

# Southwark Virtual School Annual Headteacher's Report 2019-20



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# Preface

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This report relates to the 2019-2020 academic year which was marked by the global pandemic. This created unprecedented challenges to daily routines in all our lives and traditional ways of living and working ceased globally.

A section of this report is dedicated to Southwark Virtual School's response to the needs of children in care during the pandemic.

The Summer 2020 exam series was cancelled as part of the government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which included the closure of schools and colleges to all but the children of key workers and vulnerable children from 20 March 2020. The majority of pupils did not return until the beginning of the autumn term in September 2020.

The DfE publication "Outcomes for Children in need, including children looked after by Local Authorities in England - March 2021" offers the following advice when viewing 2019-20 examination data:

*"The cancellation of summer 2020 GCSE exams and the new method of awarding grades has led to a set of pupil attainment statistics that are unlike previous years. Each of the pupil level attainment statistics have increased - more than would be expected in a typical year.... This reflects the change to the way GCSE grades were awarded rather than improvements in pupil performance. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance."*

# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1. This report presents an overview of the activities and impact of Southwark Virtual School. It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for Southwark looked after children. We want all looked after children to achieve the best they can and promote success into adulthood, whatever age they came into our care.
- 1.2. The Virtual School supports all children in care and relevant care leavers regardless of their length of time in care. The educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care for more than 12 months.
- 1.3. The data in this report is based on 2020 Children Looked After (CLA) outcomes.
- 1.4. The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in our care whether educated in Southwark or placed out of the local authority. The Virtual School has high aspirations for and strives to close the attainment gap between our children and their peers.
- 1.5. Looked-after and previously looked-after children start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs. Virtual School Heads have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential - an important part of why this role was made statutory.
- 1.6. As part of a local authority's corporate parent role, the Virtual School needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others. For previously looked-after children, the Virtual School will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible.
- 1.7. Southwark Virtual School is aspirational and our mission is to provide support to looked after children so that they can do the very best they can at school. Together with our looked after children, carers, schools, Social Care colleagues and other professionals, we plan with a view to achieve clear academic and vocational pathways into education, employment and training. We aim to minimise disruptions along the way.

## 2. Cohort

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2.1. Southwark's Children in Care population is constantly changing as children move in and out of the Care System.

2.2. In the 2019/2020 academic year, there were approximately 422 children on Southwark Virtual School roll at any point in time. Of these, 300 children had been in Care for more than 12 months.

2.3. The data of the cohort below represents the current picture of Southwark CLA statutory school age cohort.

2.4. Boys remain a larger proportion of the Southwark looked after cohort.

<b>Table 1: Gender</b>		
	Number	Percentage
Female	128	44%
Male	160	56%

2.5. Southwark looked after children with an EHCP is more than twice the percentage of the overall pupil population. **Southwark 33% All pupils 15.3%.**

[Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources - May 2021](#)

<b>Table 2: Special Education Needs - EHCPs</b>			
	Total LAC	EHCP	EHCP
Yr R	5	0	0%
Yr 1	3	0	0%
Yr 2	9	2	22%
Yr 3	16	4	25%
Yr 4	9	1	11%
Yr 5	19	6	32%
Yr 6	20	10	50%
Yr 7	29	11	38%
Yr 8	34	9	26%
Yr 9	38	18	47%
Yr 10	48	13	27%
Yr 11	58	20	34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>33%</b>

2.6. The Ethnicity of Southwark’s Children looked after cohort, while in contrast to the national cohort, remains more or less in line with our closest statistical neighbours and reflects similarities of the demographics of Southwark’s resident population and of Inner-City London.

<b>Table 2: Ethnicity</b>						
	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	EOTH	Other
Southwark	30	16	5	44	6	0
Camden	34	13	10	33	11	0
Enfield	55	12	x	27	5	x
Greenwich	52	20	2	23	3	0
Hackney	27	24	x	38	4	x
Hammersmith & Fulham	23	19	x	41	9	x
Haringey	31	10	x	48	7	x
Islington	41	27	x	25	3	x
Lambeth	17	20	3	54	6	0
Lewisham	30	23	5	38	x	x
Waltham Forest	35	22	12	23	x	x

\*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

2.6. The geographic spread of Southwark Virtual School pupils remains similar to previous years but has seen a 2% increase of pupils looked after placed within the borough. Currently, 73% of children looked after are placed outside of Southwark. This differs with national figures where 40% are looked after outside the authority.

72% of Southwark statutory school age CLA cohort are in Secondary education compared to 67% last year.

<b>Table 4: IN and OUT of Borough</b>					
	Total - Cohort Numbers	In Borough	%	Out Borough	%
R	5	0	0%	5	100%
1	3	3	100%	0	0%
2	9	3	33%	6	67%
3	16	7	44%	9	56%
4	9	3	33%	6	67%
5	19	3	16%	16	84%
6	20	4	20%	16	80%
7	29	7	24%	22	76%
8	34	8	24%	26	76%
9	38	10	26%	28	74%
10	48	16	33%	32	67%
11	58	13	22%	45	78%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>73%</b>

- 2.7. Southwark Virtual School strives to ensure that CLA are placed in schools that are good or outstanding. Children in schools rated as “Outstanding” by Ofsted are half as likely to experience a mid-year school move compared to children in schools rated “Inadequate”. Children only attend ‘Requires Improvement’ schools in exceptional circumstances, such as when a previously Good school has a poor inspection outcome but it is considered in best interests of the child for them to remain there.
- 2.8. Through dedicated effort of Virtual School Education Advisors and Social Worker, the number of children attending schools less than good has decreased from 6% last year to 3% this year.

Table 5: School Ofsted Ratings		
	Number	%
Outstanding	78	27%
Good	150	52%
Requires Improvement	10	3%
Inadequate	1	0%
No Grade (new schools / academy converters)	49	17%

### 3. A Changing Education Landscape

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3.1. “The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world’s student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place.”

“The need of the hour is to innovate and implement alternative educational system and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. “

Sumitra Pokhrel, Roshan Chhetri. A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning, SAGE Journals, Vol 8, Issue 1, January 2021  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2347631120983481>

3.2. From September 2021, Virtual School heads will be strategic leaders who promote the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. The LA will receive funding to resource the Virtual School Head to work with early years settings, schools, colleges and

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social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.

[Promoting the education of children with a social worker: Virtual School Head role extension](#)

3.3. The extended Virtual School Head role will;

- make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

## 4. Ofsted

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4.1. The following quotes are extracted from the findings of a focused visit to Southwark local authority children's services between 29 September and 1 October 2020.

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50155795>

- Senior managers and staff have ensured that children and young people continue to be safeguarded. The best possible decisions are being made about children's care and education
- During the pandemic, the virtual school has provided effective oversight of the progress of children in care, including school attendance and the take-up of remote learning during the summer term. Most children reviewed during this visit were making reasonable progress in their education over this period, supported by the provision of laptops and additional tuition through the virtual school.
- Foster carers spoke very positively about the support and help that they are receiving for children's care and education during the pandemic. They said that 'Social workers do what they say they are going to do.' Another carer told inspectors that their child felt 'extra valued and cared for' during lockdown, as a result of all the extra help with their remote learning.

## 5. Feedback from Stakeholders

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5.1. The following email received from a parent of a child in residential care.

**Sent:** Monday, September 7, 2020 11:29 AM  
**To:** Singh, Usha  
**Subject:** Southwark Virtual School - great work

*I just wanted to send an email to express our sincere thanks and gratitude and acknowledge the many hours of hard work done by the excellent Southwark Virtual School over the past two years. There is nobody i can single out for praise as you have all been, without exception, amazing - your good self, John, Alice, Janet, Blossom, Lisa, and everyone else behind the scenes involved in making it happen. Thanks to your input, we avoided a potential PEx, got one-to-one support for ██████, got an EHCP in place and identified a path forward for ██████ where seemingly none was to be found. The education of Southwark's looked after children is championed by the excellent work you guys do.  
Best wishes*

5.2. **North West Kent Alternative Provision Service** Deputy Head of Service & Lead for Inclusion shared a written testimonial in October 2020 and highlights Southwark's response and support during the Covid-19 period.

*Southwark Virtual School have worked with our service on an extremely complex case of a young man in care, who needed an EHCP and was at serious risk of permanent exclusion. They have supported our child-centred approach throughout and been on hand to offer guidance when needed.*

*This case was made more complex by the delays ...However, Southwark Virtual School have continued with their tenacious support of this young person to ensure that ... the EHCP secured.*

*Further to this, I think it is also worth noting how useful, user friendly and child-centred the PEP paperwork and processes they work to are. This has been particularly of note during the challenging Covid-19 period, where they were the only Virtual School I work with who updated the paperwork to reflect the new and emerging challenges schools were facing and considered how they could offer further support through the PEP process.*

*The allocation of a case worker, who already had knowledge of the student and worked to understand our provision was also of huge benefit to this case. It meant we had a dedicated person to contact who wanted to ensure the placement with us worked.*

*Having worked with a number of virtual schools linked to students in our setting, I have to say the experience with Southwark has meant that we were in the best possible position to offer the best for the student in question.*

## 6. Pupil Premium Plus

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6.1. The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is grant funding from the DfE to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and to close the gap with their peers.

**6.2. From April 2020, the new rate is £2,345 per eligible pupil.**

6.3. Over the past academic year, Southwark Virtual School was able to target specialist resources to ensure that educational needs were still met even though schools were closed. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) was devolved to ensure that schools have the right resources to meet pupils' needs. This included purchasing laptops and increasing the tuition offer for online learning.

6.4. The Virtual School traditionally utilises retained funding for:

- To support children's attainment and social/mental health well-being by topping up exceptional needs funding allocations as required by schools.
- Education Psychologist support dedicated to the Virtual School to support learning difficulties and early identification of statutory assessments.
- Speech and Language service offers both direct work with our most vulnerable looked after children and training to Southwark networks around children.
- Fixed Term resourcing with the employment of 4 Specialist Education Advisors, 1 Project Officer and 2 Information Advice and Guidance officers.
- Supplementary Home Tuition for pupils in full time education with a focus on English and maths to support academic achievement.
- Exam support to all looked after children taking exams through offer of 30 hours of additional tuition.
- Interim Alternative Provision: home tuition as part of a temporary transition provision for children who are between care placements, persistent absentees (school refusers) and other circumstances where this support is needed.
- Online learning programme to secure swift access to education for pupils without a school place due to care placement changes and those pupils who are placed in remote areas of the country where 1:1 tuition cannot be reserved.
- Digital resource –targeted curriculum related software to complement learning and to mitigate for changes in placements or missed schooling.
- Letterbox Literacy targeted resources for primary aged pupils targeted. Packages delivered to children are equipped with reading and writing material as well as stationery

## 7. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

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7.1. The Personal Education Plan or PEP is a record of how professionals around the child looked after will support their educational outcomes and achievement. It is developed and reviewed termly with the designated teacher, young person, social worker, carer and Virtual School. A PEP should be started within 10 days of a child becoming looked after, and their plan must be in place by their first review. PEP documents include:

- Strengths and achievements
- Views of the student
- SMART academic targets
- Current and target attainment data

7.2. PEPs are a key driver in ensuring our pupils receive good quality education provision that is suited to their needs. PEPs are a holistic tool to improve attainment and engagement.

7.3. The Virtual School Education Advisors are currently engaged in an audit of completed PEP documents that aims to look at each completed PEP document with a view of rating whether the documents are addressing and meeting the needs of students.

7.4. In the current education climate all Southwark PEPs are taking place remotely. The number of PEP meetings taking place has increased with more professionals within the network able to join meeting remotely.

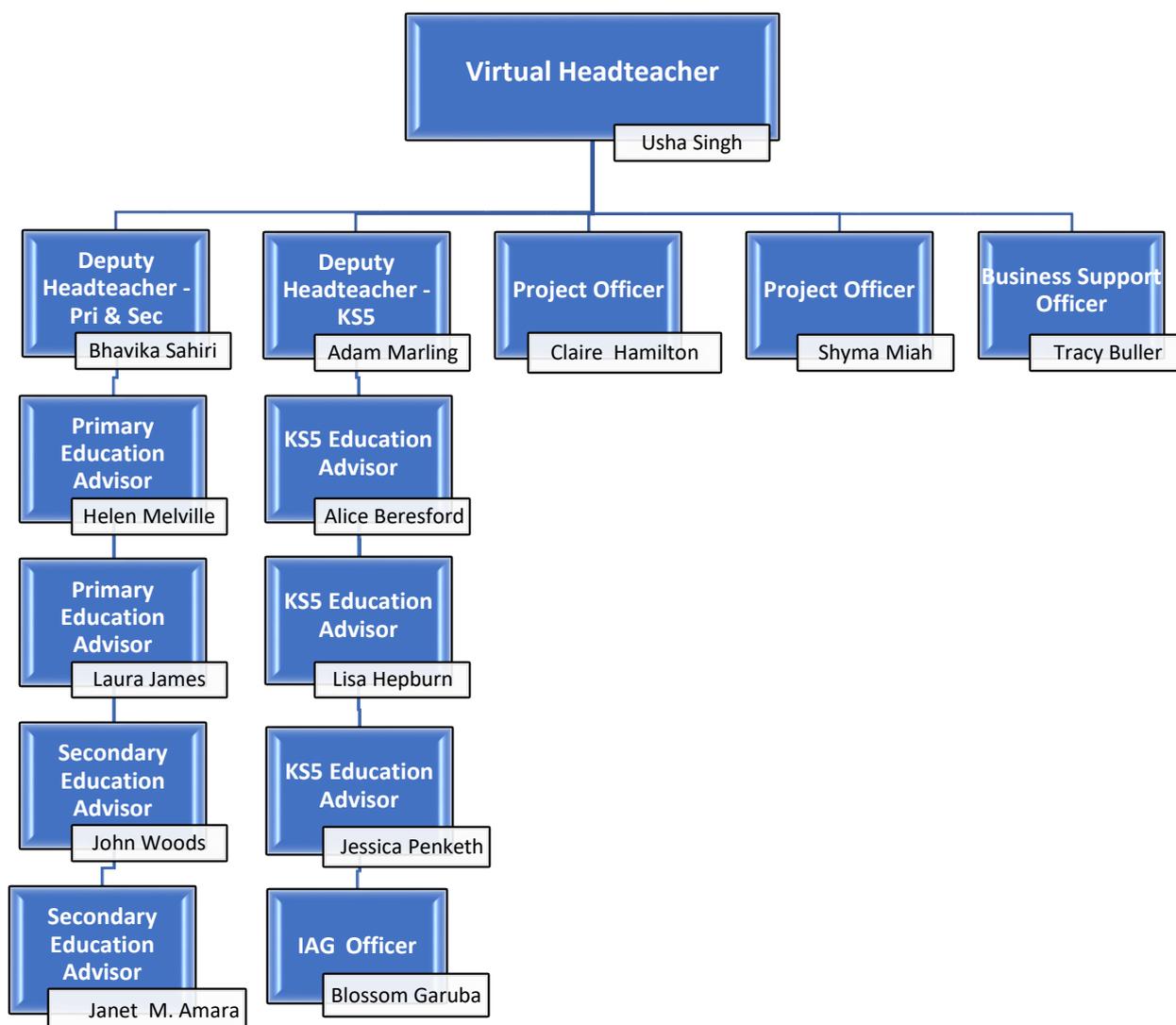
7.5. Southwark Personal Education Plan (PEP) performance as at December 2020 was reported as 83% up from 70% last year. The target remains 100%.

## 8. Virtual School – Staff Structure

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8.1. The Virtual School in Southwark forms part of the Education Access and Statutory Services division in Children’s and Adults’ Services. A minor reorganisation of management roles has recently been undertaken to provide a focus on specialist provision at statutory school age and post 16 with more targeted leadership.

8.2. The outcomes achieved in this year are due, in part, to the effort, persistence and expertise of Virtual School officers, working closely with schools, carers, other local authorities and social workers. The work put in by these post holders, such as developing a strong working together ethos with the multi-disciplinary team and both internal and external networks relates to and directly impacts on the good outcomes of the Virtual School.



## 9. Key stage 4

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### 9.1. Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 Cohort Information

Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 cohort comprised 55 children.

19-20 Yr11 cohort		
Gender		
Male	39	71%
Female	16	29%
SEN/EHCP		
SEN Support	9	16%
EHCP	20	36%
Total SEN	29	53%
IN/OUT borough		
In borough	11	20%
Out of borough	44	80%
12 miles+	47	85%

- 29% of the cohort was female and 71% male. This is different from London and national data which shows a smaller female population at 42% and 47% female respectively.
- 53% children from the 2020 cohort were recorded as having SEN. 36% had an EHCP and 16% had SEN support.
- 20% were educated in the borough compared to a London figure of 42% and 66% nationally.

### 9.2. Attainment information

The data below offer a summary of attainment for Southwark Virtual School looked after children (CLA) cohort as well as the SADA903 cohort which are our looked after children who are 12 months or more in care.

#### **12 Months+ in Care**

This definition has been used in statutory guidance because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible association of being looked after on educational attainment.

Southwark's 2020 KS4 cohort comprised 41 children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months as at 31 March.

- 29% were girls and 71% boys.
- 63% of the cohort had SEN with 41% with a statutory EHCP in place.

<b>English and Maths</b>			
Level	2018	2019	2020
English Standard, 9-4	24%	26%	34%
English Strong, 9-5	15%	17%	20%
Maths Standard, 9-4	21%	34%	34%
Maths Strong, 9-5	9%	11%	24%

Southwark's 2020 CLA results for our 12 months plus cohort have improved on the 2019 results and demonstrates a year on year improvement in attainment.

<b>Achieving a pass in both English and Maths</b>			
	2018	2019	2020
Standard, 9-4			34%
Strong, 9-5	6.5	11	17%

Southwark's 2020 CLA for our 12 months plus cohort achieving a strong pass in both English and Maths at grades 9 to 5 have improved on the 2019 results – highlighted in green.

### 9.3. **Full GCSE Cohort including children who have been in care for less than 12 months**

Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 cohort comprised 55 children. 14 children were in Care for 12 months or less.

- 29% of the cohort was female and 71% male. This is different from London and national data which shows a smaller female population at 42% and 47% female respectively.
- 53% children from the 2020 cohort were recorded as having SEN. 36% had an EHCP and 16% had SEN support.
- 20% were educated in the borough compared to a London figure of 42% and 66% nationally.

Groups of the children that were not entered in the exam:

ESOL	5
Missing from care	2
Secure Centre	1

Attainment:

<b>English and Maths</b>		
	2019	2020
English Standard, 9-4	32%	27%
English Strong, 9-5	26%	16%
Maths Standard, 9-4	13%	27%
Maths Strong, 9-5	7%	20%

The results of Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort shows while they did less well than their 2019 counterparts in English, there was significant increase in Maths outcomes.

<b>Achieving a pass in both English and Maths</b>		
	2019	2020
Standard, 9-4		22%
Strong, 9-5	10%	15%

Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort achieving a Strong 9-5 was a 5% point increase from outcomes the previous year.

<b>Achieved a Grade 1 - 9</b>		
	Number of children	%
English	25	45%
Maths	25	45%

45% of Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort achieved a Grade 1-9 in English.

#### 9.4. **Destination of 2020 Year 11 Cohort**

Successful Transitions from KS4 to KS5 are the result of joined up working between Social Workers and Virtual school teams at Key stage 4 and 5. Handover meetings are scheduled for the end of each academic year and detailed information is shared to ensure continuity of support.

Transition arrangements ensure that our students are progressing to a) an appropriate level and b) to subjects that they have a genuine interest in.

#### **Transitions from year 11 to 12:**

Secondary phase Virtual School Education Advisors work together with the year 11 Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) officer to plan for life after GCSE. A contingency plan is put in place based on GCSE results.

Special consideration at this early stage is given to students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) so that we are able to share detailed information with prospective colleges and the correct support is put in place. The second group of particular interest is the A' level contingent. The Virtual School put early support plans in place so that these students can make the academic jump from level 2 education to level 3.

**The table below offers the destination information of the 2020 Year 11 Cohort:**

Destinations				
	Gender	SEN	LA Borough	Year 12 Destination
1	Male	EHCP	Milton Keynes	HMYOI Secure Training Centre Oakhill
2	Male	EHCP	Lewisham	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
3	Male		Croydon	St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
4	Male	EHCP	Essex	Castledon Sixth Form
5	Male	SEN Support	Wealden	Uckfield Community Technology College
6	Male		Lambeth	Westminster Kingsway
7	Male	SEN Support	Wirral	Birkenhead Sixth Form
8	Male	EHCP	Southwark	Street Vibes Academy
9	Male		Bromley	John Rustin College
10	Female	EHCP	Croydon	Lewisham College
11	Male	EHCP	Southwark	NEET
12	Female		Croydon	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
13	Female	EHCP	Kent	Canterbury College
14	Male		Croydon	London South East Colleges (Bromley Campus)
15	Male	EHCP	Southwark	Lambeth College Clapham Centre
16	Male	EHCP	Southwark	The Charter School North Dulwich
17	Male		Burnley	One In A Million Free School
18	Male		Lewisham	Christ The King: Emmanuel
19	Female	EHCP	Reading	Capel Manor
20	Female	EHCP	Southwark	Southwark College
21	Female		Southwark	Sacred Heart Catholic School
22	Female	EHCP	Hastings	Roots and Shoots
23	Female	EHCP	Waltham Forest	Hornbeam Academy William Morris Campus
24	Male	EHCP	Wychavon	NEET
25	Male	EHCP	Bromley	London South East Colleges (Bromley Campus)
26	Male	SEN Support	Croydon	Harris City Academy Crystal Palace
27	Male	EHCP	Blackpool	Blackpool and the Fylde College
28	Male	SEN Support	Lambeth	Dunraven School
29	Male		Lewisham	Christ's Hospital
30	Male		Southwark	St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
31	Male	SEN Support	Lewisham	Crystal Palace FC Training Ground
32	Female		Southwark	Southwark College
33	Male	EHCP	Croydon	Croydon College
34	Female	SEN Support	Southwark	Christ The King: Emmanuel
35	Male	EHCP	Brent	The Southover Partnership
36	Male	SEN Support	Southwark	NEET
37	Male	EHCP	Greenwich	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
38	Female		Croydon	John Rustin College
39	Male		Lewisham	ProDirect Football Academy

40	Female	SEN Support	Croydon	Richmond-upon-Thames College
41	Female		Medway	The Robert Napier School
42	Female	EHCP	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire & Hinckley College,
43	Female		Lambeth	No School Place
44	Male		Croydon	Lambeth College Clapham Centre
45	Male		Ealing	Harrow College & Uxbridge College
46	Male	SEN Support	Brent	Holy Trinity Church of England Secondary School
47	Male		Milton Keynes	Oakhill Secure Training Centre
48	Male		Brent	Treehouse School
49	Male		Barking and Dagenham	New City College (Redbridge Campus)
50	Female		Croydon	Croydon College
51	Male		Waltham Forest	Frederick Bremer School
52	Male		Southwark	NEET
53	Male		Croydon	Lewisham College
54	Male		Croydon	Southfields Academy
55	Male		Lewisham	NEET

## 10. Key Stage 5

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### 10.1. Attainment levels/Outcomes

At the end of academic year 2019/20 the following academic progress is recorded for our students (Previous year in brackets)

Description	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Achieving/exceeding expected level	82% (86%)	85% (88%)	83% (87%)
Not meeting expected level	18% (14%)	15% (12%)	17% (13%)

Analysis:

These figures are based on completed PEPs (where data is gathered), detailed academic feedback and summative assessment/progression to the next level.

- 83% of learners across the key stage are achieving at the expected level for their course against 87% last year. This down turn of 4% could be attributed to the shortened academic year and reduction in teaching hours due to School/College lock down.

## 10.2. August 2020 Outcomes

Progression into Higher Education from year 13

Student	School/College	H/E Destination/Subject
1	Walworth Academy (A' Levels: A,B,B)	East Anglia University (BA Politics and History)
2	Sydenham School (A levels: A,C,C)	Birmingham University (BSc Psychology)
3	Harris Academy South Norwood L3 Dipl (Distinction, Merit)	Kingston University (BA Media studies)
4	LSEC Bromley (L3 Dip:Distinction,Distinction)	Newman University (BA Education with QTS-Teacher training Primary)

## 10.3. Destinations of year 13 A' level/Level 3 students

Destination	Number of students
Higher Education	4
Progressing to year 2 of course	4
Change of course	2
Entering/remaining in apprenticeship	2
Seeking employment	1
Total	13

In the academic year 2019/20 we had 29 students across KS5 studying at Level 3/A' level (16 in year 12 and 13 in year 13).

- Of year 13 group, 4 progressed to higher education, 4 had started their A level course a year late and progress to year two whilst 2 changed course and 2 are entering/remaining in apprenticeships.

## Year 12 destinations

Education provision type/destination	Number of YP	Percentage of yr 12 cohort
6 <sup>th</sup> form college	14	16%
FE college	28	31%
Alternative provision	15	17%
Vocational training/employment	3	3%
Specialist provision	5	6%
Education in custody/secure	4	4%
NEET	21	23%
Total	90	100%

## Year 13 destinations

Education provision type/Destination	Number of YP	Percentage of yr 13 cohort
6 <sup>th</sup> form college	9	10%
FE college	35	37%
Alternative provision	8	9%
Vocational training/employment	8	9%
Specialist provision	4	4%
In custody	1	1%
NEET	26	28%
Total	91	100%

- The majority of our looked after children attend Further education college; 35% of the KS5 EET cohort (31% in year 12 and 37% in year 13). Factors contributing to this figure include the availability of vocational courses offered by the FE syllabus (L1, 2 & 3 B'Tec diplomas) and ESOL provision.
- 13% of the KS5 cohort choose to stay in school/ 6<sup>th</sup> form college. This decision is driven by factors that include; continuity, greater pastoral support and the wide choice of A' levels and GCSE retakes on offer.
- 13% attend alternative provision/independent college. This figure is influenced by the increase of UASC accessing ESOL provision.
- We have a small number (6%) of LAC in apprenticeships/ traineeships/ employment. Our retention rate on these schemes is low. This is an area of concern and reflects that many of our young people are not yet 'work ready' or do not meet entry requirements (typically five GCSE's)
- 26% of the cohort are NEET compared to 33% at this stage last year. This is examined in more detail in the next section.

# 11. Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency response that followed has required a significant and urgent shift in practice to protect children at this time. Note the update of Southwark Virtual School's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its support of Southwark's looked after children both in and out of borough.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Between 20 March 2020 and 1 June 2020, education and childcare settings were open to priority groups ([children of critical workers](#) and [vulnerable children](#)) as part of national social distancing measures so that pupils and staff attending could do so safely.
2. From week commencing 1 June, primary schools welcomed back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups.
3. From 15 June, secondary schools, sixth form, further education colleges and Alternative provision settings offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10, year 12, and 16 to 19 students who are due to take key exams next year.
4. Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools are working towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups.

## **VIRTUAL SCHOOL STAFFING**

5. Since the outbreak of coronavirus COVID-19, Southwark Virtual School has ensured that our services remain accessible and operating at a heightened level of vigilance and flexibility to accommodate for the changing face of education and child safeguarding at this time. All Virtual School staff have been working remotely during this time.
6. All VS, KS5 Staff were trained in the use of Social Media (Zoom, Team, Skype and Conference calls) to ensure that all communications options are available.

## **ATTENDANCE**

7. Southwark Virtual School recognises that schools offer a safe place for children and that school attendance is a significant protective factor. Virtual School Education Advisors make regular contact with education settings to monitor school attendance and welfare of Children in Care. This will continue throughout the period of school closure.

8. As attendance will remain fluid throughout this period, the Virtual School monitors changes with regards to Children in Care who do not take up their place at school, or discontinues attendance. This supplements the ongoing arrangement with Welfare Call who are also monitoring attendance of Southwark's looked after cohort.
9. 65 Southwark looked after children were recorded as attending school at the start of the pandemic. This attendance figure dropped to 20 children in the week commencing 13 April. With new priority groups set after Easter holidays 2020, attendance figures indicated that 59 children were attending education provisions. This represented 20% of Southwark's current looked after cohort. The main reason provided for these attendance rates at the time was that carers opted to keep children at home.
10. Where children are not attending school for any reason, the Virtual School offers additional tuition to support learning

### **ATTAINMENT**

11. **EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2:** The Virtual School continues to work closely with schools to monitor the attainment of those children who have missed out on statutory assessments and intervene early where any gaps in learning are identified.
12. **Current Year 10 cohort:** The Virtual School are working with schools to closely monitor progress and attainment Education Advisors are working proactively with schools to mitigate against the impact of missed schooling on pupil achievement at the end of Key Stage 4.
13. **End of Key Stage 4:** The Virtual School is liaising with Head teachers to ensure that all Southwark looked after children who are not sitting exams achieve results that are a true reflection of their ability.
14. **Children in Care with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP):** The Virtual School is working with school/education setting in consultation with the local authority and parents/carers, to decide whether this cohort can safely have their needs met at home or whether they need the additional support that an educational setting can provide.
15. **GCSE and A-Level Results:** Students who were due to sit A level, AS level or GCSE exams this summer will receive a calculated grade. This process will take into account a range of evidence including, but not limited to, non-exam assessment and mock results. The Virtual School is working closely with education settings to ensure that Children in Care are not adversely affected by school closures and the cancellation of formal assessments.

16. **Further Education (FE):** The Virtual School is working closely with FE providers and Care Leavers teams to identify and support Post-16 Children in Care who are educationally vulnerable and at risk of disengaging entirely. This offer extends to those students who are likely to be hard to reengage once provisions reopen. The Virtual School advocate for and ensure that all Children in Care who are not sitting end of course assessments achieve results that are a true reflection of their ability.

### **PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANNING (PEPS)**

17. On week beginning 23 March 2020, as schools became partially open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children, Southwark Virtual School took a decision to temporarily suspend PEPs and focus attention on the impact of the unprecedented changes in education and the impact on Southwark's Children in Care. The Virtual School team focused on attendance, safeguarding and wellbeing as individual decisions were made in respect of Southwark's looked after cohort.
18. The Virtual School developed revised COVID-19 PEP documents that focused on the current education guidance and the impact on education with specific focus on children in transition years, children who were due to take public examinations.
19. The Virtual School have agreed with the Children's Social Care to take temporary responsibility in completing the recording of specially designed COVID-19 PEPs to allow for Social Care colleagues to focus on the additional impact of COVID-19 on the Care Service.
20. PEP meetings resumed mid-May in the form of online meetings. With the PEP window significantly reduced and further into the academic year as traditionally held, Virtual School Education Advisors and Social Workers are making every effort to secure education planning for all children in care before the end of the academic year.

### **PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS GRANT (PPG)**

21. Greater autonomy has been afforded by providing access to the Pupil Premium Plus Grant to mitigate against emerging attainment and wellbeing issues as well as concerns arising from children being educated in the home through online learning. This offer has been extended to cover wellbeing and physical wellbeing. Virtual school staff are striving to use PPG to promote attendance, motivation and engagement in education.
22. As pupil premium funding for the academic year was already devolved to school before the start of the pandemic, the Virtual School has tapped into pupil premium funding for the 20-21 academic year. Under exceptional circumstances, this strategy aims to

ensure that there is no drift in education at a time when this is most likely to occur and offers valuable support to children and education networks. To mitigate against loss of funding to schools, the Virtual school has increased the amount of devolved funding that schools can access from £1500 to £1800.

23. Southwark Virtual School has negotiated with current tuition providers to convert their face to face delivery of lessons to an online format and has offered additional tuition to all Southwark looked after children. This is to supplement the work done by schools at this time. The Virtual School tuition offer has been taken up by 75 Southwark children in care including 17 children in Key Stage 5.
24. Prior to the government offer of technology support, the Virtual school recognised that students did not have access to vital technology devices to access education. The Virtual School secured a purchase of 50 laptops and these were delivered to Southwark looked after children in and out of borough within a week. A further 125 requests for devices were provided through the government technology scheme.

### **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS**

25. Southwark Virtual School has remained open and continues to operate as a key point of contact between the education sector and Children's Social Care.
26. The Virtual School supports provision to enhance the learning of those Children in Care who are attending school wherever possible.
27. The Virtual School is working with schools and other providers to identify those pupils who are at risk of disengaging from education altogether following the indefinite period of school closure and commission additional support as appropriate. This will include the identification of those Year 11 pupils who are now at risk of becoming NEET.
28. The Virtual School continues to provide a full service of its advice and guidance role with regard to those children who are subject to Adoption, Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Orders.
29. Southwark Virtual School continues to offer an Education Psychology and Speech and language Service to the Southwark looked after children cohort on a remote basis.

### **SUPPORT FOR HOME LEARNING**

30. Where a decision has been made for a Child in Care to remain at home, the Virtual School has offered additional support home learning. The Virtual School has developed a resource pack of online resources and supplementary materials that has been made

available to all pupils in the cohort, to facilitate home learning.

31. As children are expected to use online learning platforms as a means of accessing education, online safety has been a high priority. The Virtual School has developed a pack of information on online guidance on how to keep children safe online.
32. The Virtual School traditionally invested in Nimbl, an online resource tool to support academic attainment. Nimbl offers age and curriculum related online resources. Details of the offer can be found at: <https://www.anspear.com/uploads/emergency-planning-pri.pdf> for primary school pupils and <https://www.anspear.com/uploads/emergency-planning-sec.pdf> for secondary school pupils.
33. The Virtual School have worked with schools to provide printed resources for those children who have limited internet access or who would benefit from reduced screen time in the home.
34. The Virtual School will conduct PEPs for Children in Care during the summer term and these will be in a revised format in response to the current situation. All Summer PEP meetings will be conducted remotely until such a time as restrictions on movement are lifted. As schools reopen, target setting will prioritise the need for successful re-engagement with education and filling any gaps in learning that have emerged.

### **CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**

35. There are several factors that contribute to looked after children missing education. The most significant of these is change of care placements and children who are new to care. From 23 March to 18 May, Virtual School Education Advisors have successfully placed 6 children in a suitable education provision reducing the number of children missing education at the start of the pandemic from 9 to 3. This is a significant achievement against a backdrop of closed education provisions and local authority admissions teams all remote working.
36. Between 23 March 2020 and September 2020, there were currently 9 children missing education due to mobility of Children in Care and Education Advisors and Social workers worked together to actively seek education placements for children who were not in a school place. Care is always taken to ensure that Southwark looked after children are placed in provisions where they will thrive. Currently there are 6 children on the Virtual School Missing Education list with 5 children new to Care w/c 21 June 2021.
37. The Virtual School works together with Children's Social Care to identify emerging cases of placement instability and endeavour to inform schools in good time so that provision to sustain education placement can be made.

## **TRANSITIONS AND DESTINATIONS**

38. Virtual School Education Advisors are tracking children who are in transition phases or years to ensure that Southwark looked after children are equipped for the changes that do not have the levels of planning and support that is usually in place for this change.
39. The Primary and Secondary teams are working with school to ensure that children who are transitioning to secondary education have secure endings to their experience of primary education and that beginnings to secondary education is secure and supported.
40. The Virtual School Secondary team and the Virtual School IAG officer are tracking destinations of children at the end of KS4 to ensure that children remain in education
41. The Key Stage 5 and Secondary team have brought forward transition work relating to student destinations 2020/21 to ensure that students remain in education, employment and training.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY**

42. The Virtual School contributes to the Local authority response to COVID-9 through participation in the COVID-19 Risk Assessment Panel, local authority Government laptop scheme and Vulnerable Pupils forums.
43. The Virtual School Headteacher has presented the Virtual School Headteacher's Report at Social Care DMT, Children's and Adult's Board and at Corporating Parenting Committee. A Covid 19 update of the Virtual School response was shared at these forums.

## **TRAINING/CPD**

44. The Virtual School is in the process of putting together a package of training material and Continuous Professional Development materials that covers emerging areas of concerns and development needs. Training will be targeted at Foster Carers, Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Virtual school staff.
45. Two Education Advisors from KS5 are working towards completing a level 5 Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) qualifications.

### **CASE STUDY 1 – Securing Education during COVID-19**

*Student A is a 16 years old Year 11 pupil who before the pandemic was being educated in a secure unit. During Covid-19, a placement change occurred and Student A became accommodated in a Semi-independent living placement. This led to Student A becoming a Child Missing from Education with no school place. The Local Authority in which Student A was accommodated was not taking any in-year admissions during Covid-19 whilst schools were partially closed.*

*The Virtual School Secondary Team worked collaboratively with the social worker, family support worker and home authority admissions team and appropriate education provision was secured for Student A despite the limitations of the current climate.*

*Alternative Provision tuition was funded by Southwark Virtual School for Student A whilst the Local Authority secured appropriate education provision. Student A has been engaging well with tuition and has now secured an appropriate education provision. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) advice has also been provided and applications have also been made for a post-16 college placement for a Level 1 course to commence in September 2020. An interview is imminent.*

### **CASE STUDY 2 – Securing SEN Statutory Assessment (EHCP) during COVID-19**

*Student B is 16 years of age and accommodated as a Southwark looked after child. Following extensive health and placement concerns Student B had a Care placement change in January 2020 and was placed in temporary accommodation. This disrupted the educational placement which was also not secure at the time of placement change due largely to challenging behaviour brought about from Student B's identified medical condition.*

*As a young person outside of formalised education arrangements and between Care placement, the Virtual School, Social Care colleagues and the SEN team collaborated to ensure the EHCP would be awarded prior to Student B competing Year 11.*

*Despite complications in Education and Care placements and the added complexity of access to local authority services in the home borough, Southwark Virtual School secured a statutory assessment of SEN during the pandemic through engaging the network.*

## **COVID-19 RESPONSE – KEY STAGE 5**

46. The closure of schools and colleges between March and July 2020 represented a significant change of working practice to the Virtual School. A list of priorities was drawn up which included safeguarding of students, continuation of education delivery and monitoring levels of engagement.
47. In support of these the following actions were implemented in response to the closure of schools and colleges between March and June 2020.

## **INFORMATION GATHERING/DATA COLLECTION**

48. Education providers were contacted directly relating to their closing down schedule and a C-19 action sheet was drawn up and populated with data collected.
49. A second database was created to log which LAC were working remotely and which were still attending school/college
50. Data was collected from Schools and colleges on methods of remote education delivery and attendance recording.
51. All data gathered was shared with Care Services, Safeguarding, A&I.

## **ACTIONS AROUND DEVELOPING SITUATIONS**

52. Working with Social care and colleges to ensure that all students are enabled to learn through the purchase of IT equipment.
53. Explanatory letters sent to all students in KS5 taking exams detailing the new arrangements regarding assessment and appeal processes.
54. The VS Home tuition offer was extended for students in remote learning.
55. KS5 staff performed an important role in information sharing between schools and colleges

### **CASE STUDY 3 - Support Offered to/ESOL Student**

*Young person A is an Unaccompanied minor who lives in a semi-independent placement in London. He arrived from Eritrea in January 2020.*

- A PEP was convened within 10 days at which it was revealed that A had little experience of education. He was keen to learn English and to start studying with students of his own age.*
- Applications were made for ESOL courses at two local colleges and for the key worker to help A adjust to living in the UK by taking him out into the community.*
- In preparation for College, Virtual School KS5 Education Advisor provided A and his keyworker with links to on- line ESOL learning resources.*
- The new college was contacted prior to the agreed start date to arrange for the Learning support team to carry out academic and cognitive assessments.*
- Virtual School KS5 Education Advisor requested that a 'buddy' be assigned to ensure that A settled in.*
- The Virtual School put in extra support of 2 hours per week of ESOL 1-1 tuition targeting specific areas of development highlighted by the tests.*

#### **Outcome:**

*Young person A started college and was assessed to have no cognitive learning barriers. Initially learning at Pre entry level English, Maths and IT. Within 6 months A had moved up two levels to EL2 in all subjects and now speaks English using past, present and future tenses. The Virtual School has liaised with Care to provide A with a laptop so he can access additional on-line learning materials. A is popular with his classmates and hope to progress to business studies. He has been granted ILR and it is expected that he will make appositive contribution to society.*

# 12. VIRTUAL SCHOOL PUPIL ACTIVITY

Southwark Virtual School launched a project in November 2020 with the aim of keeping Southwark looked after children engaged in Education and keep our children motivated during a time when the pandemic was causing significant disruption.

The Virtual school also extended this offer to children in Southwark Alternative Provision.

We removed the competition element choosing to reward every child that participated.

Although the take up was not as high as we would have like, we are looking forward to receiving more examples of work from our looked after children



**Southwark Virtual School  
Activity Time**

Southwark Virtual School has organised an activity for all our young people.

To enter all you have to do is choose a topic and send us your entry. You can send

- Drawings
- Painting
- Poems
- Essays
- Short stories
- You can also do some baking and send us pictures of the treats

Choose one of the following topics below:

- My Experience of Lockdown
- About Me
- Halloween

Send your entries to [LACeducation@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:LACeducation@southwark.gov.uk)

We look forward to receiving all of your responses

As soon as we receive your entry, we will send you a £20 Love to shop Voucher

**Every entry will receive a £20 voucher**

**Closing date: 30 November 2020**

Southwark Virtual School

Southwark Council

Please see below some entries received. Well done to all pupils who participated.

## Learning From Home



**Learning new Cooking Skills**



**Dreaming Big**



# THE TERRIFYING YEARS OF 2020 (LOCKDOWN)

By: [REDACTED]

In the years of 2020, or hopefully the only years of coronavirus, we as human beings have gone through some difficult times but it is important that we never give up and persevere. What makes us human is that we go through tough times, everyone in this world or the universe has gone through some difficult times.

## WEARING A MASK

During these times it is absolutely imperative to wear a mask when you are out and about to keep yourself and others safe. When in shops, schools or anywhere you would be in close contact with a group (that now has to have 6 or less people) it is important to wear a mask.



And to kill two birds with one stone you can get a reusable mask then you don't have to keep buying single use masks and that helps on the global warming crisis as well. I have a reusable mask so I can just wash it at the weekends, that way I don't need to keep looking for a single time use one on the day I need it.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing, we all at least have heard these words by now, it's probably the phrase you hear your teachers repeat over and over again. Well as much I hate to say this, they're right. It is important



we do it because it prevents the spread of coronavirus. When you really don't want to do it remember it doesn't just benefit others but it also helps to protect you and your family back home. As you might have heard the elderly and the adults are more likely to contract the virus than us children. SO, REMEMBER CONSIDERATE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## HAND SANITIZER

Using hand sanitiser benefits everyone around you and yourself it is a quick and easy way of washing hands. When you enter buildings, you have to use it to cleanse your hands so you don't spread covid 19 or a sickness.



## The Memories of Lockdown



## █'s Quarantine Experience (AP student-redacted)

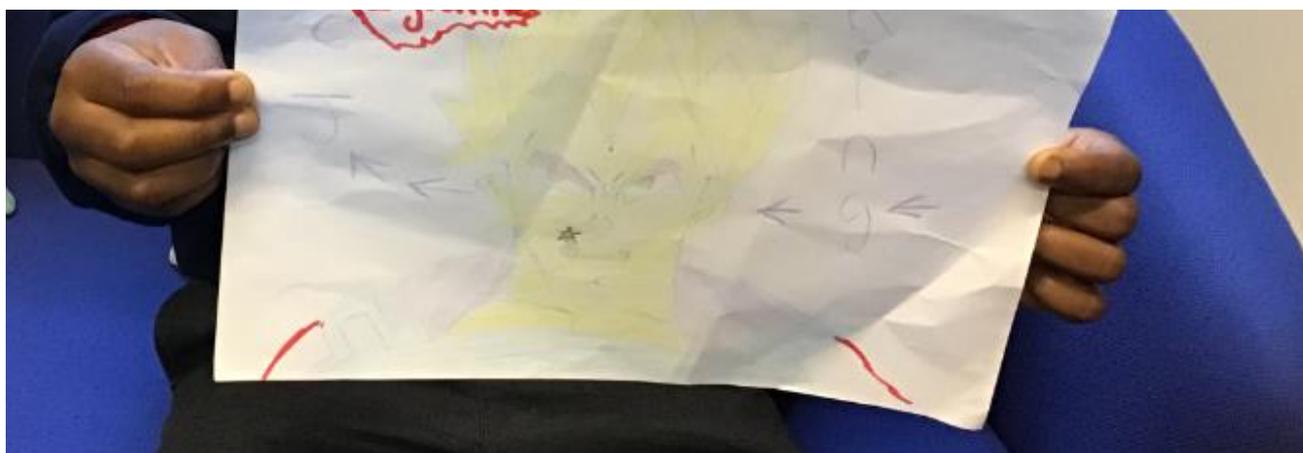
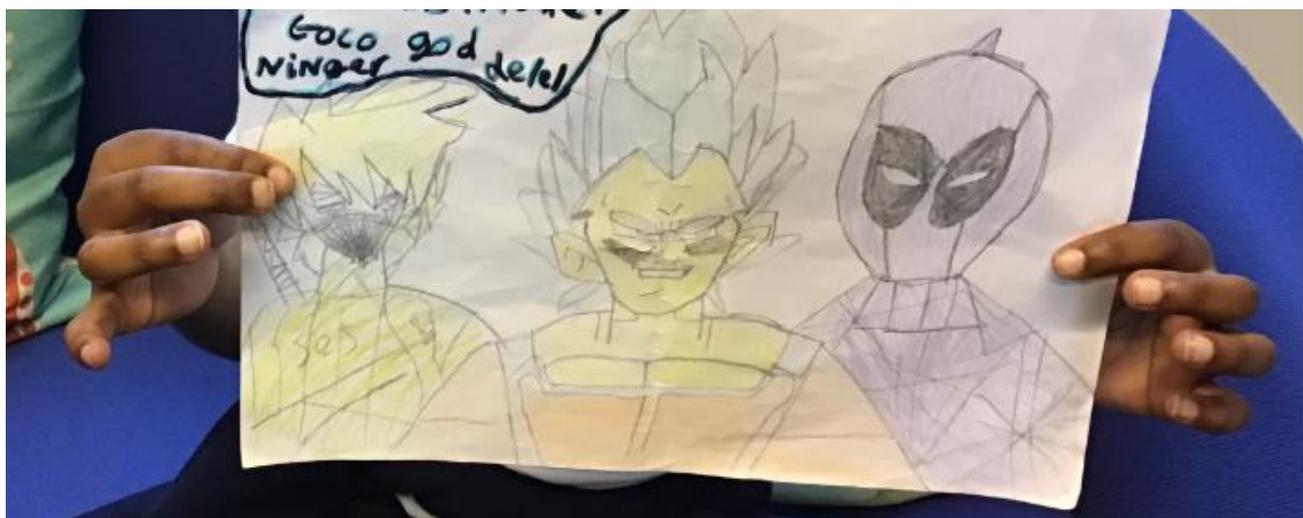
Being quarantined seemed fun at first, being at home all day and doing as little as possible but it has turned out to be fun and annoying. At the start everything seemed fine, I was hoping for it to end quite quickly as I haven't been in a pandemic like this. I thought that we would be able to do certain things such as go out for fun like bowling but instead everyone got trapped in our houses like rats.

I've been on such a rollercoaster of being happy and sad, when I was sad it was mainly because I was bored at home and couldn't do certain activities such as celebrate birthdays or go out to eat.

COVID-19 or lockdown it has given me new skills and ideas to do when I'm bored i.e Painting, video editing and dancing in the living room.

Over the past couple of months, I have also eaten some extraordinary deserts Lockdown has made me feel both sides of the emotional scale and I hope I ends soon as a lot of people can't wait to get out there.

Superheroes



# 13. Virtual School Priorities

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- 13.1. In relation to Covid-19 – Narrow the attainment gap, lost learning and mental health support. Continue to provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of Pupil Premium.
- 13.2. To promote the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. The work with early years settings, schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.  
[Promoting the education of children with a social worker: Virtual School Head role extension](#)
- 13.3. Support the development of attachment aware and trauma informed schools in Southwark by delivering a flexible and diverse virtual training programme for Designated Teachers and school leaders.