VIRTUAL SCHOOL

To:	**Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**
Meeting Date:	**25 April 2018**
From:	**Jo Pallett** **Learning Directorate Lead for Vulnerable Groups** **Head of the Virtual School**
Electoral division(s):	**All**
Purpose:	**To inform the committee of future topics for discussion relating to the Virtual School.**
Recommendation:	**The Committee is asked to identify and prioritise items for future agendas.**

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Summary:

This report shows the number of Looked After Children in each school year from nursery to Year 13, how many have special educational needs or disabilities and the number who go to nursery, school or college outside of Cambridgeshire. It also suggests some parts of the Virtual School's work that the members of the Sub-Committee might like to learn more about.

1 Background

1.1 The Virtual School is a statutory requirement of the Local Authority. Members asked for information on current key data relating to the Virtual School and possible areas for future discussion.

2 Main Issues

2.1 Current Data from the Virtual School

Year Group	Total	Male	Female	Number with Special Educational Needs	% with Special Educational Needs	Educated Out of County
Pre-Early Years	*58*	*28*	*30*	*1*	*1.7%*	*11*
EY	**63**	**31**	**32**	**0**	**-**	**20**
R	26	11	15	1	3.8%	7
1	22	10	12	2	9%	5
2	**38**	**19**	**19**	**3**	**7.8%**	**8**
3	35	22	13	4	11.4%	7
4	42	27	15	7	16.6%	16
5	32	19	13	7	21.8%	7
6	**39**	**22**	**17**	**9**	**23%**	**13**
7	39	27	12	8	20.5%	19
8	38	22	16	9	23.6%	21
9	**50**	**26**	**24**	**19**	**38%**	**25**
10	73	39	34	22	30.1%	36
11	**74**	**42**	**32**	**22**	**29.7%**	**46**
12	82	51	31	19	23.1%	41
13	76	53	23	15	19.7%	37
Total	**729** *(787)*	**421** *(449)*	**308** *(338)*	**147** *(148)*		**308** *(319)*

2.2 **Cambridgeshire Virtual School Discussion Points**

Post 16, Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) progression.
As identified at the last meeting, Post 16 support is an area requiring further development and embedding of current interventions. The Virtual School started to work with Post 16 pupils in September 2015, focussing initially on Year 12. From September 2016 we have worked with both year 12 and year 13. From September 2017 we have also had a seconded staff member supporting Post 18 young people.

Areas being developed/requiring further development include;

Transition planning, when do schools start to identify options, do they have an additional focus on Looked After Children (LAC) pupils, do they prioritise LAC pupils for careers advice and guidance, are schools aware of support for LAC post 16.

Raising awareness of opportunities Post 16, this would include liaising with local employers and education providers. Ensuring they have an understanding of the needs of LAC young people, their views and experiences. Ensuring young people are aware of the opportunities and how to access them.

Liaising with Post 18 education provision, further developing relations with University and Colleges, awareness of 52 week placements, programmes to support LAC.

Personal Education Plans, these are a statutory requirement but have only been undertaken since September 2016. Completion has not been at the required level as they are new for Post 16 providers who have required a lot of training and support to engage.

Reengagement of NEET young people, including advice, home visits and application support is not always successful as young people can be disengaged from education or work. This is a broader debate about aspiration and expectation from a young age.

2.3 **Early Years**
The Virtual School has, for some time, worked with Looked After Children in the year before they started school. In September 2015 we employed an Early Years specialist on a 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) contract. This contract has been extended to 0.8 FTE since the outset due to demand for support. The Early Years specialist works with children from the term before they turn two. There is no doubt that Early Years education is fundamental for the long term development of LAC pupils.

Issues for discussion could include:

Numbers of children who come into and leave care. Early Years children are likely to be adopted or moved quickly to family members. This 'churn' makes it difficult to build relationships and have a positive impact.

Funding for LAC early years is £300 a year. Potential impact is limited by the interventions this may afford.

Many placements are small scale, single staff member placements. This limits time for

training and discussion for LAC pupils and adds a disproportionate pressure to settings.

| 2.4 | **Year 6 intervention project** |

The results for the 2017 Year 6 cohort were disappointing. We have therefore developed a project for year 6 pupils identified as potentially able to gain the national expected level. This project includes bespoke on line lessons, 'holiday school', and monitoring/support.

This project was funded by a successful Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board bid.

We have now extended this project to year 5 pupils and are planning a progression to a 'primary age' project.

Discussions regarding impact, participation, school engagement levels are all something the board may want to discuss as well as possible further intervention options.

| 2.5 | **Previously Looked After Children (LAC)** |

From September 2018 the Virtual School will have a statutory responsibility to offer advice and guidance relating to the majority of Post LAC young people. There is no requirement for a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and funding of the Pupil Premium Plus for Post LAC comes via the school census rather than the Virtual School.

Training is already underway for schools to understand their new statutory responsibilities. Data is being collated about support provided by the Virtual School to date to begin to estimate the volume of work this new requirement may produce.

This is a major development within the Virtual School and would provide a discussion opportunity to identify the LA response to this development.

| 2.6 | **Admissions, Refusals and Alternative Provision.** |

There are a number of emerging discussion points regarding Admissions, refusal and Alternative Provision (AP) including:

There have been increasing numbers of schools both within and out of county refusing to accept LAC pupils. LAC pupils should be placed in schools which are rated good or better by OFSTED, they do not link to catchment area or pan numbers. Some schools however are concerned by the numbers of LAC they are being asked to take. We have engaged the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Chief Executives of some academy chains in this discussion, but, while the discussions take place or direction is sought a child may be out of school.

For Key Stage 4 (KS4) pupils this is a particular difficulty as it relates to Alternative Provision Placement. As this can only be accessed via a school roll we are effectively asking schools to take a child on roll and pay for them to immediately access AP.

Limited placements for those aged pre KS4 is also an issue for LAC pupils.

There has been an increase in the number of out of county (OOC) pupils requesting placements in Cambridgeshire schools. This is a particular issue in the Fenland area where large cheap housing has established a number of private homes/fostering placements used by other LAs.

LAC pupils are more likely to be in AP than other LAC pupils. This has an impact on their education opportunities and limits the options available Post 16.

2.7   **Special Educational Needs And Disability (SEND)**

LAC pupils are significantly more likely to have SEND than non LAC pupils. This creates issues of appropriate admission and support, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) application and maintenance, prioritisation of LAC pupils for assessment and support and identification of who is the lead officer to challenge and support.

LAC pupils who are also SEND are amongst the most vulnerable children in our society and this may also be an issue for discussion.

3.0   **Alignment with Corporate Priorities**

3.1   **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

3.1.1   An appropriately skilled workforce is essential to Cambridgeshire's economic prosperity. Our aim is that all children achieve their potential, including LAC. High quality provision for this group of vulnerable students reduces the risk of them becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

3.2   **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

3.2.1   A quality education and the acquisition of appropriate qualifications is one of the best ways of ensuring that LAC are able to lead healthy and independent lives.

3.3   **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

3.3.1   A key purpose of the Virtual School is to ensure that this group of vulnerable children and young people who are at risk of failing to achieve have access to a relevant curriculum that is appropriate for their needs and meets statutory and legal requirements

4   **Significant Implications**
4.1   Resource Implications, none within this paper

4.2   Procurement/ Contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications. Not stated

4.3   Statutory Legal and Risk Implications, none within this paper

4.4   Equality and Diversity Implications, none within this paper

4.5   Engagement and Communication Implications, none within this paper

4.6   Localism and Local Member Involvement.

4.7   Public Health Implications, none within this paper

Source Documents	Location
None	