

Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School



Annual Report - Academic Year 2021-2022 (Jan 2023)

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1.0 Introduction: Role of the Virtual School - What do we do?

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in care. Whether educated in Lincolnshire or placed out of the authority, the Virtual School Team works to support our children and young people to fulfil their potential and access opportunities on the same basis as their non care experienced peers. The team supports our children and young people on a case work basis, endeavouring to build strong relationships and to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and resilience of our students. There is a requirement to maintain an up-to-date roll and have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress children in care. Academic progress is monitored through a termly school survey. The Virtual School Head (VSH) must also inform head teachers that they have a child on roll that is looked after by the Local Authority. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focuses on the improvement of educational outcomes.

The Virtual School Head has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all Lincolnshire children in care. This includes oversight of admissions, managed moves, and education moves brought about through changes of care placement. The Virtual School Team also provides advice and information to the parents and schools involved in promoting educational outcomes for Children Previously in Care.

The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a statutory role in promoting the educational achievement of children in the Local Authority's care. Providing support and challenge that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with a minimum of disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for children in our care. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities for initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating each child's PEP.

The Virtual School is also responsible for the allocation to schools of the looked after children Pupil Premium Grant (PP+) and is required to report regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.0 What is the purpose of this report?

This is the statutory annual report of the Virtual School Head and Virtual School for children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council. The report highlights the work of the Virtual School, the Local Authority, and partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care aged three to eighteen. The report covers progress and attainment at all key stages from Early Years to Key Stage Four. It further covers the quality of provision and engagement for post 16 and, most importantly, how the voice of the child and young person is considered to influence practice.

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher and the Virtual School, and to report upon the 2022 educational outcomes for our children in care. It reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for children in our care.

Data contained in this report, is for children who were in the care of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) for a year or more as of 31st March 2022.

Key messages within this report are:

- The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team continues to be ambitious for all of our children in care. We understand that promoting better educational outcomes is everyone's business and we provide training, challenge, advice and support to schools, Children's Services colleagues, foster carers, parents, and others, so that they can better advocate for the learning of children and young people in their care.
- There remains a continued and growing emphasis on the development of "Learning Homes", where our carers become increasingly skilled to support learning and our schools are committed to creating an environment where the specific emotional and educational needs of our children and young people are understood and their potential fulfilled.
- The majority of our children and young people aged 3-18 continue to attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted.
- Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in a timely way and is linked to targets outlined in the Personal Education Plan. Personal Education Plans are reviewed three times per year or more, if appropriate, for all children and young people aged 3-18.
- Early intervention is key to promoting outcomes. Consequently, all children in care or entering care aged 3-13 continue to receive support from our Specialist

Teachers, so that schools are better informed of strategies to improve communication and language needs if appropriate.

- The team works closely with our children and young people with the specific aim of developing strong and effective working relationships. The voice of our children and young people is heard. We celebrate successes and provide opportunities for them and their families to be better understood. We endeavour to stick with them when things don't go so well and put any potential setbacks into context.

3.0 What is our vision to improve outcomes moving forward?

The Virtual School's vision for improvement is aligned to the vision included within the Lincolnshire Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2022 as well as the Local Authority and partners' aspirations as set out within this strategy.

This strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers sets out Lincolnshire's ambitions. Whilst we have high expectations for all children and young people in Lincolnshire, the vision, principles, and plans in the document apply to some of the most vulnerable children and young people within our community, namely those for whom we have corporate parenting responsibilities.

Our overarching aim recognises that we want all children and young people to be cared for within their family / local community and we will support families to provide nurturing, resilient parenting, so that children and young people realise their potential within their birth family. Where children / young people do need to be looked after by Lincolnshire, we will support quality family and friend time. We will do everything we can, across our partnership to care for them and nurture their aspirations so that they feel safe, loved and are heard, so that they can realise their potential. This not only applies when children are in care but also where we have a duty to support them as previously looked after children. Working with our partner agencies and communities, we will individually and collectively provide nurturing, resilient parenting and support, as we would for our own children.

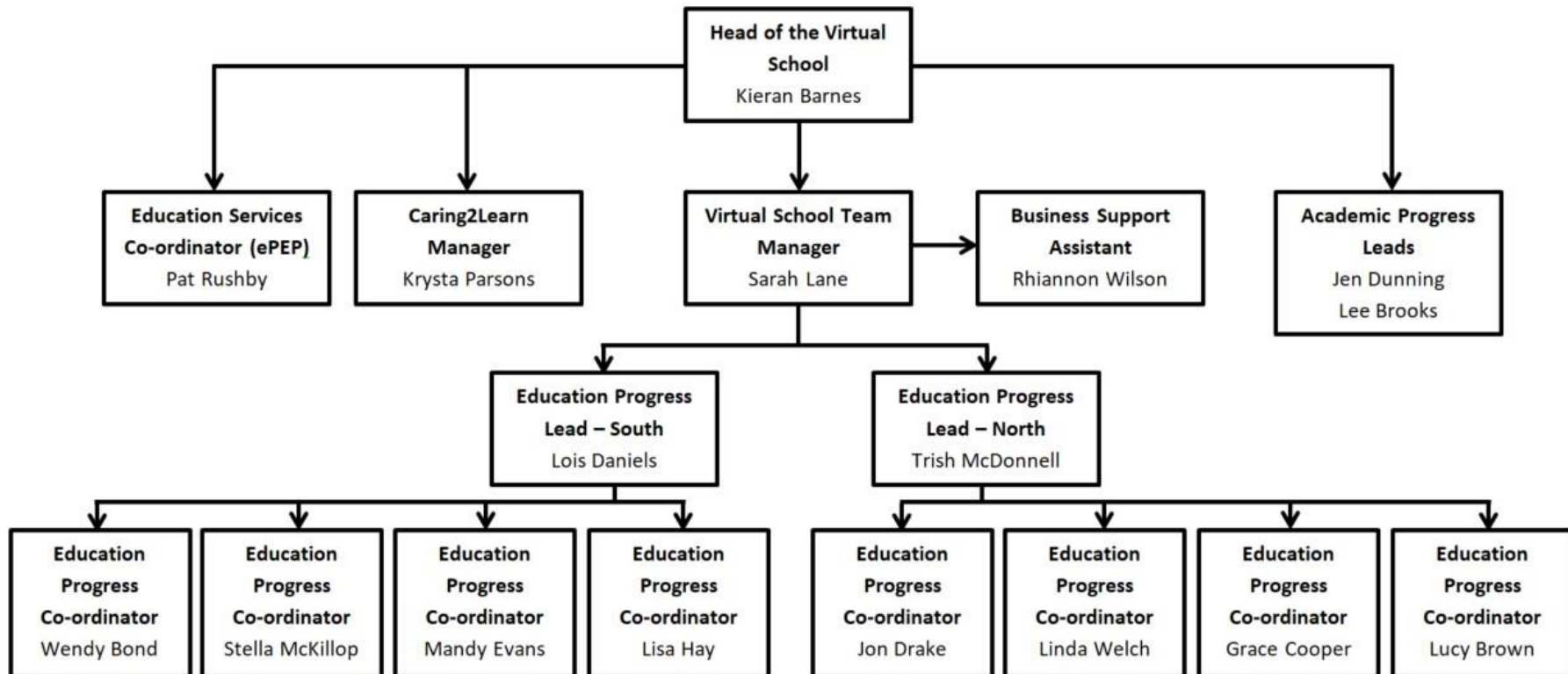
The main areas of focus for the Virtual School are:

Attainment and progress 3-18 to ensure that all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are high quality and effective with Children's Services staff, carers, children, and schools working effectively and in partnership to promote wellbeing and learning.

Leadership and management to further develop a highly skilled, effective, and innovative workforce across Lincolnshire focused upon improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care and to ensure that we fulfill our statutory duties in our extended role to support previously looked after children.

Developing strong and effective partnerships so that social workers, IROs, carers, parents and teachers can fulfil their roles as outlined in the updated statutory guidance for Designated Teachers and Virtual School Heads March 2018.

4.0 Structure of The Virtual School



5.0 Training and Development – How is the Virtual School Working with others to better support Children and Young People in Care and those Previously in Care?

The Virtual School has a duty to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children in care and previously looked after children and young people, including both social workers and school staff. A training pathway for Designated Teachers has been developed which provides a range of training events delivered by Virtual School co-ordinators and the Caring2Learn team. The pathway identifies appropriate training for those new to role through to experienced Designated Teachers and includes a combination of face to face and virtual events. The Virtual School is integrated within Children's Services and both benefits from and contributes to LCC's excellent training offer. The Virtual School Team provides support and training across our residential, early help, and fostering teams, and our carer community. This includes the circulation of One Minute Briefings for teams to refer back to and input at other team meetings.

5.1 Designated Teachers

The newly developed training pathway includes basic introductory modules for Designated Teachers who are new to role which is complemented by bespoke support from the Virtual School Co-ordinators. 59 'new to role' Designated Teachers completed a national e-learning module commissioned by the Virtual School on an introduction to their roles and responsibilities and then had the opportunity to attend a follow-on workshop which focussed on Lincolnshire processes. 35 of our more experienced Designated Teachers attended the training module on 'Meeting the needs of our children in care' and 51 attended 'Meeting the needs of children previously in care'. Termly Designated Teacher clusters, where participants have the opportunity to hear key updates and share good practice were delivered virtually and attracted 119 attendees from schools and education settings in Lincolnshire. The Virtual School continues to develop training opportunities in response to feedback from schools and educational settings.

5.2 Social Workers

The Virtual School has continued to work closely with our colleagues in Social Care to ensure that all our young people are accessing education and making the very best progress they can. Bespoke support has been provided to new Social Workers by the Virtual School Co-ordinators to ensure they can contribute effectively to Personal Education Plans. Support has also been provided through input at team meetings and information bulletins. An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) delivered a presentation at the Designated Teacher Briefings which was well received by

attendees and future opportunities will be planned to raise awareness of professionals' roles and responsibilities.

The Virtual School has been represented in the Children in Care Transformation project, supporting social workers and Children's Services colleagues in having high aspirations for our young people and recognising the contribution education plays in supporting placement stability. The Virtual School co-ordinators support social workers in completing the educational domains of the Valuing Care toolkit and are represented at monthly meetings which scrutinise the trajectories for our young people who are currently living in residential placements outside of Lincolnshire.

5.3 Continuing Professional Development for the Virtual School

In addition to completing mandatory courses in line with the LSCB 6-year training pathway, the Virtual School co-ordinators attended the Professional Development Conference alongside LCC colleagues. Colleagues from SEND, the Participation Team, Bishop Grosseteste University, Pupil Re-Integration Team and Specialist Teaching Team have provided inputs at our team meetings and the team regularly attend the Children's Services and Corporate Leadership Team briefings and the SEND Graduated Approach events to ensure they are up to date with key initiatives and projects within the council.

The Virtual School has a duty to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children in care and previously looked after children and young people, including both social workers and school staff. Designated Teachers from all Lincolnshire schools and educational settings have access to a well-established training programme provided by the Virtual School and Caring2Learn to support them in their role in meeting the educational needs of children in care and previously looked after children and young people. Due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and national lockdowns, all aspects of training and support are now delivered remotely with positive feedback from attendees. The Virtual School is integrated within Children's Services and both benefits from and contributes to LCC's excellent training offer. The Virtual School Team provides support and training across our residential, early help, and fostering teams, and our carer community as per below.

5.4 Extension of VSH Role to Support Children with a Social worker

From September 2021 the DfE issued non-statutory guidance to extend the role of the Virtual School Headteacher to "promote the educational outcomes of the cohort of children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker who are aged from 0 up to 18."

In April 2022 the DfE confirmed that the extension to the role was continuing for a further year, currently up to April 2023.

The guidance defines the responsibilities of the extension of the role as follows:

- make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

Although this guidance does include children in care who have a social worker, it is focussed on children who have a social worker as they are subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. The DfE have also used the term Ever6 which defines children who may not currently have a social worker assigned but have also been subject to either of these plans within the last six years. This is a large group of children. In Lincolnshire we have well over 3000 children or families open to social care with an allocated social worker and a further 3000 children and families open to Team Around the Child (TAC), around a third of which have previously been allocated a social worker. The national pilot is being externally evaluated in association with the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford. This evaluation focuses on how virtual schools have implemented and developed this new role and how virtual schools will monitor a range of outcomes for this group of children such as attendance, exclusion, and attainment. We are working in partnership with other children's services teams including the Attendance and Inclusion teams to build a strategic approach to data collection, monitoring, support and guidance. Further statutory guidance on attendance and exclusion has recently been issued by the DfE which also details the extension of the role of the Virtual School Head and of the role of social workers in supporting educational, as well as safeguarding outcomes for children.

The Caring2Learn Manager is taking the lead for the development and delivery of this new role within the virtual school and through Caring2Learn we continue to be in an excellent position to meet these new responsibilities. Since 2018 the Caring2Learn approach has been offered to all Lincolnshire schools and education settings to improve a range of outcomes for children & young people in care, previously looked after and now, children with a social worker. All education settings have access to the Caring2Learn learning and development programme, good practice framework & Caring Schools Award and the hub support network. This support now includes

offering advice and guidance and sharing of good practice to Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) in schools. We also offer regular support, guidance and good practice sharing with Social Work, IRO, Independent Chairs, Children with Disabilities and Early Help teams focused on raising the profile of education in assessments, child protection or child in need plans and reviews for children with a social worker to ensure improved educational outcomes remain a priority when decisions to step up or down social care involvement are made.

In February 2022 we were invited by the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, to deliver a national webinar supporting good practice in education which was attended by over 200 social workers and social care staff. In June we worked with the DfE Attendance Action Alliance and were one of three local authorities asked to contribute to their guidance document – ‘Top tips guide: supporting social workers to improve the attendance of children with a social worker’.

5.5 Supporting Families and Schools Caring2Learn

During 2021 and 2022 we have continued to support schools, education settings, foster carers, children's homes, residential settings, and Children's Services teams through our Caring2Learn offer. This innovative multi-disciplinary approach to improving academic outcomes, progress, life choices, and opportunities for all Lincolnshire children in care, previously looked after children and children with a social worker has a clearly defined strategy that is supporting education settings to be able to nurture and promote wellbeing and ensure vulnerable children achieve better progress. It is also supporting foster, kinship and residential carers to promote learning in the home and help children to develop a thirst for learning so that education is valued and encouraged.

We have continued to deliver our learning and development programme covering all aspects of our 'Cornerstones of Good Practice' which has remained popular. This year we have delivered 120 workshop sessions to over 2000 attendees from education, children's services and foster carers. These include workshops focussing on specific areas of development such as speech, communication and language, reading or maths as well as sessions which focus on readiness for learning and education, wellbeing and nurture. Feedback from these sessions continues to be very positive from all three sectors with respondents reporting:

How satisfied are you with the knowledge you gained throughout the workshop?	100% Very Satisfied
Do you feel you achieved your desired learning outcome?	100% Very Satisfied

How would you rate the facilitator's overall effectiveness?	Overall rating of 9.5 out of 10
How likely are you to recommend this workshop to others?	100% Very Likely or Likely

We also offer additional bespoke training to education settings and have also delivered whole-school or group staff training in twilight sessions and INSET days focused on developing 'Relational and Trauma Informed Approaches to Inclusion' in 10 primary and secondary schools across the county. This bespoke training also forms part of our strategic support offer to multi-academy trusts.

This year, pulling together what we have learnt over the last 4 years, we have developed a universal programme for all parents and carers called Parents2gether which aims to help education settings, schools, parents and carers work together to:

- develop learning in the home
- support education in school and early years settings
- encourage resilient and nurturing parenting approaches
- introduce strategies for improving children's wellbeing and positive behaviour
- develop local peer support networks for parents and carers with the education setting as the hub

This programme will be piloted in schools and early years settings in Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023 with joint delivery by Caring2Learn and education staff with a view to wider roll out as a 'train the trainer' package in 2023 following evaluation of the pilot.

5.6 Learning Homes Education Champions Progress Update

Since 2018 Foster Carer Education Champions, experienced foster carers who support the fostering community and education settings, have contributed to our Caring2Learn offer by offering support, co-facilitating training and workshops and sharing best practice to groups and individuals.

Throughout 2021 and 2022 there were 21 champions in place, and they received 134 allocations of tasks in the last 12 months. These have included direct support and assistance in supporting new and experienced foster and kinship carers, contributing to placement stability and improved outcomes for children.

Champions have worked jointly with virtual school and children's services staff to deliver four programmes of our 6-week course called Caring2gether. This has been positively received by carers and introduces the concepts of Learning Homes and Therapeutic Parenting approaches. Champions have also continued to co-facilitate the fostering recruitment evenings, Introduction to Fostering Preparation course, and New Carer Induction. In September 2021 the Early Years Foster Carer playgroup relaunched in Lincoln at St. Giles Children's Centre. This is facilitated by 2 Foster Carer Champions with early years specialisms with carers, babies, and under-fives attending fortnightly.

Foster Carer Champions have continued to support our strong online/virtual support offer through Facebook, where we now have a very active group of 830 carers, education staff, and Children's Services staff interacting and sharing inspiration, updates and advice on a daily basis. Champions moderate and contribute to our six different WhatsApp support chat groups which have over 170 members and a Foster Carers 2Be group with 40 prospective carers who are going through the assessment and approval process.

Champions and staff continue to support the development and maintenance of good practice through the combined Learning Homes & Training, Standards and Development (TSD) Workbook which is mandatory for all Foster Carers to complete during their first twelve months following approval. Experienced carers access the Learning Homes Toolkit and together 61 Fostering households have now successfully achieved the Learning Homes Award.

5.7 Post-16 PP+ Pilot

Following the submission of an expression of interest, Lincolnshire Virtual School alongside 29 other Local Authorities, was invited to take place in the DfE Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot. The Pilot ran from October 2021 to March 2022 with the aim to test the extension of financial support to looked after children and care leavers in general further education. Through this work, the DfE aimed to build an evidence base to inform any further support for this cohort. The proposed outcomes of the pilot were to:

- raise the profile of children in care and care leavers by strengthening close working relationships and sharing expertise on the needs of this cohort.
- Improve the attendance of these young people in FE by putting in place tailored interventions to support attendance
- Better support the delivery of Personal Education Plans, pathway plans or equivalent at both an individual and cohort level

- Identify models of good practice used by LAs across the country to respond to individual and cohort needs

Building on the foundations of our existing practice in allocating Pupil Premium for statutory school aged children, we decided to use the Personal Education Plans to identify individual needs to support our young people in accessing and attending education, employment and training opportunities. An initial information briefing was attended by Children's Services colleagues, Lincolnshire Post 16 providers and semi-supported accommodation providers. Following this, individual meetings were held with the FE colleges and training providers who had a high number of our children on role, to consider how any additional funding may support them strategically. Although their appeared to be good support for our students through the Post 16 bursaries and universal provision, the settings identified the following areas of need for additional funding:

- Enhanced pastoral support for our children in care
- Enhanced Designated Teacher support to promote effective Personal Education Plans and communication sharing
- Trauma informed training for all college staff
- Extracurricular activities and additional ESOL provision for our young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers

Additional funding was provided to identified settings to support these areas of need and the settings participated in the Rees Centre evaluation study commissioned by the DfE.

Through the PEP process, a wide range of resources were identified for individual young people to support them in their studies, to promote their re-engagement in training or support their preparation for employment. Some examples of the support provided through the Post 16 Pupil Premium include:

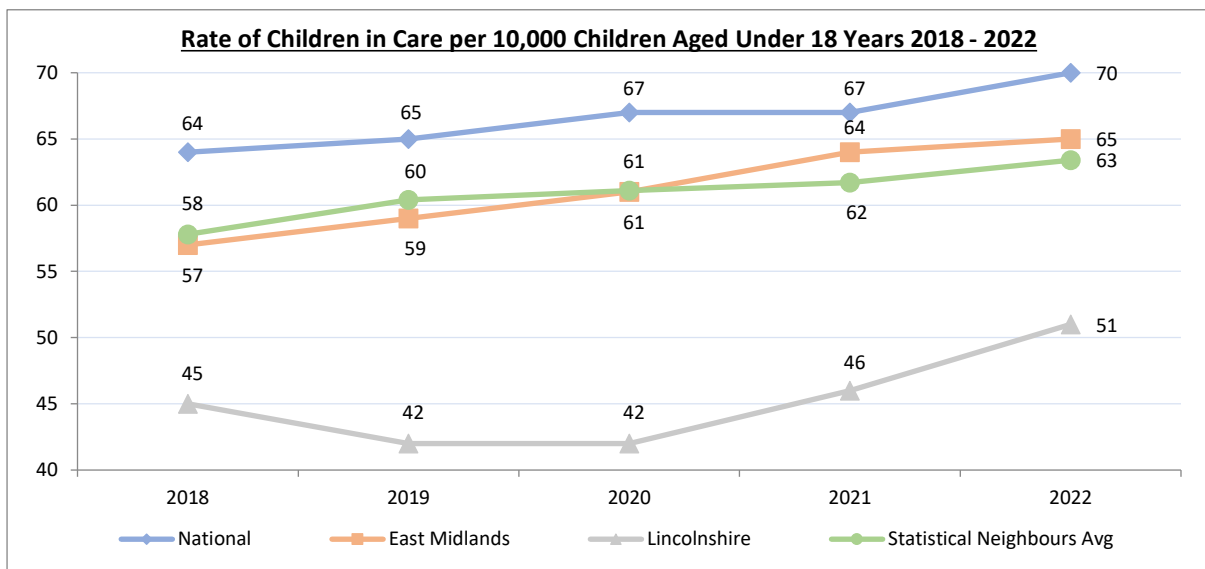
- Additional tuition to support a young person for their GCSE resits
- A contribution towards driving lessons for a young person on apprenticeship with a construction company, to increase his employment possibilities once his apprenticeship had ended.
- Functional skills on-line learning courses for two young people who had not achieved English and Maths qualifications but were not emotionally ready to attend group learning at a post 16 setting.
- Suitable clothing to enable a young person to participate in work experience in a care home as part of their college course.

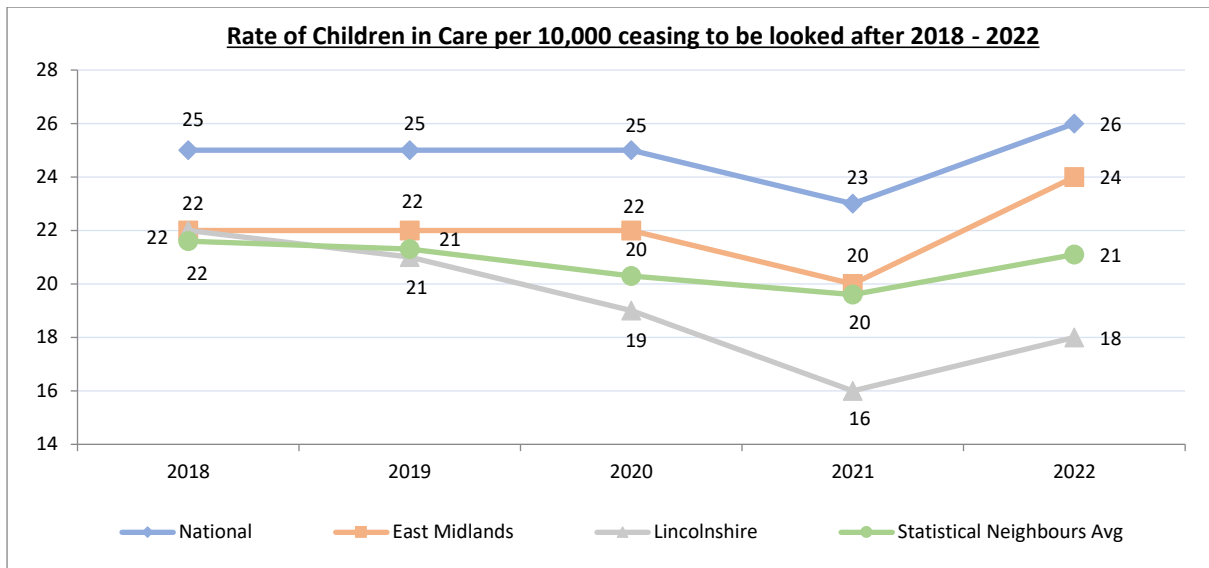
- Laptops to support young people to complete their college work.
- Bicycles and safety equipment to promote young people’s attendance at college and training courses and work experience.

As a result of the pilot and working closely with the post 16 settings, the Caring2Learn training offer and toolkit was developed for post 16 providers and a Designated Lead in a local college was identified as a mentor who was willing to support other colleges. A post 16 transition page has also been developed to ensure focussed discussions take place during year 11 PEPs on next steps for individual young people.

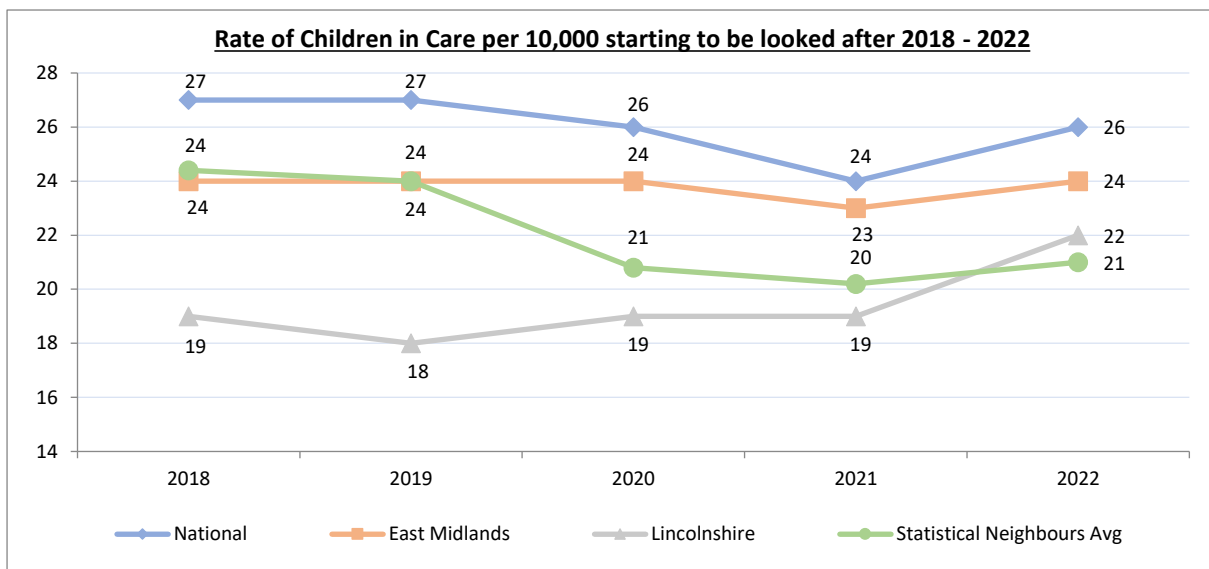
6.0 Cohort characteristics -Who is on roll of the Virtual School?

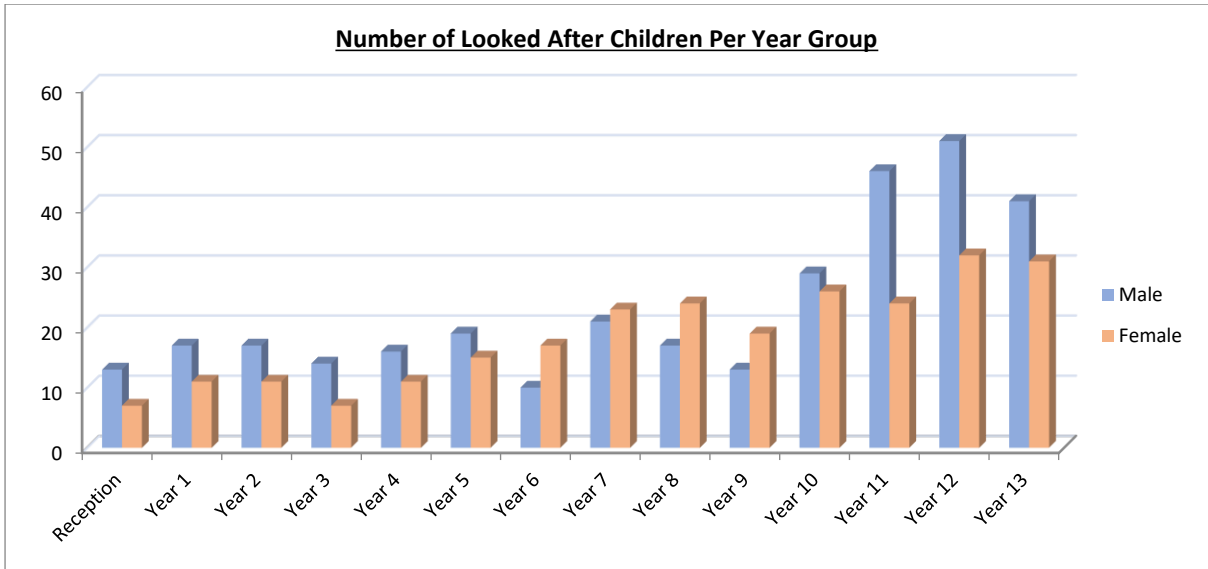
The rate of children in care in Lincolnshire increased in 2022 for the second consecutive year following a two year low in 2019 and 2020. This is consistent to the trend seen nationally, regionally and amongst our statistical neighbours.





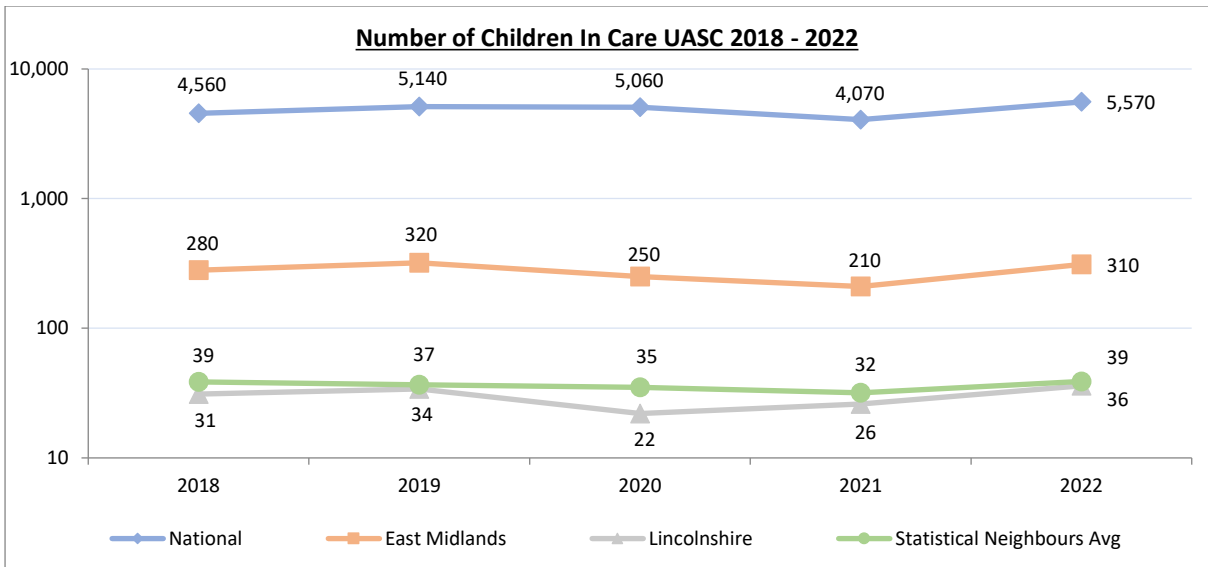
The increase in rate for Lincolnshire was driven by an increasing rate of children starting to be looked after (19 per 10,000 in 2021 and 22 per 10,000 in 2022). This was a steeper increase than that seen for each of our comparators.

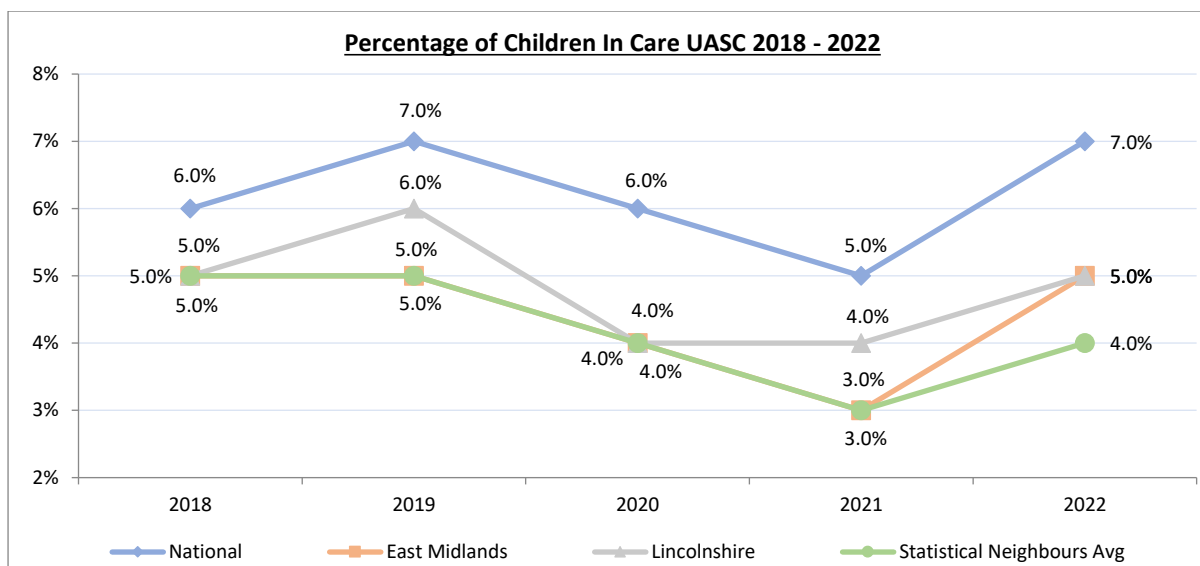




6.1 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

The numbers of young people entering care in Lincolnshire as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) increased in 2022 compared to 2021 and is the highest it has been in all of the past 5 years. This increase in 2022 is consistent to the trend seen across all our comparators where an increase was seen across the board. The percentage of children in care in Lincolnshire that are UASC (5%) is below national (7%), the same as our regional East Midlands (5%) and higher than our statistical neighbours average (4%).





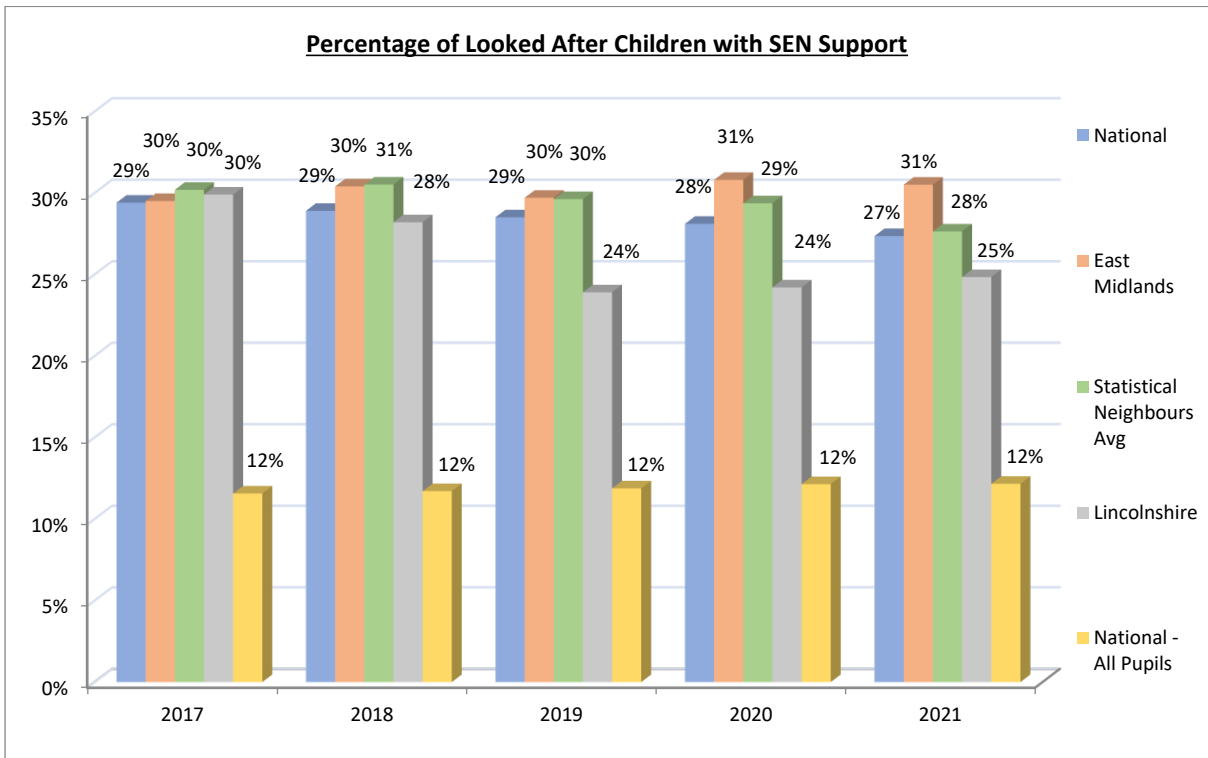
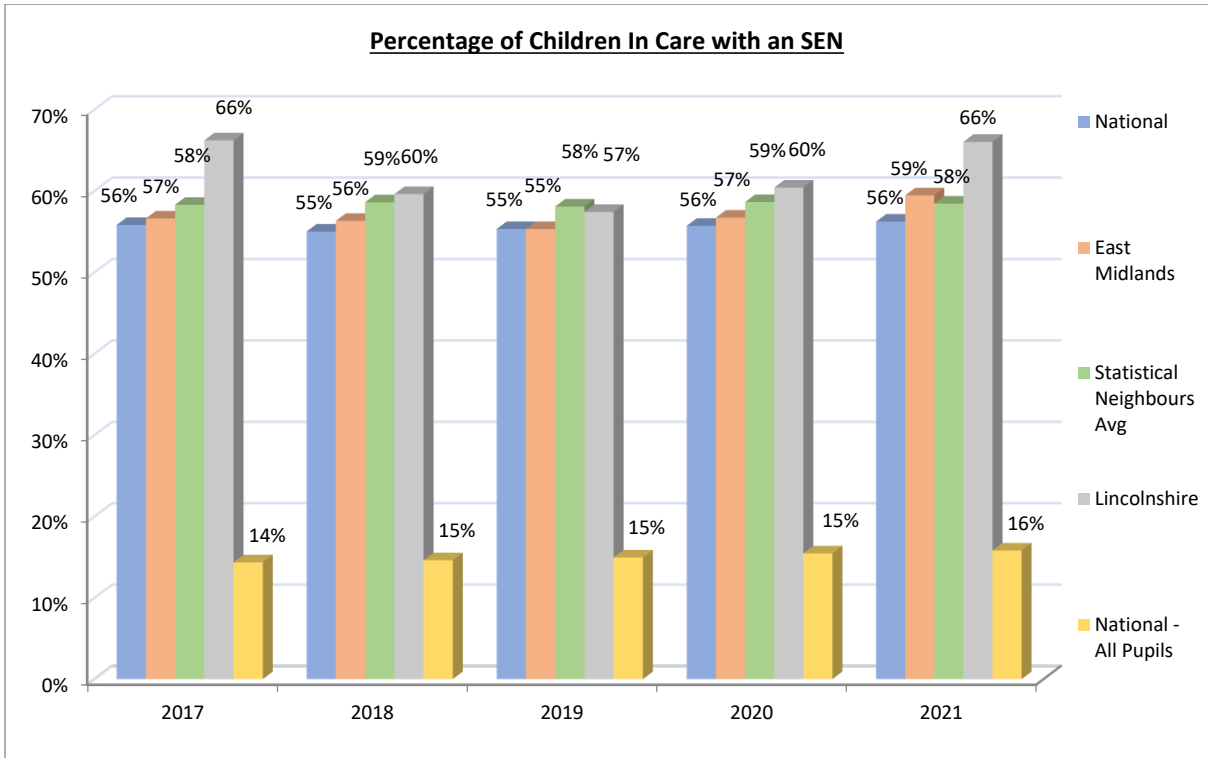
6.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

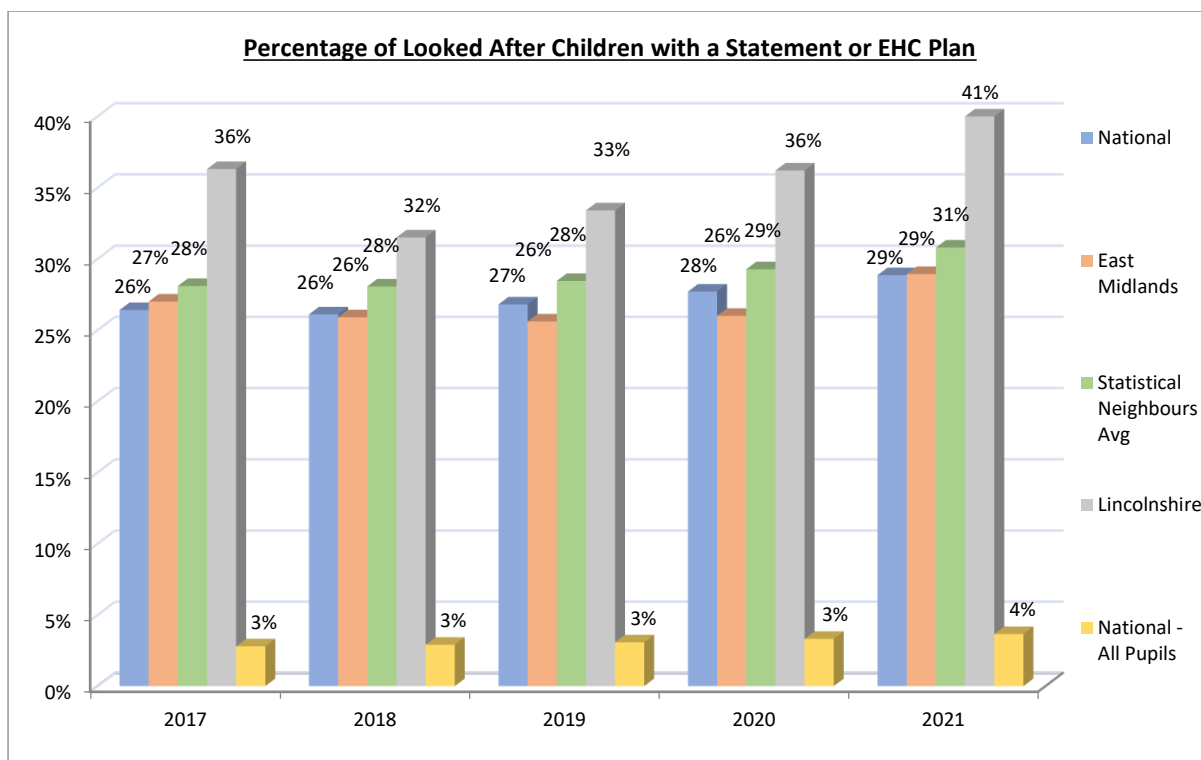
Nationally, 3.7% of the total pupil population have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

National statistics indicate that children in care are nearly four times more likely to have special educational needs when compared with all children nationally. They are also nearly eight times more likely to have a statement of special educational needs or an education health care plan.

Nationally, this equates to 12,130 children in care (27.7%). In 2021, 56% of children in care had an identified special educational need, compared to 16% of all children. When reviewing primary need type; Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was the most frequently identified area of additional support for children in care.

In England, the percentage of children in care with a SEN is 56.2%; of which 27.4% are without a statement or EHC plan and 28.9% are with a statement or EHC plan. The regional East Midlands figures are above national, with 59.4% of children in care having a SEN, with 30.5% identified as SEN without a statement or EHC plan and 28.9% having a statement or EHC plan. Lincolnshire has a higher percentage of SEN when compared to national, regional and our statistical neighbour averages. The percentage of Lincolnshire children with SEN is 66.0% and comprises of 24.8% without a statement or EHC plan and 41.2% with a statement or EHC plan. Much of the difference between Lincolnshire and its comparators comes from the much higher proportion of pupils with a Statement or EHC plan.





6.3 Virtual School Intervention and additional support

Many of our children and young people enter care with a variety individual learning needs that are often unmet or unidentified. In order to address this, the Lincolnshire Virtual School works to provide a baseline for their educational progress as near to their time of entry as possible, utilising the skills of specialist intervention teams (Early Years Foundation Stage – Key Stage 3), using the Early Years Specialist Teachers and the Specialist Teaching Team. This provides the opportunity for early and effective school-based interventions with progress monitored through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process.

Further support included additional tuition through the LCC SEND Home Tuition Team. This is commissioned by the Virtual School utilising Pupil Premium to help develop key learning skills with targeted subject support in years 5 and 6, 9 to 11.

Provision of training in language and communication support to schools and care homes, working alongside Lincolnshire’s specialist Extended Communication and Language Provision for Students team (ECLIPS) has continued to see a large number of school staff and carers gain a better understanding of how the journey through the care system can impact upon language and communication in children and how this can be effectively addressed and overcome. Additional training and awareness have been provided to SENCos across Lincolnshire in their SEND Briefings.

7.0 Inclusion - How regularly do our Children Attend?

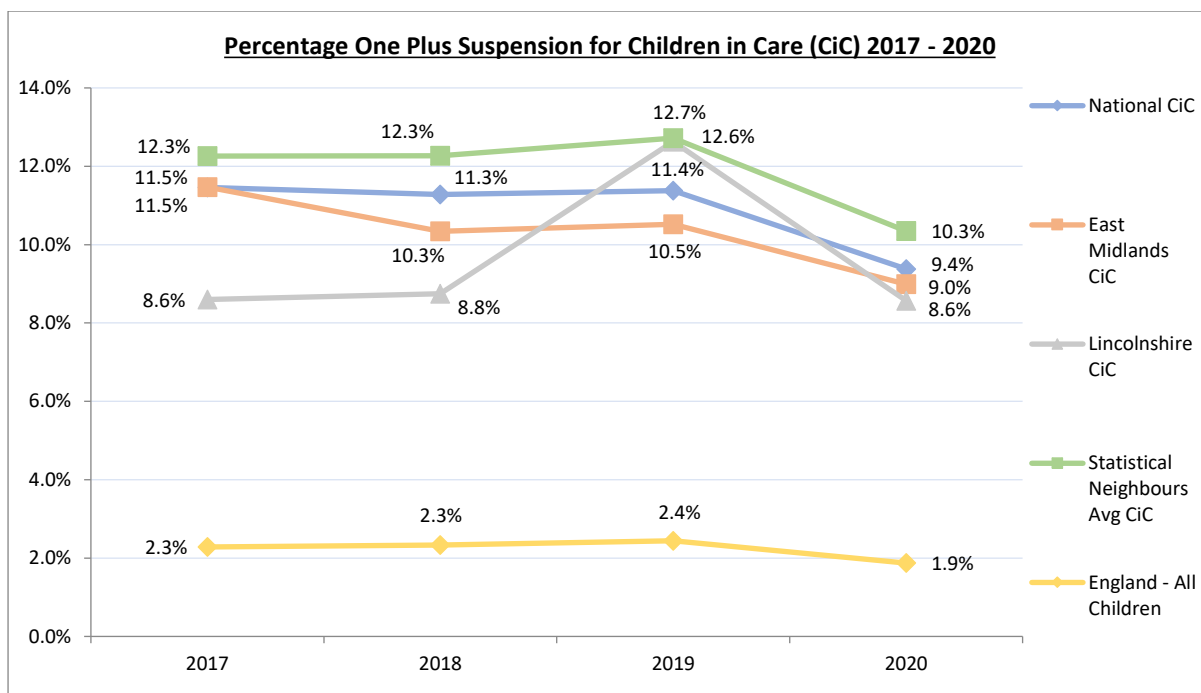
The last 3 years of complete data prior to Covid show that Lincolnshire children in care attend more regularly than their looked after peers nationally and regionally. This maintains a long trend of being in line or better than our national, east midlands and statistical neighbour average comparators. DfE National attendance data for CiC covering the period of this report remains unpublished currently and will be published in March 2023. Attendance of Children in Care and all Children Nationally has been disrupted in the period following the pandemic and local data suggests that it is unlikely to return to pre pandemic levels for our Children in Care in the short term. A separate Report on the attendance of CiC for this period will be presented at the planned Corporate Parenting Meeting in May 2023 following the planned March release.

7.1 Inclusion - How likely are our looked after children to be excluded?

7.1.1 Suspensions

Nationally (2017 - 2020), looked after children have been 5 to 5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school for a fixed-term than the national average for all pupils. Lincolnshire children in care were around 4 times more likely to be suspended from school than the national average for all pupils between 2017 and 2018. This was well below national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages.

There was a large increase in suspensions in Lincolnshire in 2019. This saw the suspension rate in Lincolnshire to be in line with statistical neighbour average and above our regional and national rates. There was a consistent drop in exclusion rates in 2020 across the board for Lincolnshire and all our comparators. The drop seen for Lincolnshire was much greater than all our comparators with the Lincolnshire rate dropping back down the rate seen prior to 2019 showing our 2019 data to be an exception.



7.1.2 Permanent Exclusion

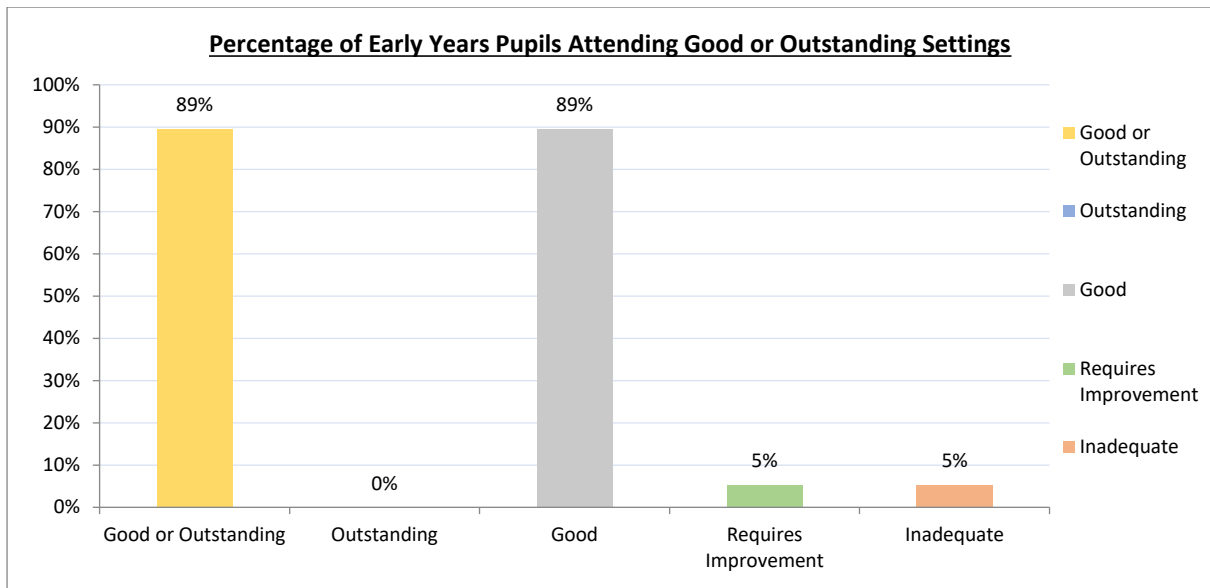
The DfE does not publish data relating to the permanent exclusion of children in care. Locally sourced data indicates that in the 2021-22 academic year, no looked after children received a permanent exclusion.

8.0 Quality of Provision - What proportion of our children and young people aged 3-18 attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted?

Between November 2017 and January 2018, the DfE consulted on changes to official statistics in reporting Ofsted outcomes. As a result of this consultation there has been a change in the way the latest inspection data is reported for all providers. The grades from the predecessor schools will now be included for schools that have not yet been inspected in their current form, to provide a more comprehensive view of the sector.

8.1 Early Years (Reception)

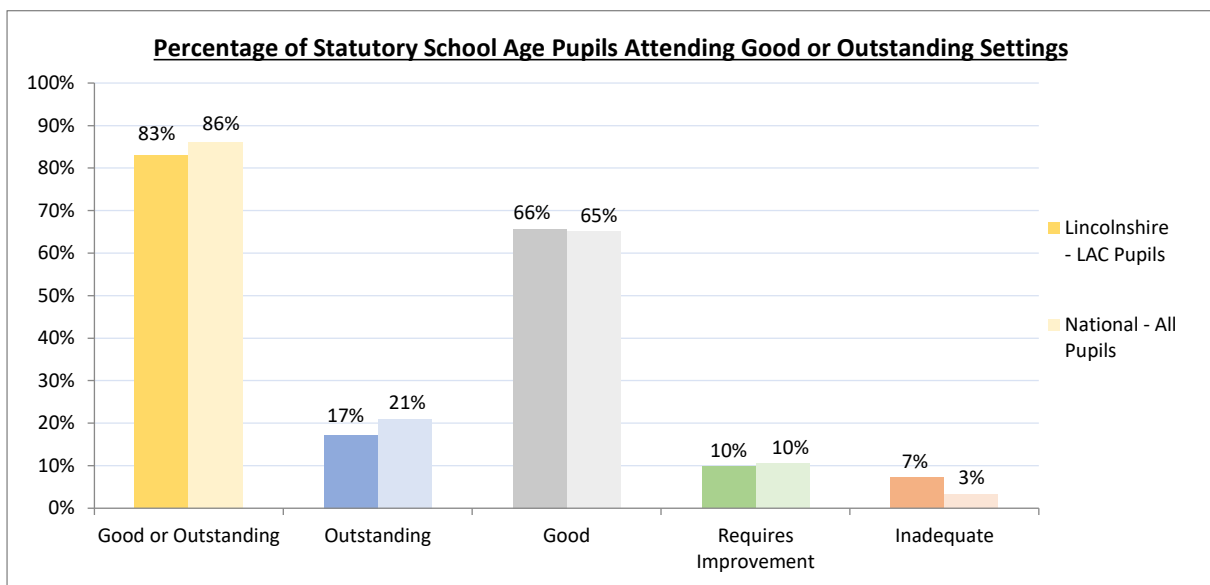
In accordance with data correct as of 19th November 2022, 89% of our children in care placed both in and out of county who are aged four or five were attending good or outstanding settings as graded by Ofsted. This is an improvement of 4% compared with last year.



8.2 Statutory School Age

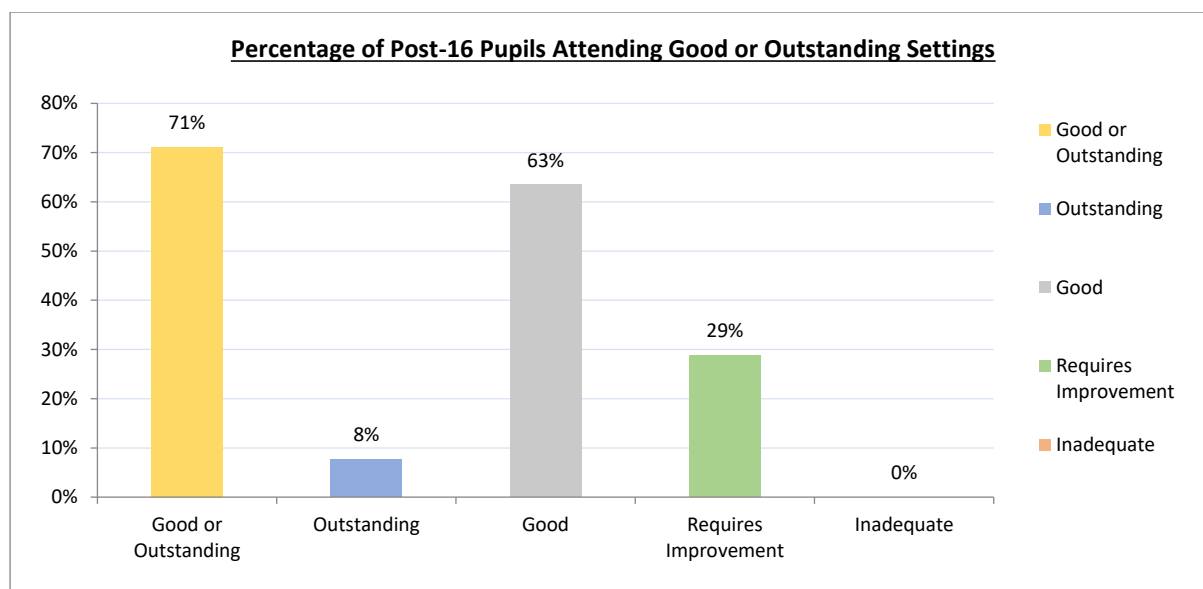
The percentage of children who are of statutory school age attending Good or Outstanding schools both in and out of county has dropped 5% compared to last year (83% compared to 88% last year).

The percentage of Lincolnshire children in care attending Good or Outstanding schools is below the proportion of all children nationally (86%) attending a Good or Outstanding school; where appropriate additional support is provided for any children attending schools that are graded less than good.



8.3 Quality of Provision Post -16

Currently 71% of our post-16 students are attending a good or outstanding setting with 29% requires improvement and 0% inadequate. This is a decrease of 8% compared to last year when 79% was reported. Our post-16 students are supported (as per case example below) through the PEP process and, as is the case with our statutory school age students, we work with our wider children's services colleagues and others to provide additional support for students attending settings judged less than good.



9.0 Electronic Personal Education Plans (ePEPs)

9.1 PEP Compliance - Have we met our target?

PEP compliance for those of statutory school age for the academic year 2021-2022 has consistently exceeded target (94%). The PEP process in Lincolnshire requires three face to face termly meetings to be held, with these usually taking place at the young person's education setting. Due to Covid restrictions, a hybrid approach was taken and Virtual School Education Progress Co-ordinators ensured that PEP meetings were held and that all partners had the opportunity to contribute either remotely or face to face.

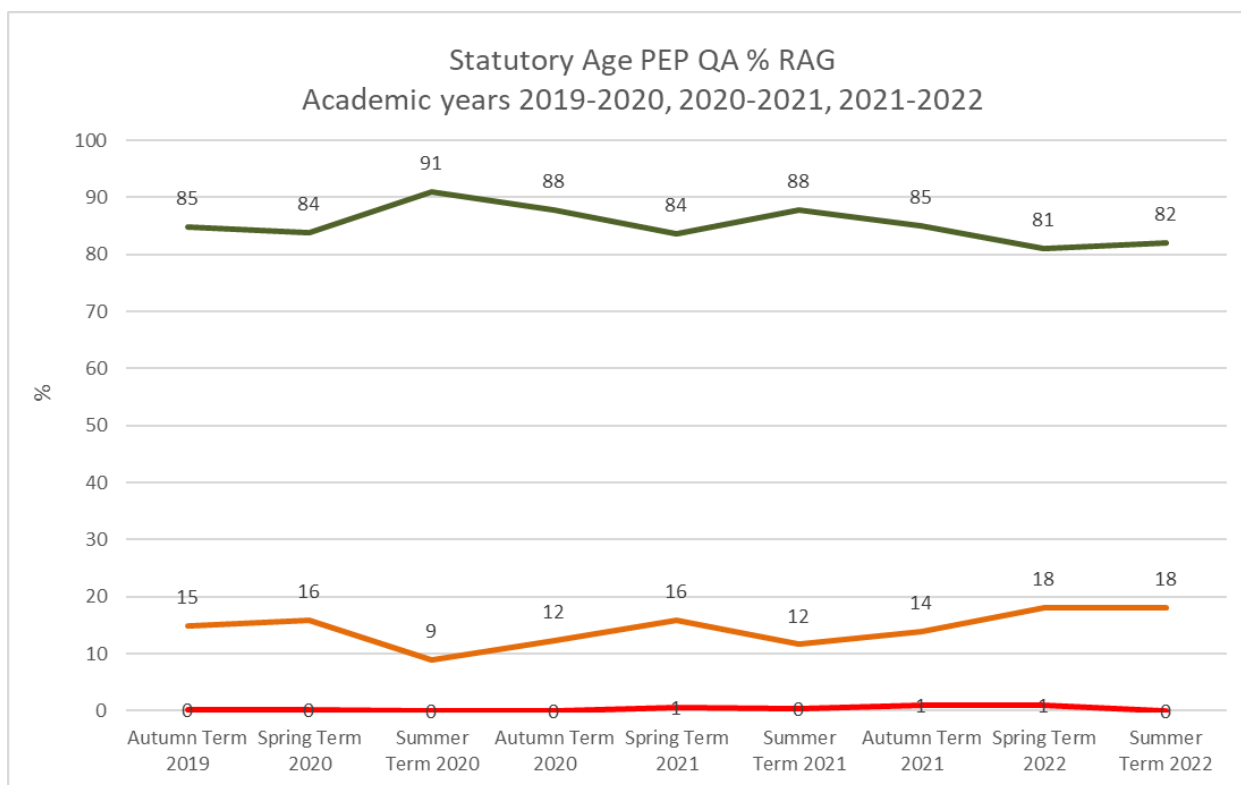
PEP Compliance	Autumn Term 2021	Spring Term 2022	Summer Term 2022
Statutory Age	99%	99%	100%
Early Years	100%	100%	100%
Post 16	96%	97%	100%

9.2 Update on new PEP meeting format and PEP QA

Our on-going development of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process seeks to improve the quality of educational support being provided to our children and young people and ensure that all of those involved are working together effectively and are empowered to play their part in supporting our children in care to succeed. Key to this is to ensure that the voice of the child or young person is heard. As a result of our involvement in the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot, the ePEP has been developed to include:

- Pupil Premium tracking and funded target requests added to the Post 16 PEP template – The system now enables Post 16 providers to request funding to meet student's individual needs against SMART targets agreed at the PEP meeting
- Post 16 transition page – Due to go live next academic year, this additional page will be completed at all Year 11 PEPs and tracks a young person's progress in applying for and securing Post 16 provision such as a college or training course or apprenticeship.

Our Quality Assurance processes support schools, carers and other professionals to work more effectively together in order to improve the quality of education plans. Every PEP includes a quality assurance page which identifies effective practice and areas for development which can be seen by everyone who has access to the PEP. Virtual School co-ordinators carry out monthly QA discussions to ensure judgements are moderated and informs further support or development that may be needed. The outcome of these discussions are shared with the Virtual School management team. Although the graph below shows a slight reduction in the percentage of 'green' PEPs as a result of the robust moderation discussions, the red line demonstrates only less than 1% of our young people did not have an effective PEP. These individual cases are monitored by the management team and are usually due to unique circumstances for the young person.



10.0 Pupil Premium + Grant Allocation - How has the Virtual School allocated the Pupil Premium Grant?

The PP+ grant allocation per Child in Care is £2345 as outlined in the DfE Pupil Premium 2021 to 2022 Conditions of Grant.

Responsibility for the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PP+) of £2345 rests with the Virtual School Head. The information below relates to the financial period April 2021-March 2022.

The revised allocation from the DfE for 2021-2022 is £1,074,010; this total is based upon 458 statutory school age Children in Care as documented in the final DfE Children in Care (SSDA903 collection data report) 2021-2022.

The Virtual School also received two additional grants: Pupil Premium Recovery Grant of £33,206 and School-Led Tutoring grant £32,484.50 for the period Sept 2021 to March 2022.

Total Allocation: £1,139,700.50.

A total of £855,404 went directly to schools through the allocation of an initial £500 to £1000 depending on year group; combined to additional requests from schools based

upon academic targets outlined in the PEP. £115,379 was used to allocate 1:1 additional tuition support. A further £81,008 was utilised to commission interventions and a proportion of the grant, totalling £87,909.50 was utilised centrally for additional support of students including resources and the training of staff.

Pupil Premium + Grant 2021-2022 Allocation of Funds	
Went directly into schools through the allocation of an initial £500 to £1000 depending on year group combined with additional requests from schools based upon academic targets and additional support outlined in the PEP.	£855,404
Tuition and additional 1-1 support as requested by school.	£115,379
Intervention Project – Wellcomm /Core Assessments / ECLIPS.	£59,739
Intervention Project – Letterbox	£21,269
Additional support of students including resources and training of staff.	£87,909.50
Total	£1,139,700.50

10.1 Early Years PP+ funding

The Virtual School also allocated £25,368 EYPP+ Grant to our Early Years settings. The funding is requested via the PEP process and linked to intervention to improve outcomes. All funding was allocated to Early Years settings to support children's progress, attainment, and transition into school.

11.0 How well have our Children and Young People Achieved?

11.1 Early Years

11.1.1 Early Years Case study

A has significant and complex medical and learning needs. She has been with the same foster carers since coming into care when she was 2 months old. A has an Education, Health and Care Plan and is on roll at her local special school. Due to her medical needs, Alina is extremely vulnerable and was unable to attend school full time due to the risks from Covid and extreme fatigue due to her medical needs. Termly PEP meetings were held virtually to reduce the risk to A and monitored the home learning that the foster carers were providing. The Virtual School co-ordinator facilitated partnership working between home and school.

During the spring term, A started to attend virtual sessions with her class and Pupil Premium was used to purchase resources for the foster carers to use at home which matched those being used in school. Photographs were shared at the PEP meeting of A virtually joining nursery rhyme and counting song sessions where she engaged

well, waved and smiled at her peers and responded to questions. The virtual learning sessions also provide opportunities for A to interact with her peers who were always delighted to see her. The PEP meetings always included a shared discussion on how to support Alina's return to school. Alina returned to school on a part-time timetable and the home learning activities supported A to remain on target with progress being seen in literacy and numeracy related targets.

11.1.2 Early Years – Cohort Characteristics

There were 14 pupils in the cohort completing Foundation Stage Reception in 2022. 6 pupils (43%) had an identified Special Educational Need (4 pupils (29%) required SEN Support and 2 pupils (14%) had an EHC Plan). Our cohort completing Foundation Stage comprised of: 8 boys (57%), 6 girls (43%), 2 pupils (14%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and no pupils (0%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of 14 pupils, 12 (86%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 2 pupils were educated Out of County.

The average SDQ score for the cohort was 16.1. This is considered to be slightly raised. In total 3 pupils (33%) in Lincolnshire had an SDQ score of High (11%) or Very High (22%).

SDQ Overview

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. The tool can capture the perspective of children and young people, their parents, and teachers. There are currently three versions of the SDQ: a short form, a longer form with an impact supplement (which assesses the impact of difficulties on the child's life) and a follow-up form. The 25 items in the SDQ comprise 5 scales of 5 items each. The scales include:

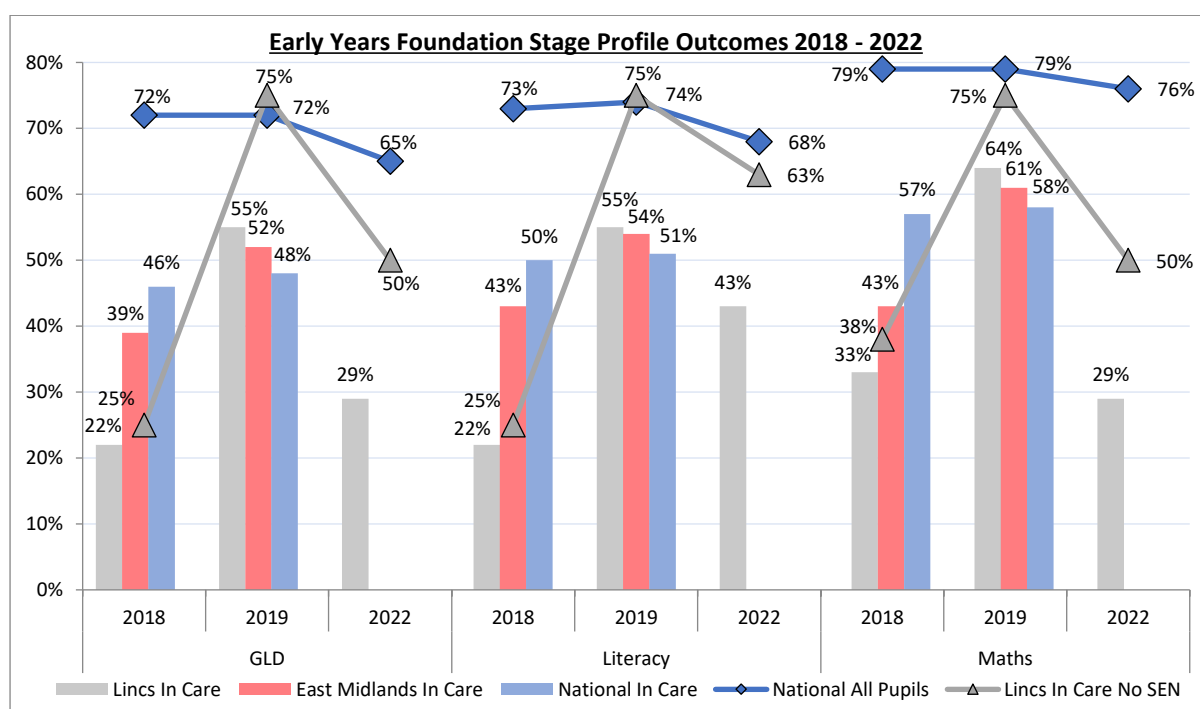
1. Emotional Symptoms subscale
2. Conduct Problems subscale
3. Hyperactivity/inattention subscale
4. Peer relationships problem subscale
5. Prosocial behaviour subscale

The SDQ can be used for various purposes, including clinical assessment, evaluation of outcomes, research, and screening.

11.1.3 Early Years – Good Level of Development (GLD)

For 2022 there have been some changes to Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The core areas of learning and development remain the same but there have been some changes to the early learning goals within each area of learning to make them clearer and more specific. This does mean that comparisons between years cannot be made.

In 2022, Lincolnshire’s Children in Care (CiC) GLD percentage was 29%. Lincolnshire’s GLD percentage for CiC pupils with no recognised SEN was 50% and compares to the National all pupils GLD percentage of 65%. In the Literacy Area of Learning 43% of Lincolnshire CiC pupils achieved the expected standard. For CiC pupils with no recognised SEN 63% achieved the expected standard and compares to the National all pupils Literacy Area of Learning percentage of 68%. In the Mathematics Area of Learning 29% of Lincolnshire CiC pupils achieved the expected standard. For CiC pupils with no recognised SEN 58% achieved the expected standard and compares to the National all pupils Mathematics Area of Learning percentage of 76%.



11.2 Key Stage 1

11.2.1 Case Study Key Stage 1

J came into care just after his 4th birthday and attended his local mainstream primary school. By the start of Year 2, although he was making progress, J was working below age related expectations in literacy and numeracy. Pupil Premium was used to provide enhanced support in these areas as well as wellbeing check-ins. There was good communication between school and home.

J continued to make progress throughout Year 2. His termly PEPs illustrated the progress he was making and reviewed the support and interventions in place. J passed his Phonics screening test at the end of the Autumn Term and by the end of the Spring term, he was on target to meet the expected standards in Maths and Phonics and continued to access interventions funded by Pupil Premium to support his progress in Literacy.

By the end of the summer term, J had made particularly good progress with his reading and was now on target for achieving age related expectations. At his PEP meeting, plans were agreed for his transition to the junior school. A Specialist Teacher assessment review commissioned by the Virtual School highlighted the progress J had made in the standardised assessments – his non-verbal reading and verbal skills were at expected levels and his word reading and spelling performances were both within the average range.

J had a successful transition to his junior school. School reported that J ‘settled and fitted in really well.’ His carers agreed that he had settled well and shared that he was excited to go to school and keen to talk about all he had been doing when he went home at night.

11.2.2 Key Stage 1 – Cohort Characteristics

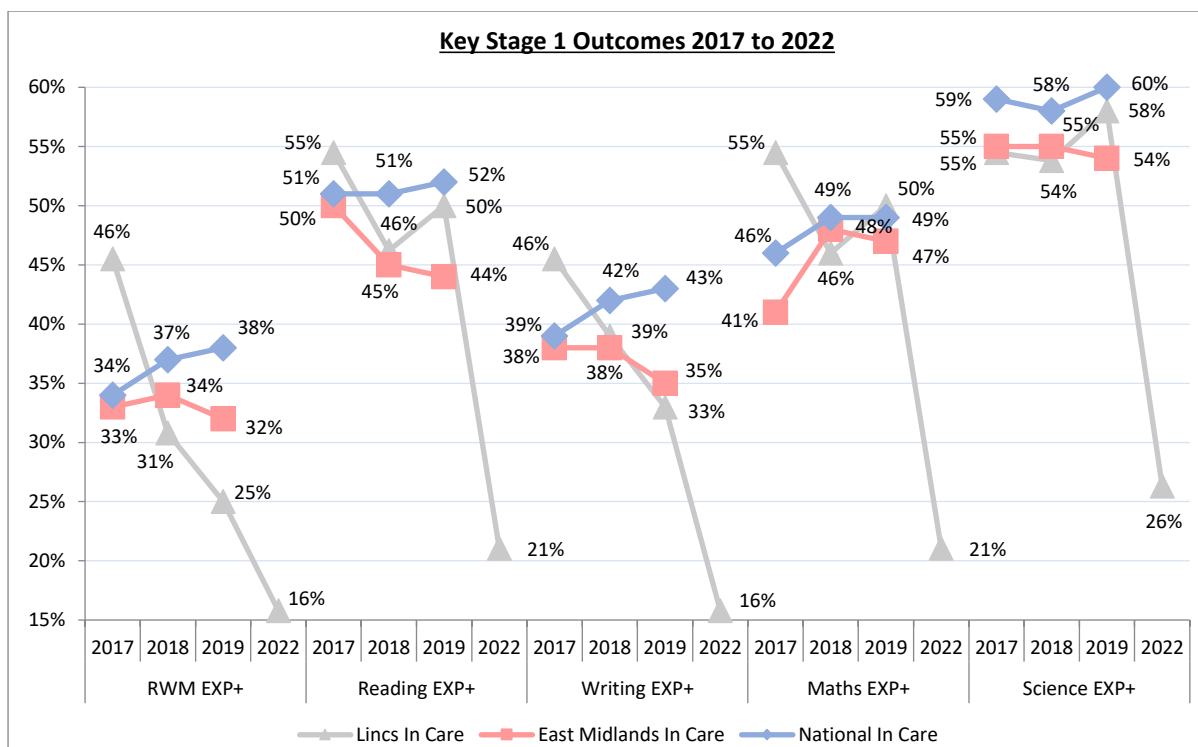
There were 19 pupils in the cohort completed Key Stage 1 in 2022. There were 13 pupils (68%) with an identified Special Educational Need, 9 pupils (47%) with SEN Support and 4 pupils (21%) with an EHC Plan. Our cohort completing KS1 comprised of 11 boys (58%), 8 girls (42%), 10 pupils (53%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and no pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In total, 15 pupils (79%) were educated within Lincolnshire with 4 pupils (21%) educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 14.3 and this is considered slightly raised. In total (38%) of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (0%) or Very High (38%).

11.2.3 Key Stage 1 – Attainment

Lincolnshire’s Children in Care Key Stage 1 outcomes in 2022 are very likely to be well below National and Regional comparators. There has been a significant drop since the last year we had examinations data in 2019. The proportion of SEN pupils in 2022 (68%) was higher than in 2019 (46%) and could explain some of this drop in performance. National and East Midlands comparator data for Children in Care will be available in early 2023 when we will be able to make better sense of this data in context.

There were drops seen for all children nationally 2019-2022 across all KS1 subjects of between 7% and 11%.



11.3 Key Stage 2

11.3.1 Key Stage 2 case study

K moved to an out of county place in 2020 and attended a local independent special school. At the end of Year 2, Social Care identified a residential placement in Lincolnshire for K to return to. The move was planned for January 2022 and transition visits started. As a change of school was needed, the Virtual School liaised closely with our colleagues in Lincolnshire SEND who began the consultation process to identify a special school place in preparation for K's move. K had a successful transition into his new home but unfortunately an appropriate special school place was not available until the next academic year. To enable K to continue to access educational provision, the Virtual School ensured home tuition was put in place as soon as possible. K engaged well with this provision, but all professionals were keen to ensure he could access group learning opportunities outside of his home to support his transition into school.

K's Virtual School Co-ordinator identified a local Alternative Provision which offered outdoor learning opportunities which matched K's interests. Following successful visits, a package of learning activities was put in place which K actively engaged in for the remainder of the academic year. Alongside his English and Maths tuition, K took part in pond and river safaris looking for nature, forest trailing, camp building, bike riding, outdoor science experiments. Staff from K's new school attended the summer term Personal Education Plan meeting where arrangements were made for K to visit his school. K has subsequently had a very positive transition into his new school.

11.3.2 Key Stage 2 – Cohort Characteristics

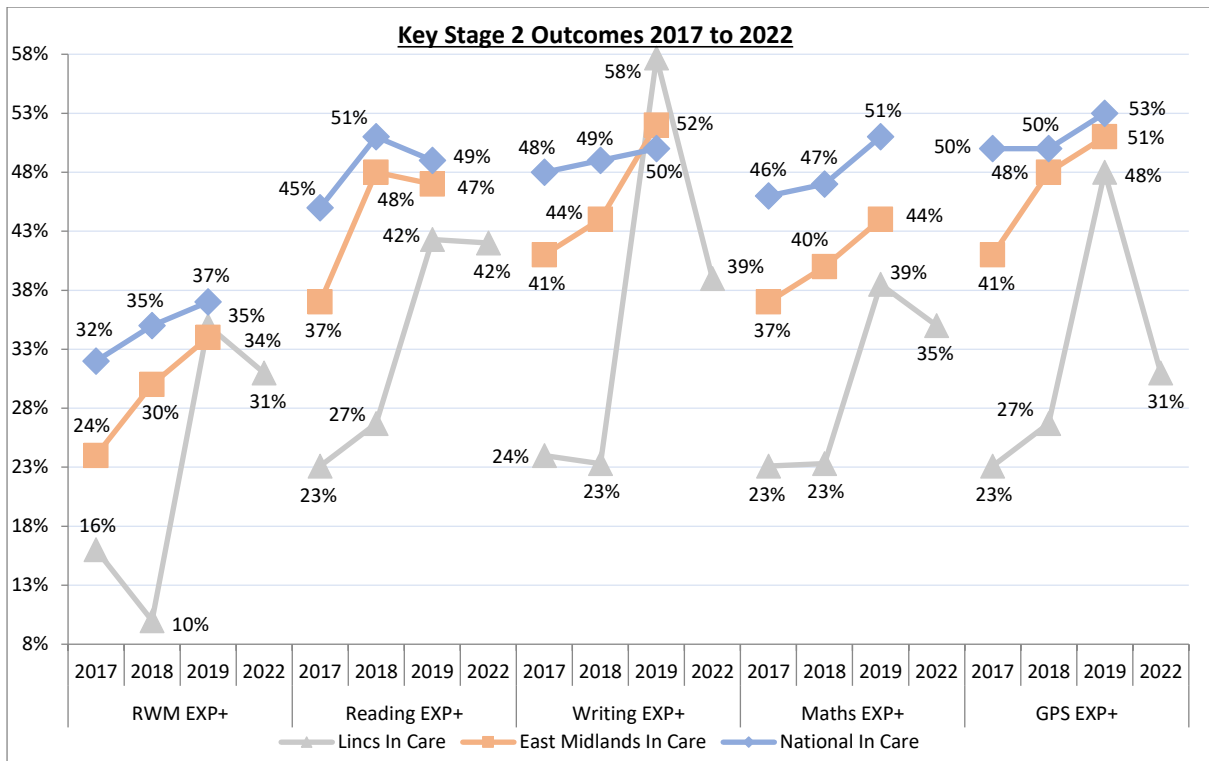
There were 28 pupils in the Children in Care cohort completing Key Stage 2 in 2022. 19 pupils (68%) had an identified Special Educational Need, 10 pupils (36%) required SEN Support and 9 pupils (32%) with an EHC Plan. The cohort completing Key Stage 2 comprised of: 13 boys (46%), 15 girls (54%), 17 pupils (61%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 1 pupil (4%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). 22 pupils (79%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 6 pupils (21%) were educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 17.1 and which is considered to be high. In total 50% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (11%) or Very High (39%).

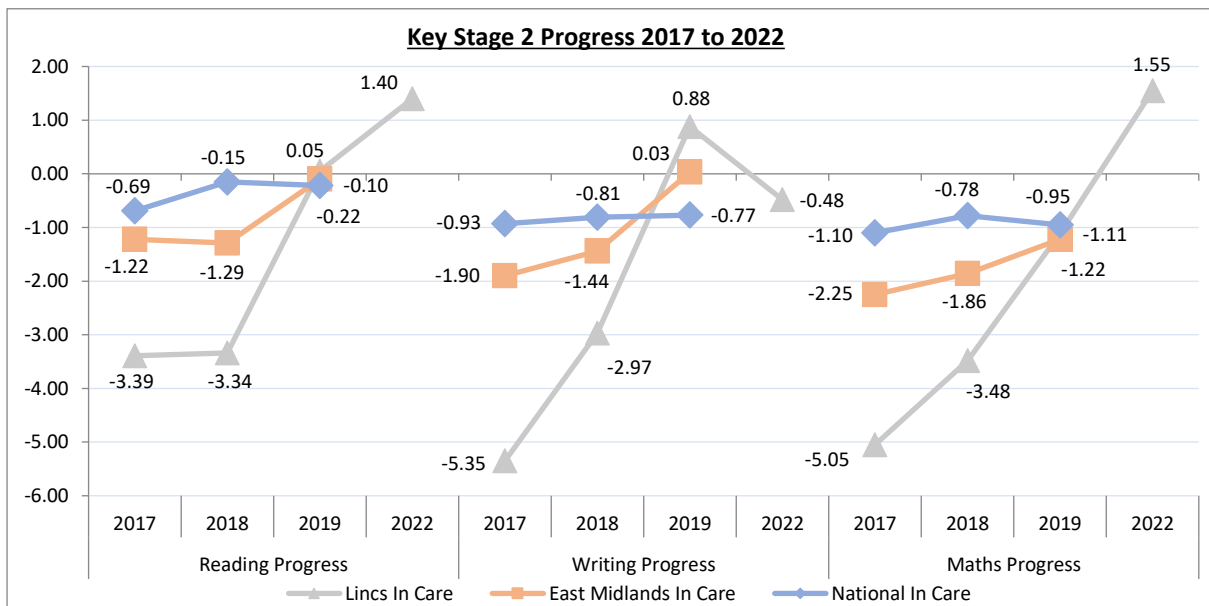
11.3.3 Key Stage 2 – Attainment

Lincolnshire's Children in Care Key Stage 2 outcomes in 2022 are also likely to be below National and Regional comparators. That said, they compare well to 2019 when we consider an increase in SEN pupils in this year group (68% in 2022, 54% in 2019) in combination with a drop in Key Stage 2 outcomes seen nationally between 2019 (65% in RWM) and 2022 (59% in RWM) in all subjects except for Reading.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths fell by 4% to 31% in 2022 compared to 35% in 2019. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading maintained steady at 42%, the same as 2019. In Writing, there was a substantial drop from 58% in 2019 to 39% in 2022, though it should be noted performance in 2019 was high relative to our comparators. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in Maths fell by 4% to 35% between 2019 and 2022. In Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling Lincolnshire Children in Care also saw a large drop from 48% in 2019 to 31% in 2022.



Lincolnshire's Children in Care Key Stage 2 progress outcomes between KS1 and KS2 in 2022 show a positive picture. Our progress is likely to be above (Reading & Maths) or similar (Writing) to our National and Regional comparators. These figures continue an improving trend that was established in the 3 years prior to the pandemic.



11.4 Key Stage 4

11.4.1 Key Stage 4 case study

J came into care at the end of Year 10 and although placed a significant distance from his school, all professionals were in agreement that it was in J's best interests to complete Year 11 at the same school. Coming into care and moving to a residential placement had had an impact on J's engagement and progress at school. His attendance at the end of Year 10 was 66% and he was working significantly below his GCSE target grades. The Virtual School commissioned some home tuition to support J in English and Maths and at his Autumn Term PEP meeting, it was agreed to adapt his timetable to enable him to attend additional English sessions at school to boost his predicated grade.

By the end of the Autumn Term, J's attendance had increased to 90% and he had continued to make progress in lessons. The pressure of a pending court case contributed to J refusing to sit his mock exams, but he did start to engage in the 1:1 English sessions which had a positive impact on his confidence.

J's summer term PEP recorded the considerable positive shift in his attitude, motivation, and investment in his future plans. His attendance had continued to improve despite the very long taxi journeys and his mock exams results went from ungraded to 2-3s. Although this was below his target grades, it was a significant improvement to the start of the year. J continued to access emotion wellbeing and academic support funded by Pupil Premium alongside the home tuition sessions.

Although J's court sentencing hearing took place just before his GCSEs, he continued to be well supported by his school and residential placement providers. Everyone was delighted when J achieved a Grade 5 in his Maths GCSE and Grade 4 in all his other GCSEs.

11.4.2 Key Stage 4 – Cohort Characteristics

There were 55 pupils in the children in care cohort completing Key Stage 4 Assessments in 2022. Within this cohort young people accessed their education in a variety of settings:

- ❖ **Mainstream Schools 55% (30)**
- ❖ **Special Schools 29% (16)**
- ❖ **Independent Schools 5% (3)**
- ❖ **Alternative Provision 5% (3)**
- ❖ **Pupil Referral Unit 5% (3)**

Of the 55 pupils, 45 (66%) had an identified Special Educational Need (18 pupils (33%) received SEN Support and 27 pupils (49%) had an EHC Plan). There were 29 boys (53%) & 26 girls (47%), 26 pupils (47%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 4 pupils (7%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of the 55 pupils, 44 pupils (80%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 11 pupils (20%) were educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 16.5 and this is on the border between slightly raised and high. In total 46% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (7%) or Very High (39%).

11.4.3 Key Stage 4 – Attainment

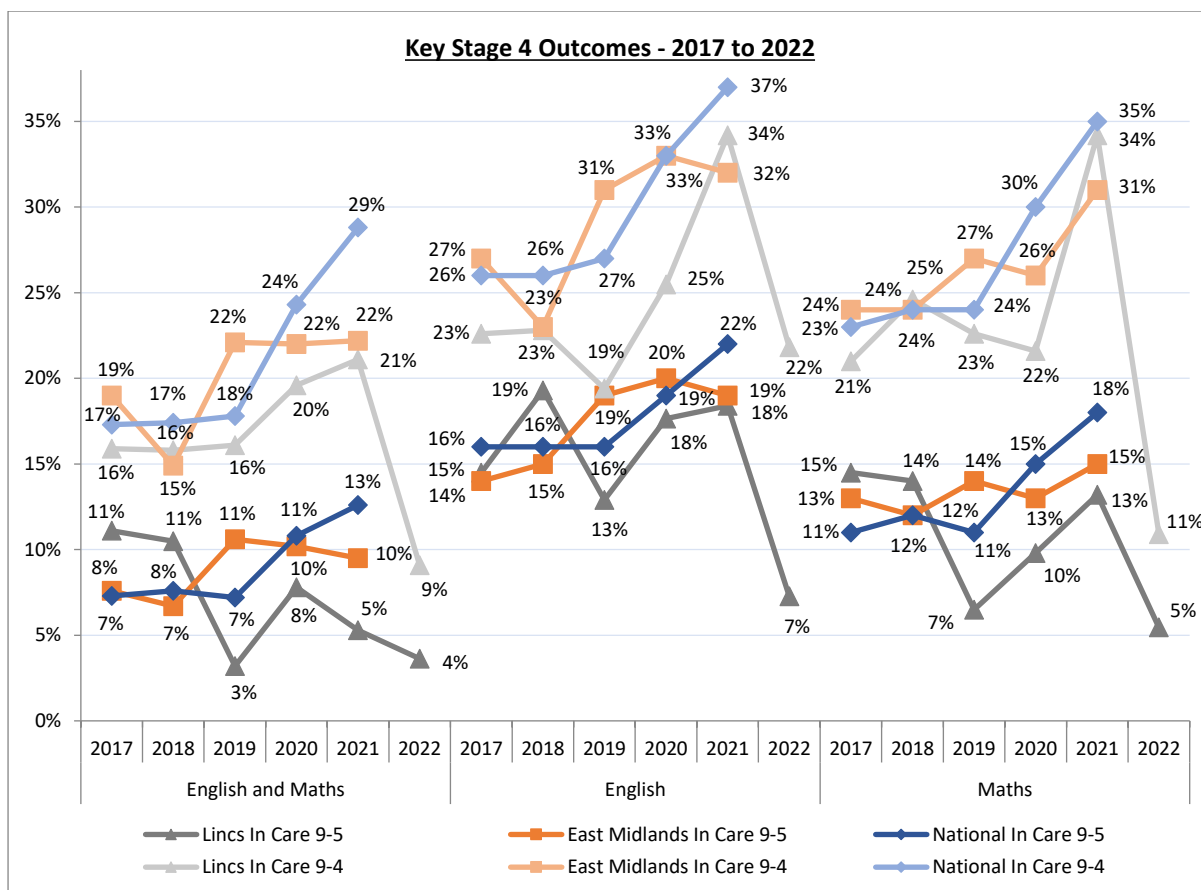
Exams years 2017, 2018, 2019 & 2022 were exam assessed where 2020 and 2021 were centre assessed grades. The use of centre assessed grade makes any comparison to years where exams were taken difficult.

55% of the cohort attended a mainstream secondary school in 2022. This is a large decrease on last year where 71% of our cohort attended a mainstream school. This large decrease was mainly made up from a large increase in the cohort attending special school with 29% in 2022 compared to 5% in 2021.

The outcomes of grade 5 or above in English and maths have shown a decrease of 1% to 4%, compared to last year (5%). This will be below the national and regional averages when compared to the previous 5 years data (no national or regional data in 2022 yet). The outcomes of grade 4 or above in English and maths has also shown a large decrease of 12% to 9%, compared to last year (21%).

Decreases were also seen in the individual subjects of English and maths, both for grade 4 or above and grade 5 or above.

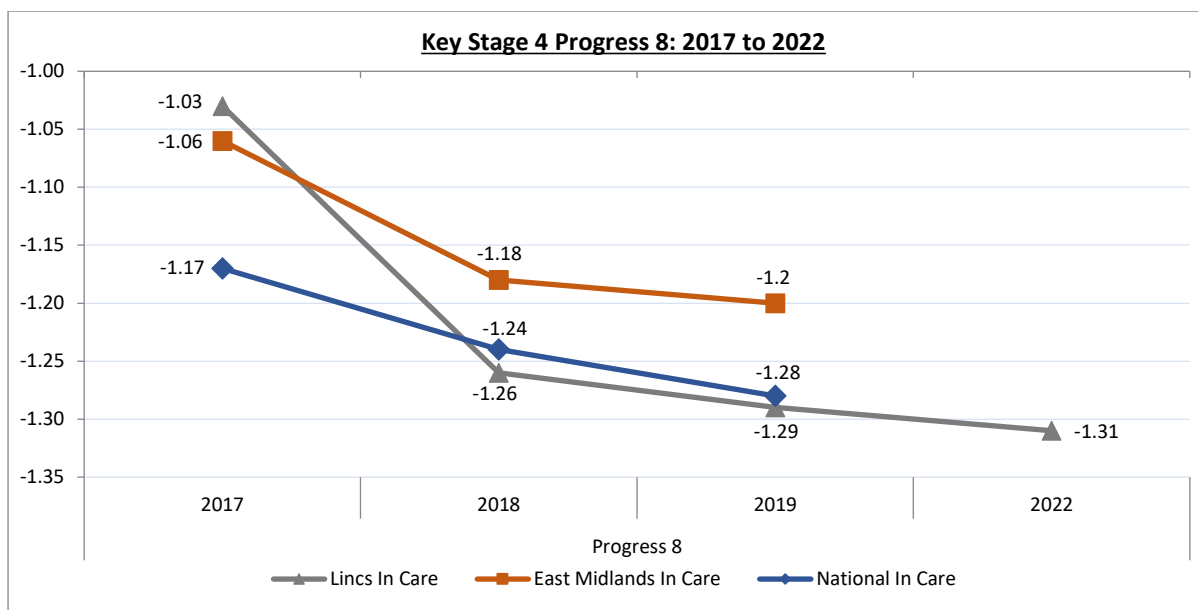
Despite the drops seen in our performance in terms of attainment, our progress figures are comparable to the figures we achieved in 2018 and 2019.



Progress 8 measures the progress between KS2 and KS4 of a pupil by comparing their Attainment 8 score at KS4 with the average Attainment 8 scores of all pupils nationally who had a similar starting point, calculated using assessment results from KS2. These scores can be aggregated to give an overall Progress 8 score for a cohort of pupils.

The Progress 8 score is represented as a positive or negative number either side of zero. A score of zero means that pupils in the cohort have made the same progress on average as those with similar prior attainment nationally, with a positive score meaning they have made more progress and a negative score meaning they have made less progress (for example a negative Progress 8 score of -1 would mean that pupils on average had achieved 1 grade less than pupils with the same prior attainment nationally and vice versa for positive progress scores).

The progress 8 score for Lincolnshire Looked after Children is likely to be very similar to when we last had full examinations at -1.31 (-1.29 in 2019, -1.26 in 2018).



12.0 Individual Achievements of Young People

Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures, and uncertainty around exams, we are delighted to share some of their significant achievements:

Student A achieved the necessary grades in her A Levels to secure a place at Leicester University to study Law.

Student B achieved a BTEC Level 3 in Child Play, Learning and Development and has started a CLAS Apprenticeship at a local early-years setting.

Student C achieved a Merit Pass in BTEC Level 3 in Public Services and Uniformed Services and is working towards his goal of joining the Army.

Student D achieved grade 7 in Mathematics and Chemistry, grade 6 in Biology and Physics, grade 5 in English Language, English Literature, Statistics and Geography and grade 4 in Art & Design and Spanish.

Student E achieved grade 6 in Design & technology, grade 5 in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics, grade 4 in Combined Science and Geography and a Level 2 Pass in Health and Wellbeing.

Student F achieved grade 5 in Combined Science, grade 4 in English Language, English Literature, Mathematics and History, a Level 2 Merit in Art & Design and Music and a Level 2 Pass in Health & Social Care and Creative Project in Art & Design.

There have also been numerous achievements for our young people in extra-curricular clubs and activities which include:

Student G was chosen to carry the flag for Brownies during the Remembrance Sunday parade.

Student H and her sister **J** achieved Distinction and Excellent grades in their Acro Dance Exams.

Student K reached the National Finals of the Aspiring Student Chef (11-16) awards held in Bournemouth.

Student L was awarded the Police Cadet Community Achievement Award by her local borough council.

Student M was part of the squad who won the national Sea Cadets unarmed drill competition held in Plymouth.

Student N graduated from Air Cadets.

Student O was nominated by his peers to be the football team Captain. He took this role very seriously and always put his teammates needs before his own.

13.0 How does the Virtual School ensure the voice of children and young people influences practice?

As noted above, one of the most important aspects of the role of our Virtual School officers and coordinators is to build strong working relationships with our children and young people over time so that any problems that emerge can be overcome and successes celebrated on an individual basis (85% of CiC chose to actively engage with the PEP process). To ensure that those who are not in a position to engage have the opportunity to be heard, the team also maintains regular contact with our children and young people to ensure that they are on track and feel, confident, safe and supported in school and any specific worries or concerns are addressed. This applies to those placed both in and out of county and has continued throughout periods of lockdown wherever possible.

14.0 Summary

This annual report covers the activity of the Lincolnshire Virtual School in the academic year 2021-2022 and describes how we have fulfilled our statutory duty to promote improved educational outcomes for our Children and Young People in care. The report outlines the specific and ever - changing characteristics of our cohorts of children in each year group and provides a context against which their outcomes are better understood (particularly the potential long term negative impact of the pandemic on the learning of Children and Young People in care).

It also highlights through the use of case examples, the positive impact that the work of the Virtual School has had on individual children and young people. The Virtual school team understands the need for patience, resilience, innovation and the importance of building effective relationships to ensure that we can create the environments in which our children and young people can thrive.

In this report we demonstrate:

- A commitment to promoting continuous professional development within the Virtual School team. Also, a determination towards training and support work with designated teachers, social care teams, foster carers, IROs, and others.
- The Virtual School team and our SEND, Commissioning, and Social Care colleagues work effectively to ensure that our children and young people are placed in provision Ofsted graded Good or better and regularly review the placement of those in less than good schools regularly.
- That Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in an efficient and timely manner with the impact of interventions recorded on the ePEP, which is reviewed at least three times per year or more often if necessary. Pupil Premium is utilised strategically to fund early intervention strategies.
- That we value the need to build strong relationships with our children and young people over time so that trust can be developed, and advocacy can be effective and based on the views of the child. We take the time to celebrate individual success and also see the importance of Celebrating success more widely as appropriate.
- That we have high aspirations for our children and young people and recognise that understanding their needs, building their emotional resilience and self- esteem goes hand in hand with promoting their academic progress.

15.0 Recommendations

The Virtual School to continue to promote improving educational outcomes for children and young people, as outlined in our Lincolnshire Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

1. The Virtual School continues to ensure that all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are high quality and effective with Children's Services staff, carers, children, and schools working effectively and in partnership to promote wellbeing and learning. That the work of the Virtual School Team focuses on supporting our children and young people to access effective support particularly those Children and Young People whose learning has been negatively impacted by the fallout from the pandemic.
2. Children's Services to continue to develop a highly skilled, effective and innovative workforce across Lincolnshire focused upon improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care and to ensure that we build on our work with our post-16 cohort and children with a social worker to fulfil our extended statutory and non-statutory duties.
3. That we engage with other Children's Services Teams to ensure improving educational outcomes is central to the delivery of our Lincolnshire Children and Care Leavers Strategy from January 2023 and beyond.

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