



**Agenda Item: 5**

**REPORT OF THE COORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL AND TEAM  
MANAGER**

**SPRING TERM REPORT FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL  
SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide information concerning the educational attainment and progress of Nottinghamshire Looked After Children (LAC) and progress of the School Improvement Plan for the Virtual School to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Information and Advice**

**Senior Leadership Team and School Development Plan**

2. The Senior Leadership Team for the Virtual School met for the second time this academic year on 14 March 2012. This was a very successful meeting with support from school based colleagues around ensuring speedy development of the data collection tool to track and monitor LAC attainment and progress. The special school head teacher is continuing to work with the Virtual School to establish a way of collecting and analysing school based data from special schools.
3. One of our academy head teachers has agreed to explore the possibility with the secondary schools within the Ashfield area around the piloting of a 'crash course' for Y10 – 11 LAC who could attain at least C grades in English and mathematics. Again, we recognise the vital role that Nottinghamshire head teachers have in ensuring the Virtual School works in partnership with school based colleagues around a shared vision for all LAC.

**Virtual School Staff**

4. The advertisements for the posts of Looked After Achievement Officers have now been advertised (March 2012). We hope to interview on 17 April and that we will be able to appoint two candidates to these posts.

**Designated Teacher Training**

5. This went ahead over six days during February and March 2012. Events were well attended with over 200 schools attending. Delegates were briefed on the new OFSTED framework and how the new judgements can be evidenced and evaluated for the looked after children in their schools (**Appendix A**).

6. Using research and support materials from the National Literacy Trust, a presentation was delivered on supporting carers with reading with the children and young people at home. The afternoon focused on developing positive approaches to rewards and sanctions systems in school following a research project run on behalf of the Virtual School in Holgate secondary school (copy to be brought to next meeting).
7. Other sessions on the day focussed on the role of the designated teacher, updates on funding streams and consultation on the proposed revisions to the Personal Education Planning documentation. Evaluations from the day were overall very positive with ideas for further training provided by delegates.

### **Designated Teacher Networks**

8. At the designated teacher training the proposal to develop designated teacher networks across the County was positively received. These will take the form of twilight drop-in sessions where designated teachers can come along and meet with the Coordinator of the Virtual School, Senior Educational Psychologist for LAC and Achievement Officers.
9. Short Continuing Professional Development sessions will be delivered at these events to share good practice, particularly in relation to how the pupil premium can impact positively on the attainment and progress of LAC. Opportunities to discuss individual children/young people will also be offered at these networks. Schools have been quick to offer venues for these twilight sessions which will be offered to all schools and academies free of charge.

### **Designated Teacher Memos**

10. These continue to be the main method of communication with all schools from the Virtual School in addition to the Fronter page. These are well received and ideas for items to be included were suggested at the training events and have already been actioned in some cases. For example, the contact emails for other authority virtual heads have now been shared to ensure that Nottinghamshire schools can follow up delays in some cases to the payment of the pupil premium. Information on funding streams and details of projects running, such as the National Literacy Trust offer on supporting carers with reading, have already been incorporated into the most recent memo.

### **School Links**

11. The Virtual School Co-ordinator has delivered a number of training sessions on the needs of looked after children in the classroom, ways in which to support them and the role of the Virtual School in supporting schools. The evaluation of these events has been positive and further events are planned in the future.
12. These training sessions are also supported by the Educational Psychology Service where appropriate. The Coordinator has also travelled to schools out of the County with Nottinghamshire looked after children and young people where there has been a need to maintain and support their school placement.

## **Social Care Links**

13. The Virtual School Co-ordinator has attended both North and South Locality Management Team meetings and informed them of the role of the Virtual School and the services it can offer. This has been received positively and the Co-ordinator will now be attending individual team meetings in various areas to train/inform new social workers on the Virtual School and its role in supporting looked after children's education.

## **Frontier**

14. The Virtual School now has a page on the support after adoption/fostering room on the Frontier site and also on the School Improvement room. During the summer term, we hope that designated teachers will be able to access training materials and memos from this website.

## **Floor Target Schools**

15. Concerns have been highlighted, through a letter to the authority from Tim Loughton MP following the safeguarding inspection, about vulnerable children and their progress and attainment in schools below floor targets.
16. The Virtual School has responded to these concerns by setting up a monitoring system through the School Improvement Advisors. Each school that is below floor targets is allocated an Advisor and these colleagues will have dedicated discussions around any looked after children who may be on roll. This will ensure that everything is being done to ensure good progress is being made by the children in these schools. Currently there are no secondary schools below floor target and only 15 pupils in 12 identified primary schools across the County.

## **Data**

17. The first termly teacher assessment (TA) data collection sheet has been sent out to all schools in Nottinghamshire during February 2012. The intention is to ensure that we can track and monitor the TA of all LAC on a termly basis and use this data to ensure that all possible provision and intervention is being offered to any LAC whose progress has stalled.
18. At this time, the first data is being analysed with a view to reporting some base line TA in the next report.

## **Statutory Data**

19. The following information provides a summary of the national and validated data for 2011 (**Appendix B**) available for the children and young people for whom Nottinghamshire retained parental responsibility in 2011 at the end of key stages 2 and 4 and relates to those children who have been continuously in care for 12 months. Whilst most of these children and young people attend schools and settings within the County, this reported data incorporates the attainment of Nottinghamshire's looked after children attending

schools and settings outside the County. When considering this data, it should be recognised that cohorts are small.

### **Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 for LAC for whom Nottinghamshire retains parental responsibility**

20. The following analysis is based on the achievement of 10 LAC. Outcomes for Nottinghamshire LAC in relation to Level 4 in English at the end of key stage 2 have improved by 18% since 2008. In 2011, 55% of LAC achieved Level 4 in English compared with the national LAC outcomes of 50% and an East Midlands average of 42%. However, the gap between the attainment of Nottinghamshire LAC when compared with all children nationally and within the County continues to be significantly large. When compared to all children in Nottinghamshire, there was a 28% gap, and a 27% gap with all children nationally. When compared with the gaps in 2010, this represents a significant improvement as the gap figures in 2010 were 48% when compared with all Nottinghamshire children and 47% for all children nationally.
21. Outcomes for Nottinghamshire LAC in relation to Level 4 in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have improved by 45% since 2008 and in 2011 were broadly in line with all children in Nottinghamshire and nationally. 82% of Nottinghamshire LAC achieved Level 4 in maths compared with 83% of all children in Nottinghamshire and 80% nationally, thus effectively closing the attainment gap in mathematics in 2011.
22. In relation to the combined Level 4+ achievement in both English and mathematics, 55% of Nottinghamshire LAC achieved the expected attainment for the end of key stage 2. This compares positively with a national LAC figure of 40% and an East Midlands outcome of 35%. This data suggests that all LAC who attained Level 4+ in mathematics also attained Level 4+ in English. However, not all children who attained expected outcomes in mathematics achieved expected outcomes in English.

### **Outcomes at the end of key stage 4 whom Nottinghamshire retains parental responsibility**

23. This data analysis is based on the achievement of 50 LAC. The proportion of Nottinghamshire LAC at the end of key stage 4 achieving at least 5 GCSEs A\* - C, was 28.8%, an increase of 6.8% since 2008. This is 2.4% below the national LAC outcome of 31.2% and 0.6% below East Midlands outcomes. Compared with all students in Nottinghamshire, 82.4% of whom achieved at least 5 GCSEs, this is a gap of 53.6%.
24. In relation to the indicator of 5 GCSEs A\*-C including English and mathematics, only 13.5% of Nottinghamshire LAC achieved this. 29.4% of East Midlands LAC achieved this compared with 12.8% nationally. In comparison to all students in Nottinghamshire, where 57.6% attained 5 A\*-C including English and mathematics, this is a significant gap of 44.1%.
25. Data in relation to students who attained one GCSE is no longer collated by the DfE.

### **Attendance and Exclusion Data**

26. Attendance and Exclusion data for LAC is due to be released nationally on 28 March 2012 and is not available at the time of preparing this report.

## **Showcase 2012**

27. A number of looked after children performed in the 2012 Showcase event at the Palace Theatre in Mansfield. This was an amazing event with groups and individuals singing, dance groups, acting and bands of all types showing off their talents.

## **Achievement Event 2012**

28. This has been booked for 14 July 2012 at Rufford Park once again and promises to be a fantastic day with lots to celebrate.

## **Multi Modality Project**

29. This project is coming to an end in May and the celebration event of the children and young people's work is to be held at Rufford Park on 14 June.

## **Mighty Creatives Research Projects**

30. All these projects have now successfully concluded. The primary project was successful in giving the school new methods of creating learning spaces for children with additional needs that find learning challenging. Their final event was held on 13 March 2012 where the children held a party in their 'space' and watched their film together.
31. This film was shown at the designated teacher training and the delegates showed interest in looking at how to use the ideas and theories behind the project.
32. The secondary project produced a resource for school staff and further work is being undertaken by the Virtual School to spread this good practice throughout the County. Supported by a primary school, the resource will be adapted into a primary friendly version.

## **Good news**

33. Book tokens once again have been sent out to a number of young people for many achievements, including being top of the class for reading, best attendance and best improvement made over the half term.

## **Other Options Considered**

34. This report is an information only report.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

35. 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**

That the Panel notes the report and makes any comments on:

- 1) the information concerning the educational attainment and progress of Nottinghamshire Looked After Children (LAC)
- 2) progress of the School Improvement Plan for the Virtual School.

**Sue Denholm and Marion Clay**

**Co-ordinator of the Virtual School and Team Manager (Primary Effectiveness)**

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### **Constitutional Comments**

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

### **Financial Comments (NDR 29/03/12)**

37. None.

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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