

VIRTUAL SCHOOL REPORT

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **18 September 2019**

From: **Claire Hiorns
Virtual School Head Teacher**

Electoral division(s): **All**

- Purpose:*
- i. **To provide an update on the reviewed Virtual School development plan (January 2019- August 2019)**
 - ii. **To outline the priorities for the coming academic year (September 2019 - August 2020)**

Recommendation: **The Sub-Committee is recommended to note and comment on the report, offering support and challenge as necessary.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Claire Hiorns	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Virtual School Head Teacher	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	Claire.hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 743850	Tel:	(office) 01223 706398

Summary:

To provide an update on the progress towards the development priorities within the Virtual School from January 2019 - August 2019. This plan focused on restructuring the Virtual School policy and practice, to a model which could be led by data and increase the Virtual School's capacity to be proactive rather than reactive.

The report also sets out the Virtual School priorities for the academic year September 2019-August 2020. This forms the first part of a three year strategic plan.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Every local authority must have a Virtual School Head Teacher. In Cambridgeshire there are a team of educational professionals who support the Head to fulfil the statutory duties. Since the time of the last report the substantive Virtual School Head Teacher position has been filled with the Interim Head appointed to the role. The Virtual School is a standing item on the Sub-Committee agenda.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Reviewed Development Plan

The plan commenced from January 2019, as this coincided with the departure of the previous Virtual School Head Teacher and aimed to support the development of the Virtual School until the substantive position was appointed to. The plan was built around four key priorities:

- Strengthen the collection of data, use of data analysis to inform strategy and interventions to drive improvement and maximise impact
- Create a school improvement approach to improving outcomes for children in care and children previously in care
- Create a Virtual School Inclusion Team who will take the lead in supporting individuals to access high quality education provision and ensure that the children and young people's experience of education is positive, aspirational and meets all needs
- Realign processes and procedures, to fit with the new model, whilst maintaining compliance with statutory guidance

Following the implementation of this plan, the Virtual School has now restructured the team; developed processes and systems for the implementation of the new model and held a launch event for over 200 Designated Teachers (attended by Cllr Lis Every and Sarah-Jane Smedmor,

Assistant Director). From September 2019 the new model will be live for children aged 4-18. It will be launched with Early Years Settings for a January 2020 start.

Appendix 1 provides a copy of the fully reviewed Virtual School Development Plan from January 2019-August 2019.

2.2 **Development Plan September 2019-August 2020**

The priorities for the next academic year focus on embedding the new model. They form the first part of a three year strategic plan, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for care experienced children. The six priorities for this academic year are:

- **Personal Education Plans (PEPs) consistently meet the needs of children and young people in care**

As part of the previous plan, the PEP was streamlined to increase the focus on pupil voice, social emotional and mental health needs, attainment and progress and the link between each of these with the development of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) outcomes. Within the new PEP, pupil premium plus must be applied for against the SMART outcomes set. A PEP submission date has also been introduced. This PEP will be live from September 2019. This was shared with Designated Teachers (DTs) at the launch event in July 2019. To further support DTs the Virtual School is developing the role of a PEP Champion.

Over the next twelve months the quality assurance process and audit of this process will be developed. There will be an increased focus on the collection of both compliance and quality data linked to the PEP. This data will be used to hold parties to account, to identify training needs and to inform the content and delivery of training. It will also provide a focus for the advisory visits in schools, with Post 16 and Early Years Settings.

There will be an emphasis on increasing children and young people's understanding of and meaningful involvement within the PEP meeting.

- **Children and young people in care have increased access to and inclusion within education, leading to improved outcomes**

The Virtual School now has an Access and Inclusion Team, whose role is to ensure when a child or young person enters care, or has a care placement move, that education is prioritised. Over the next twelve months the processes and systems which have been set up will need to be regularly reviewed and revised to ensure that system is effective.

The Virtual School Education Psychologist will be leading a project around promoting attendance for children in care.

There will be a focus on increasing Education, Employment and Training for our 16-18 year olds and increasing inclusion for our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

- **Projects (including those funded by pupil premium plus) raise attainment and support accelerated progress in English and Maths**

With the changes to the Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Policy (live from September 2019), there are three strands to funding:

1. Funding for an individual child, linked to the SMART outcomes and applied for through the PEP
2. Application for a project, which will benefit a minimum of two children in care and links to the Virtual School's priority areas
3. Virtual School retained funding

Over the next year there will be a focus on ensuring all Designated Teachers are aware of and understand the changes to the pupil premium plus policy, enabling them to make the best use of the funding streams available to them. Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) for an individual child will be scrutinised through the PEP quality assurance process and form a focus of the advisory visits in education settings.

The Virtual School Educational Psychologist will lead on supporting schools to develop project bids which maximise opportunities for impact and will monitor this impact. Schools will be empowered to take the lead on the implementation of the projects.

The impact of retained funding, for example the Virtual School Educational Psychologist role, will be evaluated and this intelligence will be used to establish future investments.

There will be a focus on how data can be collected which evidences impact of each of the funding streams.

The Virtual School is involved in a project with the REES Centre, which is supporting the training of 16 foster carers in paired reading, with the aim of improving the reading age of the focus group.

The Virtual School is working with other key partners within the local authority to develop and pilot a trauma informed project to support schools. By the end of the year, the pilot will have been evaluated with the aim of being able to roll it out across Cambridgeshire.

The Virtual School will be working in collaboration with social care to develop an aspiration audit, the findings will be used to inform support for children and young people.

- **Key partners within the local authority and beyond see children in care as a shared responsibility and are empowered to support them effectively**

Over the last year, there has been a focus on developing relationships and communication with a range of key partners. This will continue to be embedded over the next 12 months.

Within schools the next focus is to embed the advisory visits so that Designated Teachers, governors and senior leaders see the Virtual School advisory team as a 'critical friend'. Where relevant, there will also be a focus on collaboration with other Virtual Schools for school visits. As part of this, the Virtual School's data processes will continue to be strengthened.

Owing to the success of linking members of the Virtual School team to other teams within the local authority, this year further links will be established. Where relevant, protocols will be agreed. The Virtual School team will signpost Designated Teachers to the team that can best support.

In order to facilitate communication, the Virtual School website will be developed, as will the use of social media.

- **Policy and practice is developed to promote educational outcomes for children previously in care**

Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Virtual School have jointly appointed an Officer to support the Virtual School in fulfilling its statutory duty to provide advice and information for children previously in care. Following the induction, the focus will be on establishing relationships with key partners, aligning processes between Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and ensuring there is equity in the offer for those subject to a Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order, as with those adopted from care.

Advice and information sought from the Virtual School and responses given will be tracked and analysed, enabling the Virtual School to evidence impact of VS intervention; to create additional documentation; and to modify training according to emerging needs.

Links will be established with other Virtual Schools in the Eastern Region, with the aim of developing a collaborative approach to promoting educational outcomes for children in previously in care.

- **There is stability within the Virtual School Team and a sense of wellbeing**

The Virtual School has had a period of instability and high levels of change. The working practice has evolved along with the new model. The team has a wealth of knowledge and experience. There is a need to invest in staff to support them to feel confident with the new working practices and to promote a sense of wellbeing.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The recruitment of a Data Officer has been approved and is in process.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules

N/A

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

All statutory requirements are being adhered to in all developments with the Virtual School

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

N/A

4.7 Public Health Implications

N/A

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Source Documents	Location
<i>Virtual School Development Plan September 2019-August 2020</i>	<i>Claire Hiorns Head of the Virtual School Claire.hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk hire.gov.uk 01223 743850</i>