



29 October 2012

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

AUTUMN TERM REPORT FOR THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on the virtual school for the Autumn term 2012.

Information and Advice

Senior Leadership Team and School Development Plan

2. The next meeting of the senior leadership team will be in November 2012. Updates on the virtual school development plan for the academic year 2011/12 will be shared at this meeting as the July meeting had to be cancelled due to end of year commitments for head teachers.
3. A new development plan has been drafted for the academic year 2012/13 with priorities updated. This plan will be discussed at the November meeting of the senior leadership team and refined as seen appropriate. The final plan will be brought to the Sub-Committee at the January 2013 meeting.

Virtual School Staff

4. The virtual school remains in the Education Improvement Service, however, following the promotion of Marion Clay to Group Manager, Linda Foster now line manages the virtual school. Linda will attend the senior leadership team meetings and future Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee meetings.

Termly Designated Teacher Network Meetings

5. To provide ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and information sharing events, Designated Teacher Network Meetings have been organised once again for the Autumn term. These meetings are based in the North and South of the County. The co-ordinator of the virtual school, both looked after achievement officers and Linda Foster will be in attendance. These Autumn term meetings will be providing CPD on the new OFSTED framework and how this will apply to looked after children specifically.

Designated Teacher Memos

6. These continue to be sent out regularly, at least half termly. The coordinator uses this method to communicate information, news and events with designated teachers across the County. Feedback from teachers has been positive on this method and encourages contact from all schools with the virtual school. The Autumn term memo is attached as an **Appendix**.

School Links

7. The virtual school co-coordinator continues to deliver training to primary and secondary schools. Evaluations continue to be positive from these events.
8. The virtual school co-ordinator continues to support out of County schools which have Nottinghamshire looked after children (LAC) and adopted children/young people on roll with any educational issues. This autumn term, the co-ordinator will be working with city schools to support looked after children placed in Nottinghamshire.
9. The virtual school co-ordinator will attend the primary and secondary head teacher briefing events throughout the Autumn term 2012 and will support the Closing the Gap Marketplace event in November 2012.

Social Care Links

10. The co-ordinator and service manager for the Through Care Team are now working together to ensure appropriate training is delivered to the workers who will be part of the dedicated LAC social care team. Place planning and admission colleagues will also support this training.
11. LAC achievement officers for the virtual school will also be working closely with the new team and supporting social care colleagues in all matters relating to education.

Frontier

12. This is an online resource for schools, foster carers and adoptive parents. It is regularly updated by the virtual school co-ordinator with important information and developments as they occur.

Floor Target Schools

13. The virtual school continues to monitor looked after children in below floor target schools.
14. The Autumn term checks by education improvement advisors will be made as their programme of visits to support these schools begin. Should any issues arise with the progress of these children or young people, the virtual school will support the designated teacher to address these difficulties.

Teacher Assessment Data Collection

15. Following a review meeting with the data team, changes are to be made to the collection form to enable appropriate tracking to take place. This will include the addition of prior attainment data.

GCSE results

16. We do not receive GCSE results at pupil level until early October. Evaluative progress reports will be available in November 2012.

Areas for monitoring

17. The mission statement: this will be reviewed by the senior leadership team to ensure that it meets the needs of the children and young people it serves.
18. School Moves: This will continue to be a focus for the virtual school. Alerts are now in place to enable the co-ordinator to discuss with workers the reasons for moves and ensure that these pupils are placed in appropriate schools and in a supportive manner.
19. Attendance at Personal Education Planning meetings and LAC Reviews: The LAC achievement officers will attend both reviews and Personal Education Plan meetings as appropriate. Reports on this will be issued to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee at the end of each academic year, beginning in July 2013.
20. Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015: The virtual school holds a number of key areas in the Strategy. These areas will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.

Achievement Event

21. This was once again a very successful event at Rufford Park. The No Labels group will be evaluating the event and feeding back to the co-ordinator. The consensus is that Rufford Park as a venue suits all and the initial evaluation from the children and young people agrees with this. A meeting is to be held in the Autumn term to establish a date for next year's event.

Projects

22. The multi modality project: this project is to run for the third year in Nottinghamshire with Dr Bwojani heading the project again. This year a resource has been produced to support schools and the participants. It is envisaged that this will secure sustainable literacy development for looked after children in the project schools.
23. Intensive Mentoring Project: the funding for this project has been extended to further evaluate the success of this project. Feedback to date has been very positive with carers and workers valuing the support the mentor has been offering to some of the most vulnerable post 16 students.

24. Letterbox Club: the first parcels for this year's project have now been sent out. All young people have received them including those who were in care but have now left at the beginning of the project.

LAC Education Enrichment Fund

25. The LAC Education Enrichment Fund has now been running for a term. Social workers and schools fully understand the need for the funding to be focused on closing the educational attainment gap for looked after children. Social workers are requesting funding for ICT and extra tuition. In addition, a number of educational trips have also been funded for GCSE students and equipment for such courses as media, art or food technology.

Personal Education Plan

26. The plan to trial this first draft with the Mansfield/Ashfield social care teams has been delayed to coincide with the launch of the Through Care Team. It was felt by the co-ordinator and the service manager that the trial would be best focussed with this dedicated team. This will make feedback and evaluation easier.

Children in Care Council

27. The coordinator attended the No Labels meeting in September 2012 to both introduce herself and discuss items such as the update on personnel for the virtual school, the revision of the personal education plan and ways in which the Council can ensure the virtual school is operating effectively. Any consultation on the personal education planning document will be worked through the sub-groups when it is ready.

Good News

28. Book tokens have been sent out regularly for outstanding achievements. These have included high attainment grades, accelerated progress and 100% attendance for a number of students who had very low attendance on entering care,

Other Options Considered

29. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options.

Statutory and Policy Implications

30. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the report be noted.

Sue Denholm
Co-ordinator of the Virtual School

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

31. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (NDR 28/09/12)

32. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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