

17 October 2023**Agenda Item:11****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
INCLUSION****VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work and impact of the Virtual School and its partners for the academic year 2022-23.

Information**Virtual School role and structure**

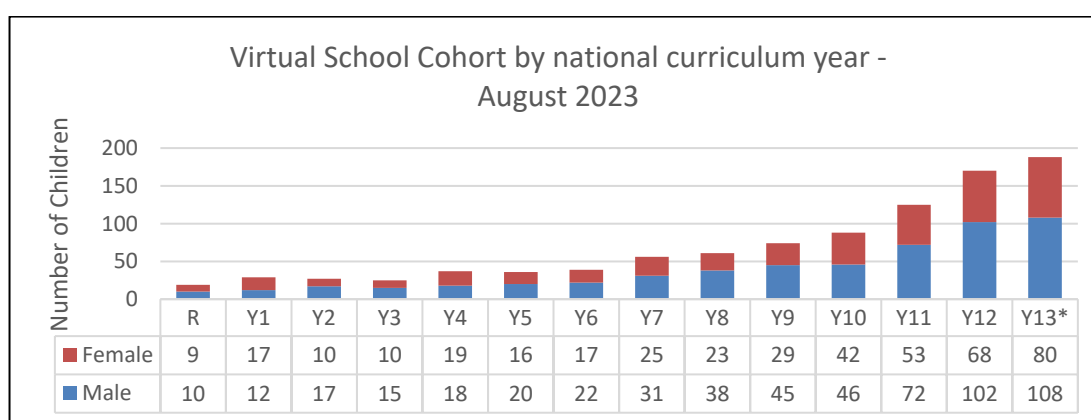
2. The Virtual School discharges the Council's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children, aged 3-18 years old. It does this by facilitating strong collaborative working and partnerships with services and schools as well as by providing effective support, challenge, and intervention.
3. The work of the Virtual School contributes to the achievement of the ambitions summarised in Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers 2022-25. The Virtual School is a key contributor to the Local Authority's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Board; this accountability board ensures that key partners come together from across and beyond the Local Authority to have collective responsibility for the education, health and wellbeing of our children.
4. Nottinghamshire's Virtual School team is relatively small in size. It is our intent, within an increasingly 'schools-led system', to promote and build a clear shared vision for developing systems, capacity and accountability in schools through strong partnership-working to secure good quality educational provision and outcomes for our children. Headteachers and governing bodies retain the responsibility for the educational outcomes of our children, and the Virtual School holds them to account when progress stalls or provision is not meeting need. The Virtual School works in a relational and strengths-based way promoting trauma informed approaches.
5. The Virtual School's Senior Leadership Team oversees the strategic and operational working practices of the team. This leadership team currently comprises the Head of the Virtual School, who is also the Local Authority's Group Manager (Psychology Services), the Assistant Heads of the Virtual School (one full-time and one part-time post), and the Senior Educational Psychologist for our children. The wider team includes a Virtual School Data Officer, currently working 0.6 with vacancy of 0.4, and eight Achievement Officers.

6. Virtual School structure:

Group Manager – Psychology Services (Virtual School Head)		
Assistant Head of Virtual School (1.0 FTE)	Assistant Head of Virtual School – Project Lead (0.6 temporary)	Senior Educational Psychologist (0.4)
Data Officer (1.0 FTE)	Achievement Officers (5.0 FTE perm.)	Achievement Officers (2.4 FTE temp.)

Virtual School cohort

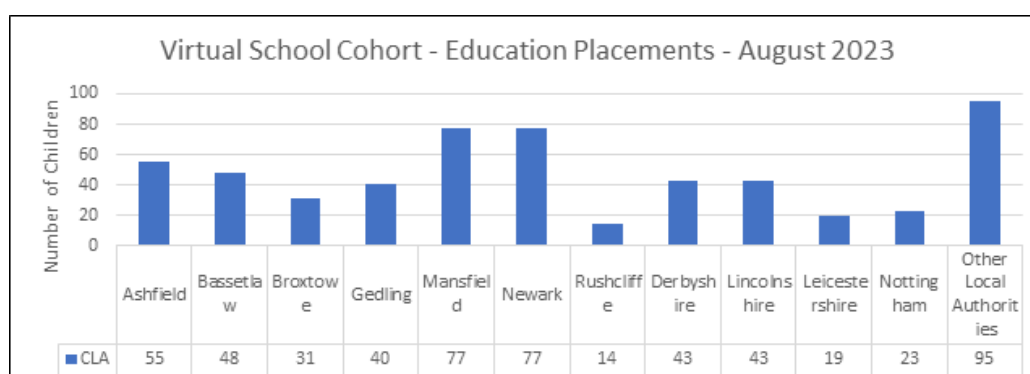
7. At the time of writing there are 967 Nottinghamshire looked after children. The number of children looked after by Nottinghamshire has remained between 950 and 1000 for the last 2 years. 597 children are of statutory school age.



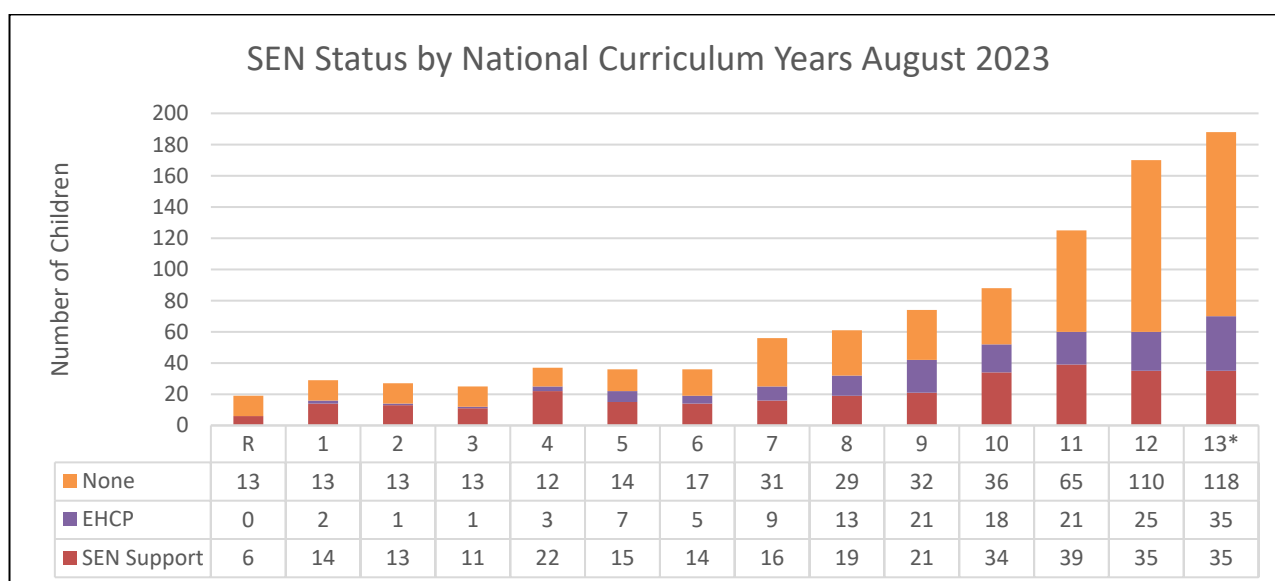
*Y13 includes care leavers

Note: in this table female/male refers to sex, not gender identifies as

8. At the time of writing 58% of our children of statutory school age attend education settings in Nottinghamshire. There is a 2% increase on number of our children attending Nottinghamshire schools when compared to last academic year. Mansfield and Newark continue to be the two Nottinghamshire districts with the highest numbers of Nottinghamshire children in care. For children attending education settings outside of Nottinghamshire, 58% of those attend schools in neighbouring authorities. Virtual School Achievement Officers are allocated to work for our children by district or local authority. This enables officers to understand the context and landscape of districts our children are in, and to understand how to navigate processes of other local authorities where needed to avoid unnecessary drift and delay.



9. Over 85% of the schools our children attend are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. School Ofsted ratings form part of the Virtual School's termly data triangulation which informs the priorities and work of Achievement Officers.
10. 14% of our children and young people have an Education Health and Care Plan which is 13% below the national average for children in care. This demonstrates the impact of Nottinghamshire's graduated response and processes which enable access to Educational Psychology support and other services without the need for an Education Health and Care Plans. Of those children with Education Health and Care Plans, 34% attend mainstream schools. The highest proportion of Special Education Needs support is in primary age groups, and highest proportion of Education Health and Care Plans is in secondary and post-16 year groups.



*year 13 includes care leavers

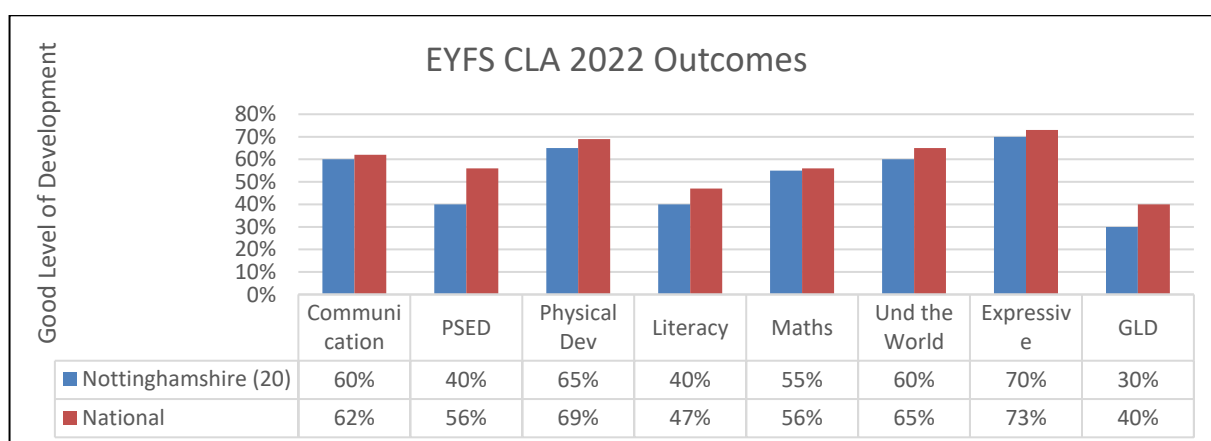
Outcomes - Attendance and suspensions

11. Average attendance for our children of statutory school age is 86.16% for the academic year 2022-23 which compares to 90.55% in 2021-22. Persistent absence is slightly above national average when compared to last year's national figures. The slightly lower attendance figures for this academic year mirrors the national picture post-pandemic.
12. The Virtual School use attendance data at individual, school and cohort level throughout the academic year to inform and prioritise the work of Achievement Officers. To enable earlier identification, support and intervention for children and schools with low attendance the Virtual School has procured a daily attendance monitoring system which will be implemented in September 2023. The Virtual School worked closely with Educational Psychology Service to promote the Attend programme training with Nottinghamshire schools this year. Attend is an early intervention, systematic way of identifying the underlying reasons for pupil absence and aims to engage families in a collaborative process to put together effective support plans. In November 2022, 170 primary schools and 43 out of 45 Nottinghamshire secondary schools participated in wave 1 of Nottinghamshire's Attend training delivered by the Educational Psychology Service.

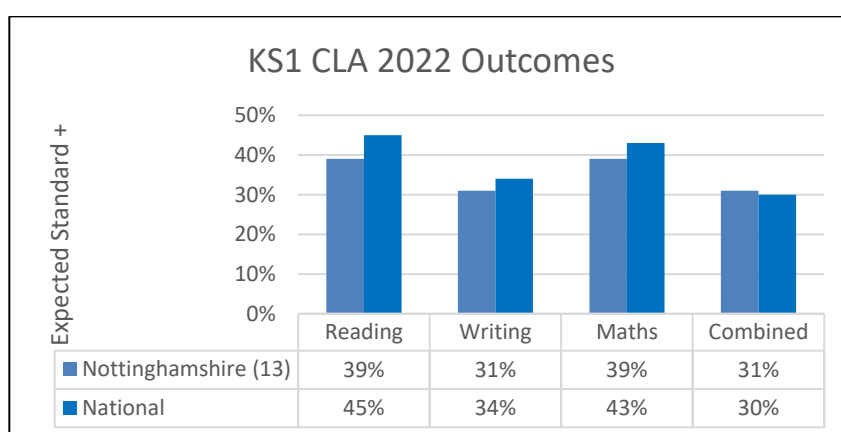
13. 110 of our statutory school age children and young people received fixed term suspensions this academic year, this compares to 77 the previous year. The Virtual School team use data and information gained through regular communication with education settings and social care colleagues to prioritise support and challenge to schools around suspensions. During the academic year, the number of our children and young people receiving fixed term suspensions decreased with 1/3 fewer children being suspended in the summer term when compared to the autumn term. The Virtual School training offer for Nottinghamshire education settings focuses on developing a trauma informed lens in education using relational and inclusive approaches to respond to behaviour rather than sanction led approaches. 292 delegates attended Virtual School training courses during the academic year 2022-23. No Nottinghamshire looked after children were permanently excluded from school in 2022-23.

Validated outcomes from 2021-22

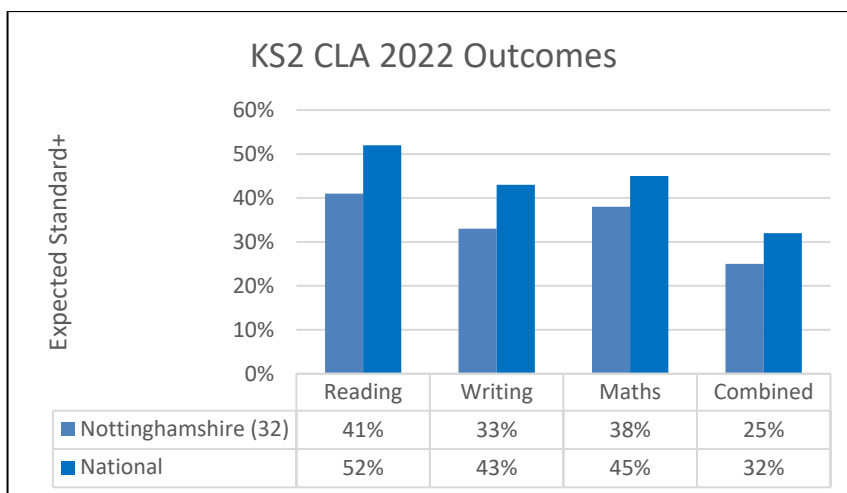
14. 30% of our children achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception which is 10% below the national average. This is a small cohort of 20 children and SEN support is 8% higher than the national average. Girls and SEN support group achieved broadly in line with the national average.



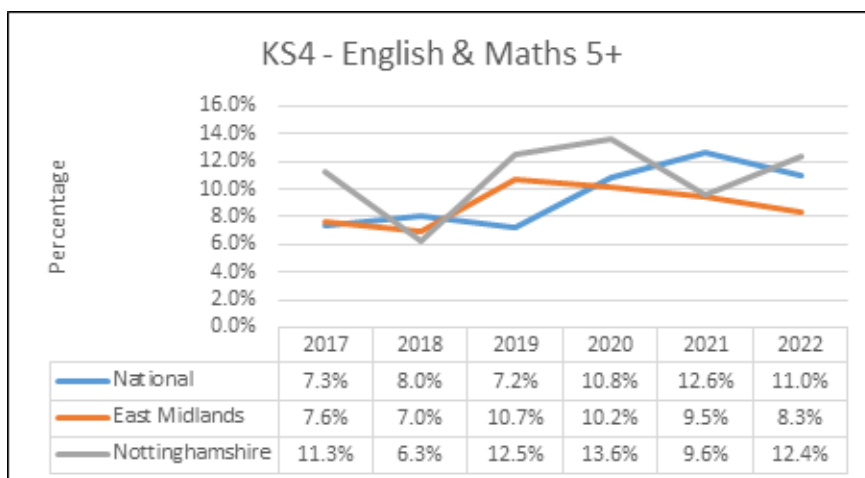
15. 31% of our children achieved age related expectations+ in combined reading, writing and maths which is 1% above national. This is a small cohort of 13 children with 8% above national average for children with SEN support. Writing remains an area for development for this cohort.



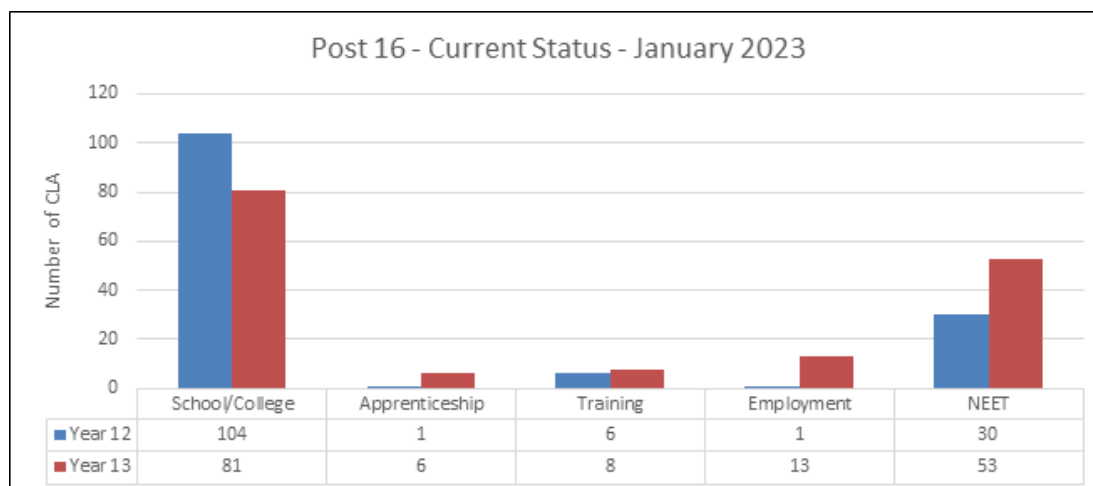
16. 25% of our children achieved age related expectations+ at the end of key stage 2 which is 7% below the national average. This is another small cohort of 32 children. Girls achieving age related expectations+ in reading was 22% above the national average for girls.



17. 12.4% of our children and young people achieved GCSE 5+ in both English and maths which is 1.4% above the national average. Children achieving GCSE 4+ in both English and maths is 2.6% above the national average.



18. In January 2023, 73% of our year 12 and 13 children and young people were in education, employment or training which is 2% lower when compared to last academic year. There were 303 of our children and young people in year 12 and 13 in January 2023 and this figure is increasing year on year.



19. 18 of our children and young people transitioned to university in September 2022. At the time of writing, 8 of our young people have secured first year places at university for September 2023. Universities our first-year students will be attending include Sheffield Hallam, Nottingham Trent, University of York, to name a few. Our young people will be studying courses such as criminology, art and design, drama and theatre, and health and social care.

Improving Personal Education Plans

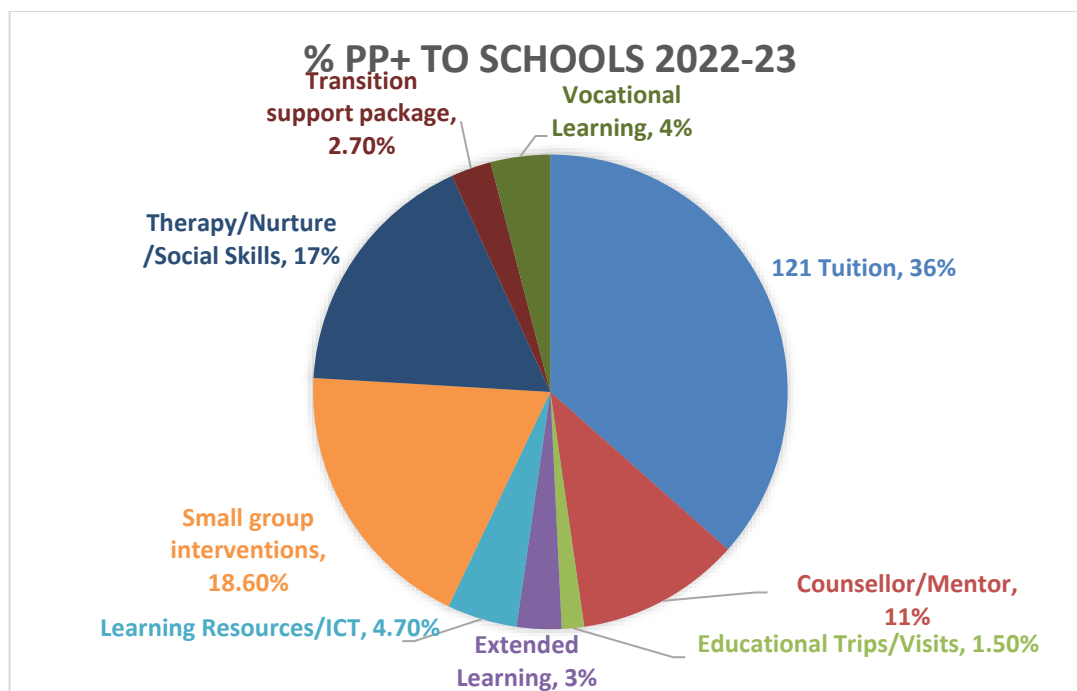
20. Local authorities and education settings have a statutory duty to conduct Personal Education Plans for children in care three times a year. Personal Education Plans are living documents that are the vehicle for driving educational achievement for children in care. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to develop Personal Education Plan quality assurance processes with partners to ensure our children and young people receive quality and timely Personal Education Plans. The Virtual School facilitate a termly Personal Education Plan working group for key partners to continue to drive the improvement of Personal Education Plans and the quality assurance process for our children and young people.
21. Nottinghamshire's Personal Education Plan quality assurance process has three strands: termly Personal Education Plan completion figures; Independent Reviewing Officers' Personal Education Plan in timescales check at looked after review; termly deep dive of randomly selected Personal Education Plans
22. Since the implementation of an online Personal Education Plan platform in September 2021, the number of Personal Education Plans completed for our children and young people has increased termly. 89% of our children and young people aged 3-18 years had a PEP completed in the summer term which compares to 53% in autumn 2021 when accurate completion figures were first extractable. Collaborative working between education and social care colleagues has enabled improvements to continue termly and barriers to be identified and addressed.
23. Nottinghamshire Personal Education Plan quality assurance process has continued to develop this academic year. A representative from a local Further Education setting is an active member of the termly deep dive group, and outcomes of deep dives continue to be used to inform training and projects with education and social care colleagues.

24. Personal Education Plan deep dives take place termly and representation includes colleagues from Virtual School, school/education settings, Early Years Service, Achievement Service, Independent Reviewing Officers and Children's Social Care teams. Individual feedback is given to link schools and social workers through normal processes, and general feedback from the deep dive is sent to all designated teachers through termly memos.
- 2022-23 deep dive overall strengths:
 - Child's voice and aspirations captured
 - Strengths well documented
 - 2022-23 deep dive overall areas for development:
 - Consistently specific actions for adults to support needs
25. The capturing of our children and young peoples' voices is an integral part of a good and meaningful Personal Education Plan. Prompts have been added to this section of the Personal Education Plan to encourage aspirational discussions and a space to hear what else our children and young people need from the adults around them. Children in Care Council artwork and message has been added to the 'child's voice' section of the Personal Education Plan document this year. An extract from primary child's voice recorded in summer 2023 Personal Education Plan:

When I'm a big girl I want to be a chef and make cakes. I want to be a doctor and a singer and a teacher. In year 2 I want to have Miss Robinson in the Rabbits class because I like rabbits. X said she sometimes likes learning her phonics and art. X also likes when it is someone's birthday in school because "you get cake."

Pupil Premium Plus to drive improvement

26. Pupil Premium is additional funding provided to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, and to ensure educational opportunities for all. Looked after children are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus which equates to £2,410 per pupil of statutory school age. Virtual Schools are responsible for overseeing Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children.
27. This academic year, the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Nottinghamshire children in care was just over £1.6million. For eligible Nottinghamshire looked after children, schools claim £700 per term through the child's Personal Education Plan. The grant is claimed against specific interventions and actions linked to children's termly targets which helps to ensure the grant is used to fund support and interventions with a strong evidence base. In 2022-23, 55% of Pupil Premium Plus sent to schools was to fund 1:1 tuition and small group interventions to address gaps in learning and to raise attainment and progress.



28. In line with the 'Conditions of Grant' guidance, Nottinghamshire's Virtual School retains some Pupil Premium Plus funding in order to commission and provide a range of additional development projects. Projects are identified using data and areas identified for development. The aim of all Pupil Premium Plus funded projects is to improve achievement and opportunity for our children through an enhanced offer.
29. The Virtual School training offer to schools and education settings is funded through Pupil Premium Plus to support the Virtual School's approach of building capacity in schools and supporting designated teachers and schools to meet the needs of our children. Other Pupil Premium projects are identified through Virtual School data to address areas for development such as the Letterbox, Multimodal Literacy and Switch-On to support reading and writing outcomes. Additional careers advice and guidance was offered to 14 year 11 student who did not have post-16 plans. School specific projects were started in April 2023 with 6 secondary schools with high numbers of our children to create an evidence base of good practice to increase attendance and reduce suspensions. Outcomes will be measured next academic year after a year of the projects and opportunities facilitated to share learning with other settings.
30. The Letterbox Club, which is an initiative run by the Book Trust between May and October, to promote reading for pleasure continues to be evaluated as being extremely positive, with many carers reporting that their young people are now enjoying reading. Letterbox is offered to all our children in nursery, year 1, year 3, year 5 and year 7. 155 children have taken part this academic year which is an increase on previous years. In 2022 evaluations, 33% of carers said that teachers at school had noticed an improvement in reading and/or maths for children receiving Letterbox parcels. 100% children from nursery to year 5 said they liked or loved reading out of school. When asked what the best thing about Letterbox was, one child said, *"it's exciting to get things in the post. I like love the books."*
31. 2022-23 has seen another successful year of the Multimodal Literacy project with the addition of a key stage 3 group and the largest Multimodal cohort to date. 46 children were

part of the project this year and half of those were new participants. The delivery of the programme is bespoke in delivery and uses quality multi-layered texts and technology linked to children's interests. The project is based on closing the gap research and it demonstrates positive outcomes in reading, writing, communication skills and relationships between home and school. Participants making expected+ progress in reading for 2022-23 increased from 50% to 70% by the summer term. 5 children were making exceeding progress in reading in summer term 2023. MML cohort expected+ progress in writing for 22-23 increased from 44% to 64% across the year. 2 children were making exceeding progress in writing in summer term 2023.

32. Teacher and carer quotes for Multimodal Literacy primary groups:

- *It has also done a great deal for his self esteem and made 2 positive impacts on his literacy.*
- *Vastly improved writing skill and pencil hold/control.*
- *Range/breadth of vocabulary improved and speech and language improved*
- *Moved up multiple book bands - huge sense of achievement in his progression*
- *Improved the detail she adds to her writing and is using more descriptive language in her writing.*

33. Teacher and carer quotes for Multimodal Literacy key stage 3 group:

- *Both have discovered an interest in engineering and riding motorbikes. They both enjoyed the creativity pieces*
- *He is now working at a career in engineering after his visit to the Triumph factory*
- *He has been happier in school and looking forward to year 8.*

34. Our unaccompanied children seeking asylum group increased this academic year which initiated a pilot project with Inspire to provide ESOL and transition support to post-16 for 8 young people who were new to the country. The main project aims were to develop speaking in English, provide an opportunity to build relationships with peers, and to prepare for post-16 education settings starting in September. The Virtual School worked with the Achievement Service to support 16 unaccompanied young people seeking asylum to access summer ESOL project run by Winchmore tutors. Evaluations from these projects will be used to inform further opportunities and support for our unaccompanied children and young people in 2023-24.

Working with partners

35. The Virtual School work in partnership with the Educational Psychology Service to deliver many of the training sessions available to Nottinghamshire education settings. 324 education and social care professionals attended Virtual School training this academic year. Average delegate evaluation feedback for all courses was 4-5 out of 5 when asked about usefulness and quality of the course. For 2023-24, a Building Relational Nurseries course is being developed with the Early Years Service to develop trauma informed approaches in settings where our youngest children attend which has been identified as an area of need through contextual knowledge, termly and end of key stage data. Example of feedback quotes from delegates at Relational Schools training this year:

- *Good balance of research and reflection combined with knowledge.*
- *A very useful reminder and some new ideas and resources.*
- *Feeling inspired.*

Course	Delegates 22-23
Building Relational Schools: Attachment Aware & Trauma Informed	47
Building Relational College: Attachment Aware & Trauma Informed (new for 22-23)	11
Emotion Coaching	75
Understanding Behaviour & Responding to Distress (new for 22-23)	42
Statutory Role of the Designated Teacher	93
Meaningful Personal Education Plans	42
Mediated Learning Support Assistant training (new for 22-23)	14

36. The Virtual School held its 4th annual conference in partnership with Nottingham Trent University in April 2023. 200 delegates attended the Doing What Matters: Leadership Counts conference which consisted of inspirational keynotes from Hayley Clacy (Spen Valley Headteacher), Jaz Ampaw-Farr (keynote speaker and author), and Jamie (Chair of No Labels, Children in Care Council), and workshops delivered by local authority, school and NTU colleagues. The number of delegates attending this academic year, has doubled when compared to last year. The average rating of the quality of the conference in evaluation was 4.73 out of 5. Example quotes from delegates in response to, what worked well:

- *Key note speakers excellent. Nice to have secondary head this year to balance primary head last year.*
- *Very informative and thought provoking. Great to network and time to think.*
- *Incredibly knowledgeable. There was lots to take away from this conference and put into practice. Lots of thought provoking moments.*
- *Very strong key note speakers and topics including workshops had a wide scope to impact on day to day running of school.*
- *Raising profile of trauma informed practice*

37. The Virtual School run termly network meetings as part of standard practice which provides an opportunity for designated teachers, mental health leads and designated safeguarding leads to come together to access peer support and share good practice. Following the success of the 2023 conference, a Doing What Matters network was set up to provide an additional space to develop collaborative relational work and create opportunities to share good practice across Nottinghamshire. Comments from designated teachers in the Virtual School annual evaluation survey included:

- *The network meetings are always useful*
- *The new network recently set up based around trauma informed schools is looking good and our first meeting was positive*
- *The follow up network helps drive improvement*

38. Through the Department for Education's post-16 pupil premium pilot, the Virtual School has funded a care experienced mentor at West Nottinghamshire College for two years. This role is now well established and support for our young people is extensive and includes: support to complete and share their voice in Personal Education Plans; working with tutors to make reasonable adjustments and provide flex to enable achievement; supporting transitions including university visits and securing work placements. West Nottinghamshire College have developed excellent practice in supporting care experienced students to succeed and they have been shortlisted for an Attachment Research Community Award following a nomination from Nottinghamshire Virtual School. West Nottinghamshire College have enthusiastically engaged with training and support provided by the Virtual School and implemented learning into practice including Emotion Coaching, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and Building Relational Colleges work. Plans for 2023-24 include West Nottinghamshire College and Virtual School continuing to work together to share good practice with other settings.
39. The Virtual School work with the Youth Service, Children in Care Council and social care colleagues to deliver an annual achievement event for our children. This year the event was held in June 2023, at the University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus which provided some children their first experience of a university. Members of the Children in Care Council chose the keynote speaker for the day, Ashley John-Baptiste, who gave an inspirational speech sharing his personal experiences overcoming adversity. Over 250 of our children and young person were nominated for an achievement award by their carers, social workers, teachers and other adults in their lives. Almost 90 children and young people attended the celebratory event on the day and they all received a trophy and certificate for their achievements. Quotes from young people:
- *This is the best day ever*
 - *I'm going to keep this trophy forever*

Virtual School priorities for 2023-24

40. Virtual School priorities for 2023-24 will include:
- Improve monitoring data and early intervention to increase attendance and reduce suspensions
 - Virtual School senior leadership team to lead strategically and operationally on key groups of children in the most vulnerable situations to ensure they have good educational provision and the right support in place. Groups to include children Educated Other Than at School, children who are Unaccompanied and Seeking Asylum, children with Youth Justice Service involvement; children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Work with partners and other stakeholders to continue to increase completion and quality of PEPs through established quality assurance processes

Extended duties

41. The Virtual School have extended duties in an advice and guidance role to promote the education of previously looked after children. The Nottinghamshire offer for previously looked after children this year included an advice and guidance line for families and professionals, and workshops for parents. 2022-23 workshop themes were informed by

evaluations from the previous year and themes identified through the advice and guidance line. The workshops were delivered by the Virtual School lead for previously looked after children and a senior educational psychologist. Workshops were attended by 53 delegates this academic year and the themes were:

- Thinking about anxiety
- Who's who in SEND
- Emotion Coaching

42. Developments for 2023-24 include changes to promoting workshops to increase delegate numbers; a conference for families of children previously looked after; and working with Adoption East Midlands to form a multi-disciplinary team for adoptive families.
43. Virtual Schools also have extended responsibilities to promote the education of children who have or have ever had a social worker. This is a strategic and advice and guidance role supporting schools, education settings and children's social workers and does not involve working directly with children and families. The Virtual School provides an advice and guidance line for families and professionals requiring support and signposting around the education of children with a social worker. The Virtual School is running pilot projects with two schools with the aim of increasing attendance and promoting the achievement of children with a social worker. Both schools identified their area of need was additional support for this group of children specifically focusing on their social, emotional, and mental health. As a result both schools have implemented a mentoring programme using external providers. Developments for 2023-24 include further project work with Nottinghamshire schools to raise the profile of children with a social worker and establish what works well for them. The Virtual school will work in partnership with social care to embed signposting and understanding of approaches and processes to support the attendance and achievement in education for children with a social worker.

Other Options Considered

44. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

45. The report provides an opportunity for the Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

46. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

47. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel provides any feedback in relation to the information contained in the report.

Peter McConnochie
Service Director, Education, Learning and Inclusion

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Steph McGill
Assistant Head of the Virtual School
T: 0115 804 2227
E: stephanie.mcgill@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (initials CD12/09/23)

48. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SS 19/09/23)

49. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children (Department for Education, February 2018)

Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-25

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0108