

16 July 2012

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

SUMMER 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 summer term 2012.

Information and Advice

Virtual School Senior Leadership Team and Virtual School Development Plan

2. The next meeting of the virtual school senior leadership team will be in July 2012. Updates on the virtual school development plan will be shared at this meeting.
3. A member of the virtual school senior leadership team who is head teacher of an academy in the north of the County expressed an interest in running a short course English GCSE for looked after children. Four other schools in the area will also collaborate in working towards establishing a short course English GCSE. Further developments will be discussed at the senior leadership team meeting.

Virtual School Staff

4. The virtual school co-ordinator is pleased to report that two Looked After Children Achievement Officers were appointed following interviews in April 2012. Ian Stewart and Marice Gillespie are now working for the virtual school full time. Ian will be covering the south of the County (Broxtowe, Rushcliffe, Gedling and Newark) and will also be working with the three County residential homes on any educational issues. Marice will cover the north of the County (Mansfield, Ashfield and Bassetlaw). Both Officers will be based at Lawn View House with the co-ordinator.
5. Both members of staff have received an induction programme with the virtual school and attending training with an outside provider on looked after/adopted children/young people's needs in education to assist them in providing support for our schools.

Termly Designated Teacher Network Meetings

6. To provide ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities and information sharing events Designated Teacher Network Meetings have been organised

for the summer term in the north and south of the County. The co-ordinator of the virtual school, and both looked achievement officers will be in attendance as will the senior educational psychologist for looked after children. These summer term meetings will be providing CPD on a multi-modality resource that the virtual school will offer to schools following the successful multi-modality project run by the virtual school in conjunction with Dr Petula Bhojwani, consultant on literacy. The meetings will also give an opportunity to discuss any educational issues schools may have with LAC/adopted pupils.

Designated Teacher Memos

7. These continue to be sent out regularly, minimally 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 and encourages contact from all schools with the virtual school.

School Links

8. The virtual school co-ordinator continues to deliver training to primary and secondary schools and evaluations are positive.
9. The virtual school co-ordinator continues to support out of County schools who have Nottinghamshire looked after children and adopted children/young people on roll with any educational issues.
10. The virtual school co-ordinator has also continued to attend the primary and secondary head briefing events and will be delivering a workshop at the Closing the Gap event in June 2012.

Social Care Links

11. The virtual school co-ordinator has now visited social care teams across the County. Information has been passed to them concerning updates on the virtual school, new LAC achievement officers, funding streams and the importance of keeping school placements stable. Since these meetings, social workers have been contacting the virtual school for support when considering a school move.

Fronter

12. The Fronter room for the virtual school is now accessible to all schools. This will be continually updated with information available for schools on important aspects of education and looked after children. Currently, there are films from the Mighty Creative Projects, OFSTED information, designated teacher training course materials and The Pledge. In the future such items as pupil premium and transition ideas will also be posted. The virtual school also has a room on Fronter for fostering and adoption networks.

Floor Target Schools

13. The virtual school continues to monitor looked after children in below floor target schools.

14. There are now 13 looked after children in schools below floor target. The summer term checks by School Improvement Advisors are now underway and reports back so far are encouraging. All children are making progress with some making accelerated progress. All children who qualify for 1:1 tuition have had or are receiving the additional sessions in English and maths and have made progress in these areas. Other interventions are also provided for children who require them in areas such as reading, maths and English and show good progress in these areas.
15. In the new academic year, should there still be schools in this category. School Improvement Advisors will continue to monitor any looked after children on roll.

Teacher Assessment Data Collection

16. The virtual school has now implemented the collection of termly teacher assessment data. There have been two collections, one in the autumn term and one in the summer term. Schools have been supportive in returning data. However, there is still work to be done with ensuring all the data is sent into the authority. Out of 345 children and young people of statutory school age, data was returned on 242 across autumn and summer collections. These figures are based on Nottinghamshire looked after children in Nottinghamshire schools.
17. This is seen as positive and there will be further contact made with the schools not returning the data either on a timely basis or not at all to ensure that 100% return is made in the future.
18. The virtual school is working in collaboration with the data management team to begin the analysis of the data received. Reports to enable the co-ordinator to track and monitor individual pupils will be developed in the coming months.
19. The Authority is making this a high priority for development and the senior leadership team for the virtual school is also working collaboratively to assist in this process. The co-ordinator is working with the data manager for a secondary school represented on the senior leadership team to ensure correct reports are developed. The head teacher of the secondary school is also keen to support the virtual school in working with the schools not returning data or not in a timely fashion.
20. Special school data is returned by manual methods. Generally pupils in special schools do make good progress and achieve their potential within the range of their complex needs.

Areas for monitoring

21. The Mission Statement for the virtual school has been agreed to replace the No Less than Success document. This will now be reviewed and updated as required through both senior leadership team and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. A copy of the statement is available as a background paper.
22. School moves. There have been concerns that a number of looked after children may move schools inappropriately and to schools that may be unsuitable in meeting the child's needs. This issue and the use of the agreed transport policy to ensure looked

after children can remain in their schools were also highlighted in the serious case review findings and have been identified as areas for monitoring through the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. To assist with this monitoring process, it has been agreed that applications for looked after children to move schools within the County will be passed through the virtual school to monitor the situation and reduce the number of unnecessary moves.

23. To date no applications have been received by the virtual school. There have been a number of school moves that were in process prior to this agreement involving 17 children/young people and the virtual school has had a role in all of these cases to ensure that appropriate support has been provided and the placement can be as successful as possible.
24. 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

25. The achievement event is due to take place on 14 July 2012. The co-ordinator will be attending an evening session with the young people who are working on the bunting theme for the day. A year 13 young person will also make a short presentation on her forthcoming trip to teach English abroad. Rufford Park has again been chosen for the venue and they are providing free of charge activities through the day to support the event.

Projects

26. The final sharing event for the Mighty Creatives projects went ahead in May and was successful. A number of other local authorities have made contact with either the co-ordinator or the Mighty Creatives organisation to run similar projects.
27. The 2011/12 multi modality project ended in June 2012. A celebration event was organised for June at Rufford Park where the young people came to show their work; schools also came to this event to support their pupils alongside carers. From the success of this project Dr Petula Bhojwani is now working with the virtual school to produce a sustainable resource for all schools to use. This will be shared at the designated teacher network meetings. The work of the children and young people from this project was due to be shown at an international conference in June 2012 and displayed at the achievement event.
28. The co-ordinator of the virtual school is also in contact with the Arts and Sports for Children and Young People team looking at music opportunities through the Music Hub.
29. Intensive Mentoring Project. The virtual school highlighted that a number of post 16 young people can be at risk of falling out of their education plans. Alongside Remedi (a charitable organisation providing reparation services) and the Youth Justice Service, the virtual school has jointly funded a mentor to support the most vulnerable young people known to the virtual school through working with them during their statutory school age education. This worker will not be taking over the role of an after care worker but

complement and enhance the support the After Care team currently provide. The mentor has already met with all the young people identified and their carers/parents and there has been positive feedback from Children's Social Care, families and young people to date.

Letterbox Club

30. Initial evaluation of the 2011 letter box club has been received in draft form. The outcomes have been very positive with 118 children and young people accessing this resource (over 90 living in Nottinghamshire). Questionnaires were sent out to the carers of the children/young people. For the first questionnaire there was a 40% response rate and for the second questionnaire a 32% response rate. The evaluation indicated 81% of children/young people enjoyed receiving the parcels 'a lot' the remaining saying 'a little' or 'OK'.
31. An evaluation report should be available for the autumn term 2012. Provisional numbers for the 2012 project are 104 children/young people.

LAC Education Enrichment Fund

32. Agreement has been secured to continue to provide access to £500 for looked after children to enhance their educational opportunities. This funding has been agreed by Schools Forum Direct Schools Grant. This LAC 'Education Enrichment Fund' will effectively replace the Personal Education Allowance that was phased out by the Government over 3 years ago. This decision by the Schools Forum reflects the commitment of Nottinghamshire schools to improve educational outcomes for LAC.
33. The guidance and paperwork will be circulated in June 2012 to Children's Social Care service managers, team managers, social workers and independent reviewing officers.

Personal Education Plan

34. The first draft of the updated personal education plan is now ready and will be delivered to the Permanence Team and Mansfield/Ashfield children's service team for a trial period of at least two terms. Feedback will then be taken and documentation further revised as necessary.

Children in Care Council

35. The coordinator will be meeting with the Children in Care Council in September 2012 to both introduce herself and discuss items such as 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 works best for them.

Good News

36. Book tokens once again have been sent out to children and young people for a variety of successes. These have included completing SATs week, achieving 100% attendance for the first time, making outstanding progress and achieving early GCSEs.

37. A young person has also been highlighted to the virtual school for achieving a prestigious award for agriculture presented at Southwell Minster. This young person will have his name on the Roll of Honour board at Nottingham Trent University and has a glass trophy to keep.

Other Options Considered

38. This report is for information only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

39. 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 Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee notes the report.

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Co-ordinator of the Virtual School

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (NDR 25/06/12)

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

Background Papers

Virtual school mission statement

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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