Virtual Headteacher's Report
Southwark Children Looked After

Virtual Headteacher

Annual Report January 2016

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1. Introduction

1.1 The local authority has a responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children looked after (Children & Families Act (April 2014). In July 2014, government released 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children' which reinforces the local authority's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children looked after and promote the child's educational achievement. There is a clear ambition, at national and local level, to narrow the attainment gap between children looked after and their non-looked after peers.

1.2 The Children & Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated.

1.3 In Spring 2015, Southwark restructured the Priority Learners Team into a new Virtual School. The newly structured school provides more robust education support and guidance for looked after children. Close interest is taken by Corporate Parenting Committee re. academic progress of CLA. Equal priority is given to pupils in care regardless of where they are educated or live. There is a clear emphasis from the Virtual School that education is at the centre of decision making.

1.4 The remit of Southwark's Virtual School includes the authority's duty to provide education other than at school (EOTAS). This area of work is not included in this report which focuses specifically on the education of Southwark children looked after. The gains made by including EOTAS commissioning within the Virtual School are particularly beneficial where children are on the edge of care.

1.5 The Conditions of Grant for 2014/15 Pupil Premium gave responsibility for the management of this funding to the Virtual Head. This has provided opportunity to secure fixed-term resourcing at local authority level that will make a real difference to individual children.

1.6 The Virtual School is mindful of the Rees Centre report 'The Education Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data' (November 2015) and the subsequent Joint Policy Paper from The Association of Directors of Children's Services 'The Educational Achievement of Children in Care' (December 2015). Both documents inform the strategic planning and operational delivery of Southwark Virtual School.

1.7 Strong working relationships within and beyond Southwark have been maintained during episodes of restructuring and high staff turnover. LAC Education Advisors are co-located with Care Practitioners. The Virtual School's aspiration for best possible education provision and improved outcomes for CLA is shared at every level of practice and management.

2. Virtual School remit and structure

2.1 Southwark Virtual School is responsible for 434 children looked after in the school age range Reception to Year 13. Learners in the school attend 261 schools across 54 local authorities. The school's work includes those children who have been placed for adoption until the court makes the adoption order giving parental responsibility to the adoptive parents.

2.2 Increasing numbers of Southwark children looked after are placed outside of Southwark. In 2014/15, 69.8% of pupils on the Virtual School roll attended non-Southwark schools. Approximately 23% of children are placed more than 20 miles from their home authority.

2.3 The Virtual School promotes the educational achievement of its looked after children, *wherever children live or are educated.* Each school and local authority has its own organisational structure and service offer. These must be effectively navigated by Southwark Virtual School officers to ensure tight systems around the child.

2.4 The priorities of the Virtual School remain to:

- Advocate for the best possible education provision for Southwark's children looked after, in multi-disciplinary contexts
- Secure rapid, appropriate education provision at times of placement change
- Support and challenge schools to be ambitious for every child looked after
- Track pupil attainment and attendance, focussing on pupils' academic progress and raising alerts regarding those at risk of disengagement
- Increase the quality of Personal Education Plans to improve education outcomes

2.5 Of the 306 school age children, 256 (84%) attend a school that has been judged good or better by Ofsted.

2.6 In the wider climate of organisational restructuring, the creation of Southwark Virtual School (Spring 2015) inevitably incurred some disruption to staffing. This was partly mitigated by the fixed-term addition of an Associate Headteacher who has extensive experience of disadvantaged pupil cohorts.

2.7 In addition, centrally held Pupil Premium (LAC) has been used to create separate fixed-term posts for the benefit of the local authority's looked after children. New post-holders have been selected from a high quality pool of well-qualified and experienced practitioners, adding to the existing team's expertise. The additional posts have increased the Virtual School's capacity to improve education outcomes for Southwark's children looked after. Additional staffing capacity has: increased the number of PEPs directly supported, significantly added to our capacity for dialogue with Designated Teachers, provided individual, impartial careers advice and

guidance, which has encouraged children looked after to be more involved in their education.

2.8 The Virtual School works strategically across schools, services and agencies within and beyond Southwark, to improve education outcomes, and life chances, for Southwark children looked After. Strategies and interventions used to raise attainment include:

- Weekly tracking of pupils listed as Children Missing Education, who are (a) in receipt of interim alternative provision while appropriate local education is secured or (b) attending planned alternative provision or (c) recorded as a persistent absentee with less than 90% school attendance
- Prioritisation of PEPs for those pupils with greatest academic drift, poor attendance or other cause for concern
- Early Education Psychologist's assessment to identify potential barriers to learning
- Letterbox, age-appropriate literacy and numeracy packages specifically for children looked after delivered to pupils at their carer's address
- 1-1 home tuition. This supplementary service is in addition to school learning and is offered to all pupils outside of school hours
- TextNow project - piloted early in the 2015/16 academic year to encourage targeted pupils' improved literacy through reading with their Foster Carer
- Attendance at Social Care's Resource Panel to position education at the centre of decision making
- A programme of professional development for partner agencies (including London Fostering Achievement programme).

2.9 Southwark Virtual School's SEF identifies a range of key areas for improvement and development. These will be achieved through collaborative working within and beyond Southwark services, to improve education outcomes for children in care. Southwark Virtual School's SEF was tabled at Southwark's Achieving Excellence Programme Group in Autumn 2015 and a final version, with agreed leads and timescales will be shared in the January 2016 meeting.

3. Performance data

3.1 In previous years, the DfE has published education performance data for children looked after in early December. The publication of this data has now moved to Spring 2016. This means that comparative statistics at national and local level will not be available until that time. The provisional performance data given in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.5 and 3.7 below is based on information collected by Southwark Virtual School and its agents. Data remains provisional until the DfE's statistical first release is published.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1, 2014/15

Figure 3 – KS1 Performance, all Southwark LAC
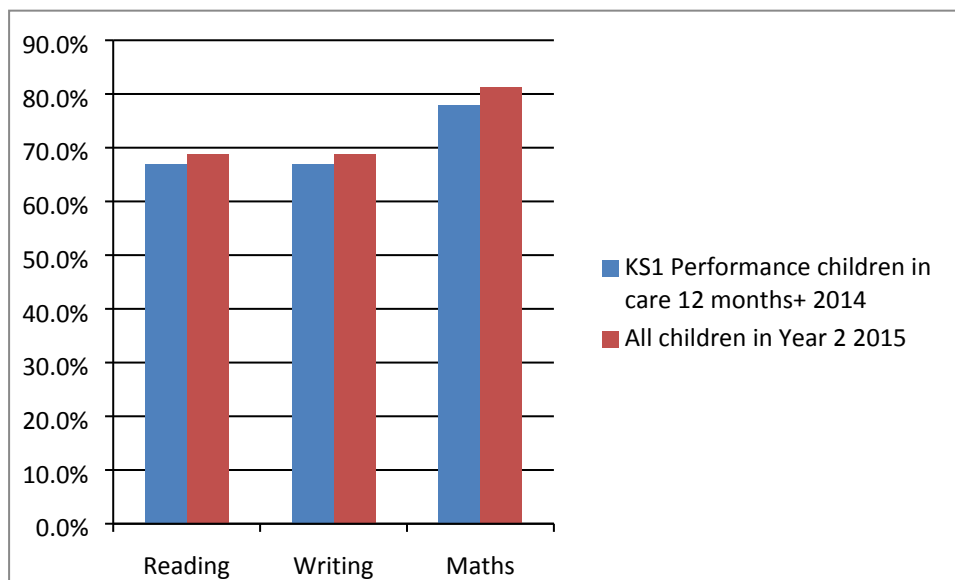
3.2 The full KS1 cohort comprised of 18 pupils. Provisional data shows that KS1 outcomes were stronger in all 3 outcomes compared with the previous year. In this phase of education, children are assessed through pieces of work set by their teacher.

3.3 **Attainment and progress at Key Stage 2, 2014/15**

Figure 4 – KS2 Performance, all Southwark LAC
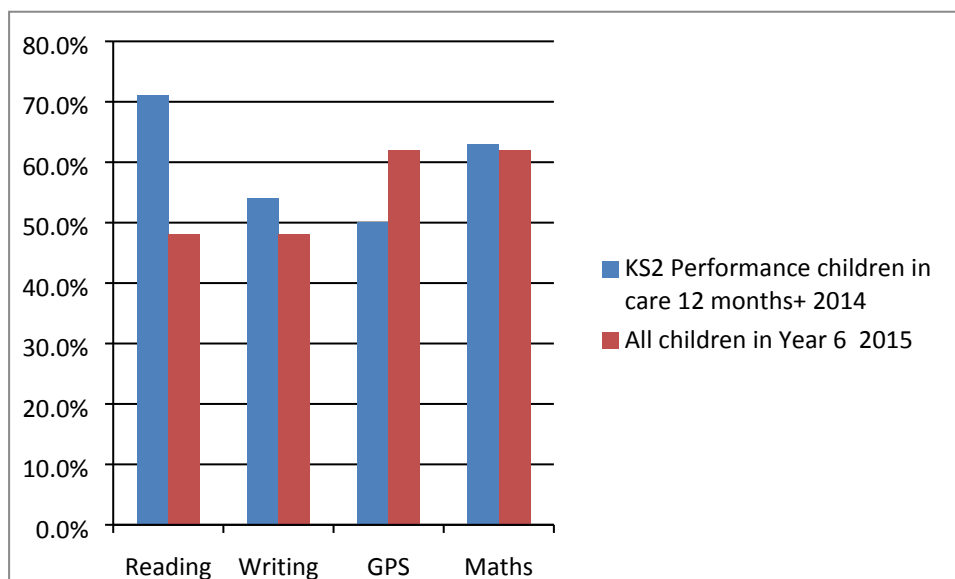
3.3.1 Provisional results are available for all 24 pupils in Southwark's care at the time of the Key Stage 2 tests. Compared with the previous year, Level 4+ outcomes were stronger in Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar, marginally lower in maths and lower in reading and writing. Twenty pupils in this cohort had special educational needs, eight had a statement/EHC Plan.

3.3.2 At the time of KS2 testing, pupils in care to Southwark for 12 months or more as at March 2015 (i.e. the cohort on which nationally benchmarked data is based) were housed in 10 different local authorities. Pupils educated in authorities outside of Southwark generally achieved poorer results and here generally the gap is increasing with their non-looked after peers.

3.3.3 Where children looked after remained in Southwark schools, the attainment gap narrowed with all Southwark pupils.

Figure 5 – Attending Southwark Schools, narrowing the gap with all Southwark pupils at KS2, comparing 2014 with 2015

	Gap with all Southwark Pupils 2014	Gap with all Southwark Pupils 2015
Reading	33.5%	1.3%
Writing	23.6%	13.6%
GPS	46.0%	17.6%
Maths	32.3%	18.6%

3.3.4 It is expected that pupils will make 2 full levels of progress from KS1 to KS2. The progress of pupils who remained in-borough was stronger than those attending non-Southwark schools. This is in contrast to previous years.

Figure 6 –Pupils making 2 levels of progress at KS2, comparing pupils attending in- and out of- borough schools, 2015 outcomes

	In Borough	Out of Borough
Reading	85.7%	64.3%
Writing	85.7%	64.3%
Maths	85.7%	78.6%

3.3.5 The four pupils attending schools judged by Ofsted to require improvement achieved proportionately better than those in good or outstanding schools. Girls represented a quarter of the cohort and out-performed boys at reading, while boys performed better than girls at maths.
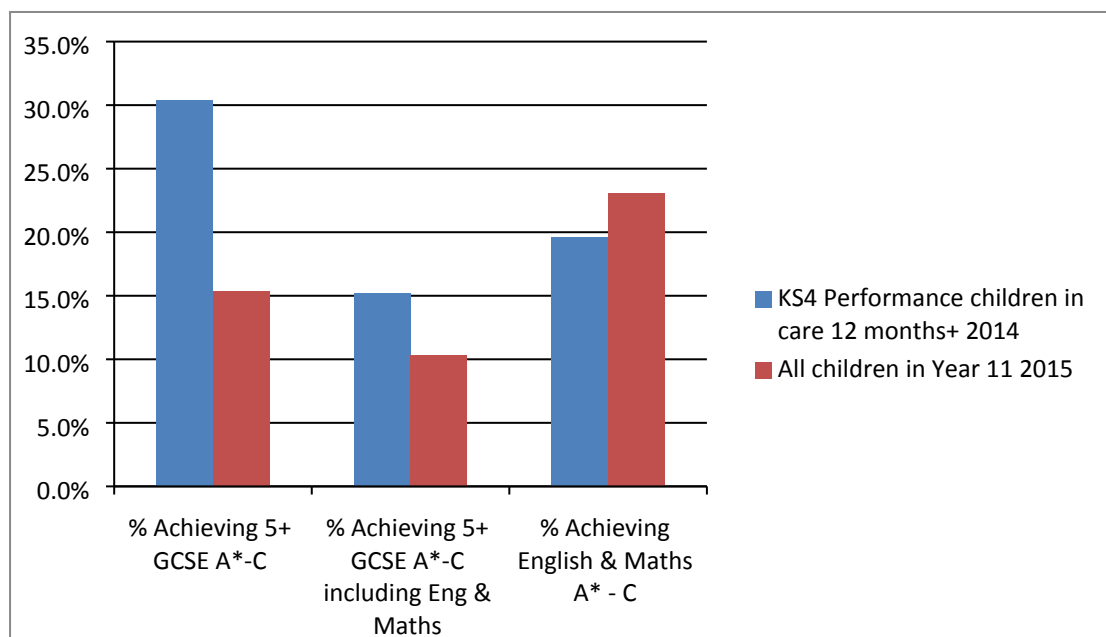
3.3.6   Pupil outcomes in this age group improved the longer they had been in care:

Figure 7 – KS2 Progress of all Year 6 pupils and length of time in care, 2015 outcomes
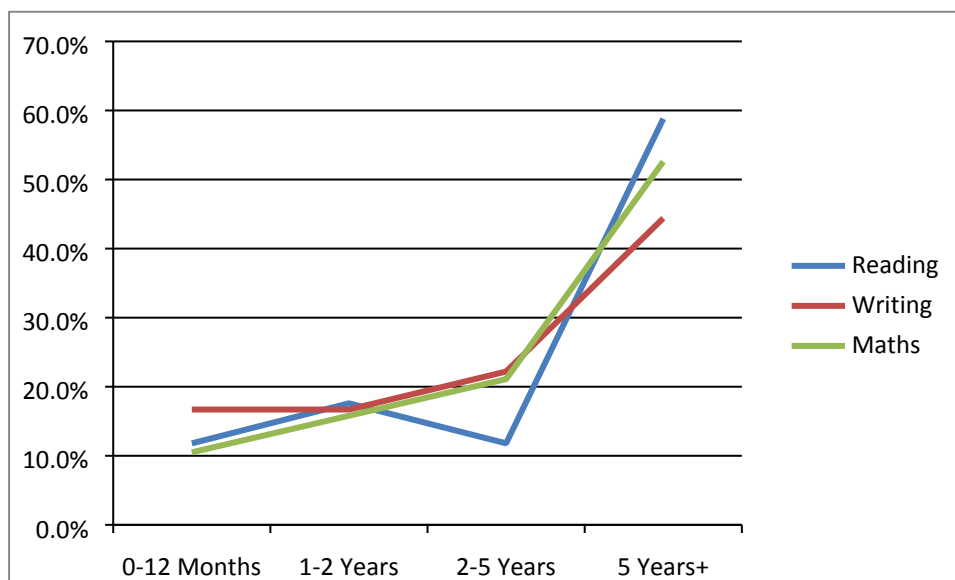
3.4   Attainment and progress at Key Stage 4, 2014/15

Figure 8 – KS4 Performance, all Southwark LAC

3.4.1   Provisional results are available for all 48 pupils in care to Southwark at the time of Year 11 public examinations. Targetted approaches to GCSE English and maths A* - C resulted in higher outcomes in 2015 than the previous year. Results were lower for five GCSEs at A* - C and five GCSEs at A* - C to include English and maths. Fifty-six per cent of this cohort had a special educational need and one third had a statement.

3.4.2   At the time of KS4 examinations, pupils in care to Southwark for 12 months or more as at March 2015 (i.e. the cohort on which nationally benchmarked data is based) were housed in 15 different local authorities. Pupils educated in authorities outside of Southwark generally achieved poorer results and here the gap is increasing with their non-looked after peers.

3.4.3   Where children looked after remained in Southwark schools, the attainment gap narrowed with all Southwark pupils.

Figure 9 – Attending Southwark Schools, narrowing the Gap with all Southwark pupils at KS4, 2015

	% Gap in 2014	% Gap in 2015
5 A* - C	40.0%	32.5%
5 A* - C Including English & Maths	31.5%	22.9%

3.4.4   *The progress of pupils who remained in-borough was stronger than those attending non-Southwark schools, echoing the trend of previous years.*

Figure 10 – Progress data for pupils attending schools in and out of Southwark at KS4, 2015

	In Borough	Out of Borough
English	70.0%	27.6%
Maths	50.0%	20.7%

3.4.5   Children who had been in care for 12 months or more at at March 2015 performed better than those who had been in care for less than a year.

3.4.6   As before, we have experienced unrealistic Year 11 GCSE predictions from schools. The Rees Centre report found that '[pupils] entering care in adolescence with more challenging difficulties [are] less likely to do well educationally'.

3.4.7   In academic year 2015/16 the Virtual School will target Year 11 progress and attendance, maintaining regular contact with Designated Teachers and increasing the challenge to schools where there appears to be a risk of drift. High aspirations are encouraged and the Virtual School will work with schools and other agencies to maximise our pupils' opportunities to achieve their target grades.

3.5 <u>Attendance</u>

3.5.1   The most recent published data shows that Southwark's attendance improved in 2014. Absence decreased in each of the performance indicators:

	2013 (6 terms)	2014 (6 terms)
Authorised	3.3%	3.1%
Unauthorised	1.5%	1.2%
Overall	4.8%	4.3%
Persistent Absence	5.4%	5.3%

3.5.2   Welfare Call is commissioned by Southwark Virtual School to monitor children's attendance on a daily basis. Schools are contacted every morning and, where a pupil is not attending, the Foster Carer and Virtual School are notified. Social care is notified of any pupil absence of 3 days or more. Individual attendance figures are tracked monthly and RAG rated by the Virtual School. The PEPs of pupils with persistent absenteeism (attending less than 90%) are prioritised by the Virtual School's LAC Education Advisers.

3.5.3   Attendance data provided by Welfare Call provides us with pupil-level information. It shows that greatest school absence occurs in academic years 9, 10 and 11. Pupils entering care in this age phase may have histories of habitual poor attendance. The Virtual School works with other agencies to effect improved school attendance, impacting positively on pupils' education and attitudes to learning.

3.5.4   In academic year 2015/16, children with poor school attendance are included in the 'Children Missing Education List' and are treated as a priority. Using this pro-active approach in the period between PEPs, the Virtual School will target key

groups and, working with other agencies, stimulate early intervention to improve school attendance.
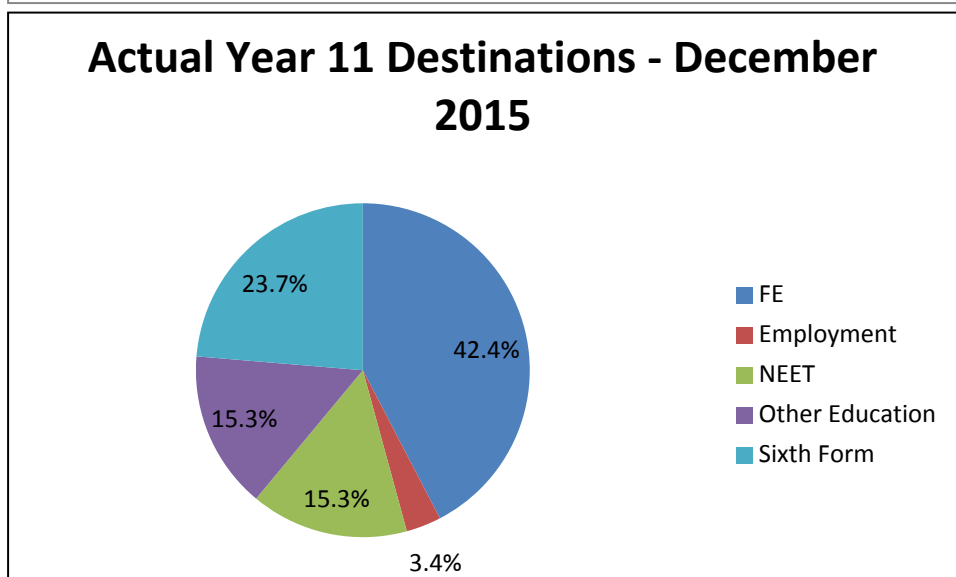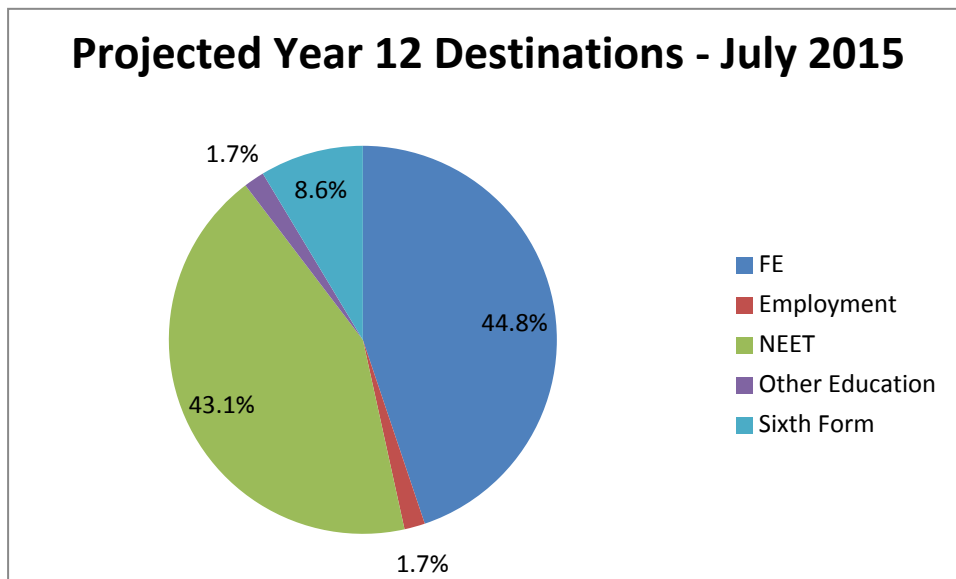
3.6   **Exclusions**

3.6.1   The most recent published data shows that the rate of fixed term exclusions improved in 2013 and that the gap narrowed with the national rate, however at 13.46% (reduced from 15.98% in 2012) this is still unacceptably high and needs to be addressed.

3.6.2   It is clearly recognised that attachment difficulties and trauma impact on learning and better use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires would give the Virtual School an early indicator of exclusion risk factors.

3.6.3   In 2015/16, the Virtual School is working closer with behaviour and attendance specialists to strengthen schools' earliest intervention at times of disruptive behaviour. We work with schools where pupils are at significant risk of exclusion and, in some cases, use centrally retained Pupil Premium to fund local alternative provision on an interim basis.

3.7   **EET at 16**

3.7.1   At the end of academic year 2014/15, Year 11 destination data suggested that 51% would be EET the following September.

3.7.2   The restructuring of the Virtual School allowed the creation of fixed-term posts specifically to re-engage this vulnerable cohort with education, employment and training. Careers Information Advice & Guidance continued to be offered to all learners during the Summer 2015 break.

3.7.3   From the start of the new academic year, Year 12 EET improved on a month-by-month basis, reaching 85% as at December 2015. Weekly KS5 meetings track individuals, identifying those learners who are at risk of/NEET and ensuring those in care have access to high quality, appropriate provision. When including Yr 13 learners, the EET figure decreased in January 2016 to 80%. This compares favourably with national trends for CLA at this time of the year.

3.7.4   In 2015/16, the Virtual School is strenuously addressing the NEET profile of learners in Key Stage 5. Qualified CIAG specialists are providing 1-1 advice and guidance in Years 11 and 12. All CIAG is impartial and is offered from a principle of high expectation, to encourage and support each learner to achieve their potential.

3.7.5   Key Stage 5 NEET is at its lowest recorded level since the remit of the Virtual School expanded to include academic Years 12 and 13. Post-16 entrants to care

are also considered for the Adult Dyslexia Diagnosis and Support assessment so that they may be able to access specialist support that wouldn't meet EHCP thresholds.

Projected Year 12 Destinations - July 2015

- FE 44.8%
- Employment 1.7%
- NEET 43.1%
- Other Education 1.7%
- Sixth Form 8.6%

Actual Year 11 Destinations - December 2015

- FE 42.4%
- Employment 3.4%
- NEET 15.3%
- Other Education 15.3%
- Sixth Form 23.7%

4. Alternative Provision

4.1   Alternative provision is made available in exceptional circumstances. In some situations, pupils receive alternative provision as a result of an emergency care placement change. In these cases, 25 hours alternative provision is delivered as an interim arrangement while local education is secured. In exceptional circumstances, a pupil will receive less than 25 hours, in accordance with need.

4.2   Southwark Virtual School attends Social Care's Resource Panel in rotation with other educational professionals to promote education stability at times of change, reducing the reliance on interim education provision at times of placement

instability.

4.3 In a very small number of cases, individually tailored packages are secured for pupils who enter care with histories of education disruption, disengagement or gaps in schooling. High quality alternative provision is secured to maximise opportunities for success, with a view to re-integrating pupils into school as soon as is appropriate.

4.4 During academic year 2014/15, a maximum of 26/306 (8.5% of the school age cohort) attended Alternative Provision at any one time. Pupils attending alternative provision are placed on the Virtual School's 'Children Missing Education List' and are tracked as a priority.

4.5 With the exception of 1-to-1 home tuition, all Alternative Provision directly commissioned within Southwark is quality assured by the council, is Ofsted registered and graded good or better.

4.6 In 2015/16, the Virtual School has capacity to be actively involved with care planning decisions at times of transition. It would be timely to make changes to Mosaic workflow so that the Virtual School's input is an unavoidable requirement at times of placement change for statutory school age pupils.

4.7 The Virtual School is piloting a 'virtual classroom' for pupils who are in emotional crisis but below SEMH thresholds. In situations where Key Stage 4 pupils are temporarily placed in care in remote locations, an externally commissioned provider will deliver an on-line curriculum of maths and English, tailored to meet pupil needs. This will be an interim arrangement, maintaining an engaging education offer, until the pupil is able to re-join school.

5. Personal Education Plans

5.1 PEPs in Southwark are managed by Social Care. In 2014/15 PEP completion rates recorded in CareFirst peaked at 86%; 61% of PEPs were completed within timescales. PEP completions continued to suffer in academic year 2015/16, with a reported rate at 55% (January 2016). This is unacceptably low

5.2 A redraft of the PEP template was agreed in consultation with social care, to coincide   with the transition to the new case management system (Mosaic).

5.3 The PEPs of pupils with greatest academic drift or significant absence are prioritised for VS attendance, wherever the pupil lives or is educated.

5.4 PEP quality is variable. Improvements are needed in target setting and monitoring.

Liz Britton, Virtual Headteacher

5.5   In 2015/16, the Virtual School is introducing a one-year fixed term administrator

post with key responsibility to track PEP scheduling and completion. The post-holder joined the Virtual School in January 2016 with the aim of ensuring timely PEP uploads to Mosaic and establishing a regular cycle of quality auditing to improve quality consistency. Through this post, the Virtual School will (i) increase the challenge to social   care where there is drift in PEP scheduling, recording, quality and follow-up (ii) increase support for Social Workers and Designated Teachers

5.6   The Virtual School will introduce a whole-school education review in Spring term 2016. This exercise will identify those pupils in the school with greatest academic drift or other cause for concern and will stimulate a school-based multi-agency PEP meeting where necessary.

6. Pupil Premium

6.1   Southwark retains 20% (£400) of allocated PP (LAC) per child; 80% (£1,500 per child) is offered to schools. Schools submit costed plans to support their applications for Pupil Premium (LAC). In those cases where intervention costs have exceeded £1,500, schools have made clear how they will use the additional monies to remove barriers to learning and have been successful in their application for additional funding.

6.2   In 2014/15, female pupils were over-represented in submissions for Pupil Premium (LAC). Submissions for all pupils in the lower Key Stages were higher than for pupils in higher Key Stages (72% of Pupil Premium (LAC) was issued to Year 3, 26% was issued to Year 10). Schools in Kent, London Borough of Bexley and London Borough of Bromley submitted the highest proportion of applications. Schools in seventeen authorities, educating a total of 22 Southwark children looked after, did not submit a single application, despite repeated reminders from Southwark Virtual School.

6.3   Where high-cost education provisions submitted applications for materials, equipment or support that should have already been made available to pupils, submissions were returned for reconsideration.

6.4   The retained element of funding is used to address individual pupil needs (e.g. additional therapeutic support, out-of-school hours' study, extra tuition, additional support for school re-integration) as well as drive up standards across the wider looked after cohort (e.g. improve quality of education planning, reduce number of pupils at risk of school exclusion)

6.5   In 2015/16, the retained element of Pupil Premium (LAC) has also been used to secure fixed-term posts, to drive up the quality, completion, tracking and monitoring of Personal Education Plans fund interim alternative education

Liz Britton, Virtual Headteacher

provision, either at times of emergency or when individually tailored education provision is most appropriate as a short-term solution

6.6 At time of writing this report, Post-holders have been in place for one academic term and gains include: significant reduction in NEET, reduction in Children Missing Education long-list (reduced from 18 cases to 12), swifter access to interim Alternative Provision (arrangements are made for AP delivery inside 20 days for all known pupils), increased capacity to attend PEPs and additional, school-based meetings.

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