

Virtual School Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 13th January 2021

From: Claire Hiorns, Virtual School Head Teacher

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Key decision: No

Outcome: The Sub-Committee will have an awareness of the educational challenges faced by schools, children and their carers during the pandemic since September 2020 and the statutory role of Cambridgeshire Virtual School (CVS) in support of these challenges. They will be informed of provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and have information on attainment.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officer

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information requested by the Sub-Committee in respect of the impact of COVID 19 on the education of children and young people in care since September 2020, attainment of the 2020 cohort and education provision for UASCs.

2. Background

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire Virtual School (CVS) sits within the Education Directorate and is accountable to the Director of Education. The role of the Virtual School is to monitor the education of all children and young people aged 2-18 and support and intervene to ensure all have the opportunity to make at least good progress.
- 1.2 This report follows on from the information provided in the Head Teacher’s Report (shared with the Sub-Committee on 9th September 2020) and therefore focuses on the provision since schools and education settings fully opened in September 2020.

2. Main Issues

2.1 Impact of COVID 19 on education provision for Cambridgeshire Children in Care from September 2020 until December 2020

All schools fully opened to all children and young people in September 2020 following the summer break*. However, there have been a number of factors which have impacted on education attendance over the term:

- Bubble closures: where a confirmed case within a school has resulted in the school needing to shut a bubble.
- Child or young person coming into contact with another person with COVID and needing to self-isolate
- A member of the household developing symptoms resulting in the child or young person needing to self-isolate
- The child or young person testing COVID positive

In all of these scenarios schools have been expected to provide a package of remote learning.

* with the exception of children or young people in the ‘extremely clinically vulnerable’ category. During the period of ‘lockdown’ medical advice needed to be sought as to the appropriateness of school attendance. Cambridgeshire Virtual School had two children that fell into this category. One child received 1:1 tuition, the other had consent from the medical team that they could attend.

Attendance Data

The Virtual School monitors the attendance of all children of statutory school age on a daily basis. The Post 16 cohort and 2-4 year-old children’s attendance is monitored through the personal education plan (PEP) process.

Number of days lost to on-site provision because of COVID-19:

	Primary	Secondary
Number of pupils with days lost to onsite provision	63 of 147 children (43%)	116 out of 245 children (47%)
Total number of days lost to onsite provision	361	855

Breakdown of reasons for days of on-site provision lost

	Primary	Secondary
Self-isolating	64%	40%
Bubble Closure	28%	31%
Whole School Closure	1.3%	7%
Other	6.7%	22%

Wider COVID-19 Impact (on Virtual School Activity)

- The Virtual School has not been able to offer face to face training to empower Designated Teachers and other key partners in their role
- The Virtual School has not been able to physically attend meetings in schools and education settings.

Virtual School Response

- All education settings across the country with Cambridgeshire Children in Care attending received contact from their link Advisory Teacher to 'check in' before October half term.
 - Virtual advisory meetings took place with Designated Teachers. The priority was new Designated Teachers, schools and settings requiring additional support with PEP quality and those who had expected a visit in Summer 2020. Following this, capacity enabled meetings with other Designated Teachers. This was an advantage of the visits taking place virtually. Meetings took place with approximately 80% of Designated Teachers.
 - Advisory Teachers have supported Designated Teachers and other key partners with the inclusion of individual children. All members of the Virtual School are STEPs trained. STEPs is a therapeutic behavioural model which seeks to identify the underlying need the behaviour is communicating in order to construct a consistent response to supporting this need.
 - All schools received a standard amount of Pupil Premium Plus for the autumn term, with a process in place for schools to request additional funding when required.
 - The Education Support Line (run in conjunction with SEND 0-25 and the clinicians from social care) was extended. It is available to carers of Cambridgeshire Children in Care, parents and guardians of children previously in care, education settings and social workers; it offers a trauma informed response to education queries / concerns in light of COVID recovery. There have been four requests for support.
 - The Virtual School developed a series of webinars to support Designated Teachers (DTS) new to role and Designated Persons for Children Previously in Care. As of 18th December there were 303 views of these webinars.
 - The Virtual School developed live webinars to support all DTS with attainment and progress aspect of the PEP (this is a key focus for the Virtual School this year.) These have been recorded and continue to be available. As of 18th December there were 67 views of these webinars.
 - The Virtual School developed a series of 'empowerment' webinars. These include:
 - supporting the flight response
 - supporting resilience
 - supporting self-relief and mastery
- As of 18th December there were 103 views of these webinars.

- The Virtual School purchased Beyond Boxall and the Reach to Teach App for schools and settings. These are tools to support the social and emotional needs of children and young people. These have been provided to all schools and Post 16 providers with Cambridgeshire Children in Care, alongside the offer of training in the use of the Boxall Profile.
- The Virtual School has quality assured the PEPs for all children in care and provided feedback to the Designated Teacher and Social Worker on these.
- The Virtual School has collected end of Autumn term attainment data for children in care. Where the data has not been provided by schools the Virtual School have followed this up. The available data has been analysed and will be used to inform data conversations with Designated Teachers in January 2021. Where the conversation prompts intervention for the child or young person, additional pupil premium plus will be made available to support.

2.2 Attainment 2019- 2020

Context

Due to the unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, formal examinations and assessments did not take place and grades were based on a range of information including teacher assessments. The Department for Education have been clear that outcomes and other related data should only be used to ensure young people transition successfully to the next stage of their education, employment or training and aggregated data should not be used for comparisons or performance benchmarking.

The Virtual School has collected results as in previous years, for internal use. All those working with schools and colleges, such as Ofsted, Department for Education regional teams and local authorities, will use data from previous years when assessing school and college performance, and not the 2020 data.

GCSE Data

As with previous years the cohort concerned is young people who were in continuous care for 12 months or more on the 31st March of the specified academic year. This year on 31st March 2020 it encompassed 55 students in year 11.

Benchmark	Academic Year	2018	2019	2020
	Cohort	55	64	55
Achieved Basic (English & Maths)	Standard (9-4)	15%	13%	22%
	Strong (9-5)	7%	5%	11%
EBacc English (Language and Literature)	Standard (9-4)	26%	19%	26%
	Strong (9-5)	13%	9%	13%
EBacc Maths	Standard (9-4)	26%	19%	27%
	Strong (9-5)	16%	9%	15%
5+ Including E&M (9-4 in 5 or more subjects - inc E&M)	Standard (9-4)	13%	11%	20%

Contextual Analysis

The number of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is higher for children in care than other students; this year it was 14 of the 55 which equates to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cohort. Of those, 12 were male which is 86% of the SEND students.

The gender breakdown for the cohort was weighted more towards males at 58% which is roughly in-line with previous years both locally and nationally.

The number of students placed out of county was slightly higher than last year at 56% but broadly similar to the year before. This is higher than historic national figures which are around the 40% mark.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) accounted for 3 of the students (6%). Considering the whole Key Stage 4 cohort of 78; which includes young people more recently in-care, then there is a significant increase to 19 UASC which is nearly a quarter of the cohort. Only one of the UASC is also recorded as SEND. Combining the number of UASCs and those with SEND equates to nearly half of the Year 11 cohort.

Most of the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children are studying the core skills of English and maths at an Entry Level, many of them doing the ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) courses.

Course breakdown

The range of subjects studied was in excess of 50 with a wide range of examination levels from the GCSE's and BTEC's to ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) and ASDAN (Developing skills for learning, work and life). That said, there was a high proportion of students studying the 'traditional' subjects at GSCE level.

36 of the students were studying GSCE's subjects equating to 232 individual courses while 19 students were studying other courses from, BTEC to vocational and life skills covering a further 52 courses.

The focus of the Virtual School is always to support the students to take the courses that are right for them. Although academic qualifications are important it is vital that the young people have a positive educational experience and study subjects that are right for them and at a level that is appropriate.

2.3 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children / Young People are supported to access education as soon as possible upon coming into the care of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School complete an initial assessment to support the identification of appropriate education upon entry to care.

Children of statutory school age are entitled to pupil premium plus. Post 16 students are eligible for the vulnerable bursary and applications are supported for them to access this. This provides support for travel, lunches and any resources required for learning.

As with all Children in Care Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have been supported with access to laptops to support their education during the pandemic.

In previous years Cambridgeshire Virtual School have worked in conjunction with Cambridge University to offer summer activities to UASCs. This year the provision needed to be virtual. The participation was impacted by the virtual offer.

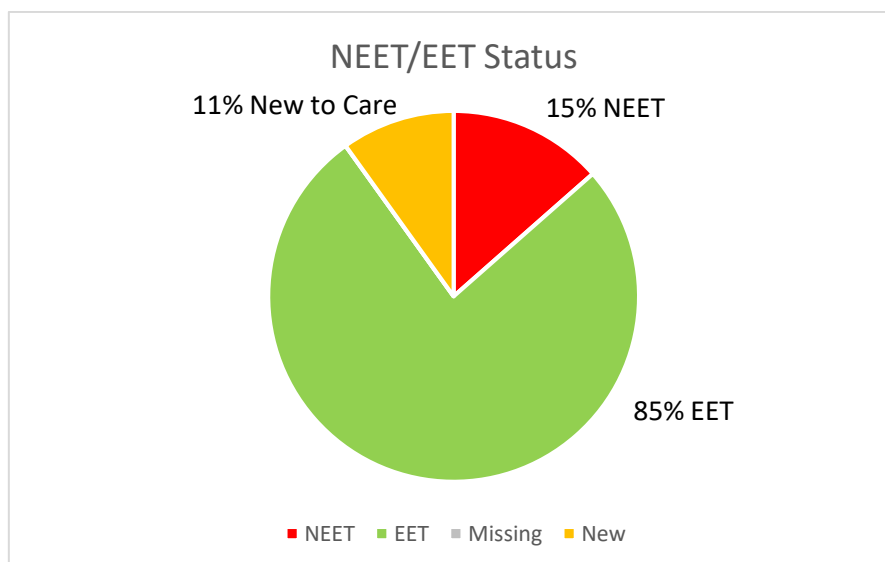
From January 2021 there will be a homework club for young people resident in Cambridge. This will be held at CRC and supported by Cambridge University students.

Number of Children and Young People by Year Group

At the point of writing this report Cambridgeshire Virtual School were working with 80 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

	Number of CYP	Percentage
Year 8	1	1.25%
Year 9	1	1.25%
Year 10	2	2.5%
Year 11	3	3.75%
Year 12	30	37.5%
Year 13	43	53.75%

Distribution of EET (in Education, Employment and Training), NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)



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

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5. Source documents

5.1 Source documents

None