2023.
Develop a Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus model to provide additional support and improve retention.	R	Progress has been made but impacted upon by the departure of the Post 16 PEP lead, which is currently a vacant position. Following appointment, this will be completed during 2023.
To continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%	X	Although progress has been made with individual students, the overall attendance was 85% for secondary age young people. However, as a whole cohort, the attendance remains above 90%
Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.	X	Within the Primary cohort the number of exclusions remained low throughout the year. There has been an increase in exclusions from the previous year but remain broadly in line with exclusions in previous years.
Continue to monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school judged as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.	R	Support and challenge visits to schools were completed on a termly basis. The information collated during these visits were then fed back to the termly Cross Service Monitoring group, attended by all sectors of the Inclusion division.
Develop a SEND dashboard to monitor the outcomes, support, and quality of provision more effectively.	X	Due to the retirement of the previous VHT and redeployment of existing team members, this has not been completed during 2021-22
Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 22-year-olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.	R	A high percentage of 16–18-year-olds are engaging with EET, but this is not sustained at 19+. Initial plans are in place for the development of a traineeship model in 2022-23. The arrival of additional UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) has also impacted upon these figures.
To develop a proactive and bespoke package of support for UASC.	R	Support is provided, but this now needs to be strengthened and developed following the

	appointment of a Post 16 PEP co-ordinator under the direction of the Post 16 team leader.
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Please see below regarding national policy changes that will have implications for the support provided through Halton Virtual School.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Halton Virtual School relies heavily on the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding from the Government to support the educational outcomes of Children in Care. This includes support provided through the Personal Education Plan, for the staffing required to carry out its duties to a high and effective standard, and the ability to commission specialist psychological assessments, as well as provide direct curriculum support for the children and young people. There is currently an agreement that this funding will remain in place until 2022 but that it will be reviewed to take into account other budgetary changes and pressures.
- 5.2 There is a major risk to the outcomes of our most vulnerable children if this funding ceases because Halton Virtual School will no longer be able to provide the high level and necessary educational support for our children in care. Halton's ILACS inspection in 2020 stated that the Virtual School required more capacity in order to keep delivering its very good work so the grant funding has been used to meet this suggestion (details of the staffing structure are contained within the full annual report). If the grant funding used by the Virtual School ceases this will have a direct impact on its capacity to meet not only the statutory requirements but continue to deliver its Ofsted validated bespoke support model to Halton's children in care. Therefore, Council funding of at least the same level will need to be identified to mitigate against this.
- 5.3 Halton Virtual School continues to look to provide additional employment and training opportunities for Care Leavers through access to apprenticeships and work programmes. There needs to be a review of funding opportunities to support these and also creative opportunities both within the Council and within local businesses.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The educational outcomes of Children in Care remain a key priority for the Council.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

If Children in Care do not achieve their expected educational outcomes, there is a high risk that they will become NEET and therefore not achieve employment which fulfils their aspirations or enables them to be active participants in the community.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Research has demonstrated that issues related to the emotional health and well-being have a significant impact upon the educational outcomes for Children in Care. Timely and effective services are vital in providing emotional support for our young people to enable them to have positive engagement in their learning and achieve their potential.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Due to their lived experiences Children in Care can be at higher risk of child sexual exploitation, and episodes of missing from care or school. Research does indicate that these factors all have a negative impact upon educational outcomes for our children and young people in care. Therefore, all agencies need to provide proactive support in order to keep children in care safe.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 If the outcomes for our Halton Children in care do not improve then there is a continued risk that they are more likely to become NEET and not become active and positive partners in their community.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Children in Care continue to be a vulnerable group whose life experiences of trauma, neglect and abuse mean that they have not had the same start to life as other young people.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.