

Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School



Annual Report - Academic Year 2019-2020 (Jan 2021)

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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 looked after children. 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-looked after 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 of looked after children. 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 upon the improvement of educational outcomes.

The Virtual School Head has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is a suitable education in place for all looked after children; this includes oversight of admissions, managed moves and education moves brought about through care placement moves. The Virtual School Team also provides advice and information to those parents and schools involved in promoting educational outcomes for previously looked after children.

As Corporate Parents, the Virtual School and Virtual School Head has a leading role in promoting the educational achievement of children in its care. An education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievements, 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 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 report also covers the response of the Virtual School Team to the national emergency from March to the end of August 2020.

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher, the Virtual School and report upon the 2020 educational outcomes for our looked after children. 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 at 31 March 2020.

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. Our network of Foster Carer Champions proved themselves to be very effective over the year, and particularly came into their own in the emergency, as they provided a support network across our carer community working alongside the Caring2Learn Team and social workers.
- Our children and young people in care continue to be significantly less likely to be excluded from school when compared with their peers nationally and their attendance is good. In comparison to those nationally, a greater proportion of our children and young people continued to attend and access

learning during Lockdown.

- 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. Personal Education Plans and support for transition continued throughout Lockdown and the Virtual School worked with schools and LCC colleagues to deliver ICT equipment and commission additional tuition to support Children in Care wherever possible.
- Early intervention is key to promoting outcomes and 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 Virtual School Team continued to work effectively and in cooperation with carers, parents, schools and Children's Services colleagues to support the education of Children in Care throughout the period of Lockdown and recovery up to August 2020 and beyond.
- 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 the voice of our young people is heard. We celebrate successes and also 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.
- Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures and uncertainty around exams, our children and young people achieved in line with previous years and in line with historic national and regional comparators with some achieving outstanding results at GCSE and A Level.

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 Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021 (see *below*) as well as the Local Authority and partners' aspirations as set out within this strategy.

We believe you can achieve.

We want all Looked after Children and Care Leavers to feel safe, loved, be heard and to realise their potential, through nurturing, resilient parenting and support.

This strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers sets out Lincolnshire's ambitions up to November 2021. 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 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 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:

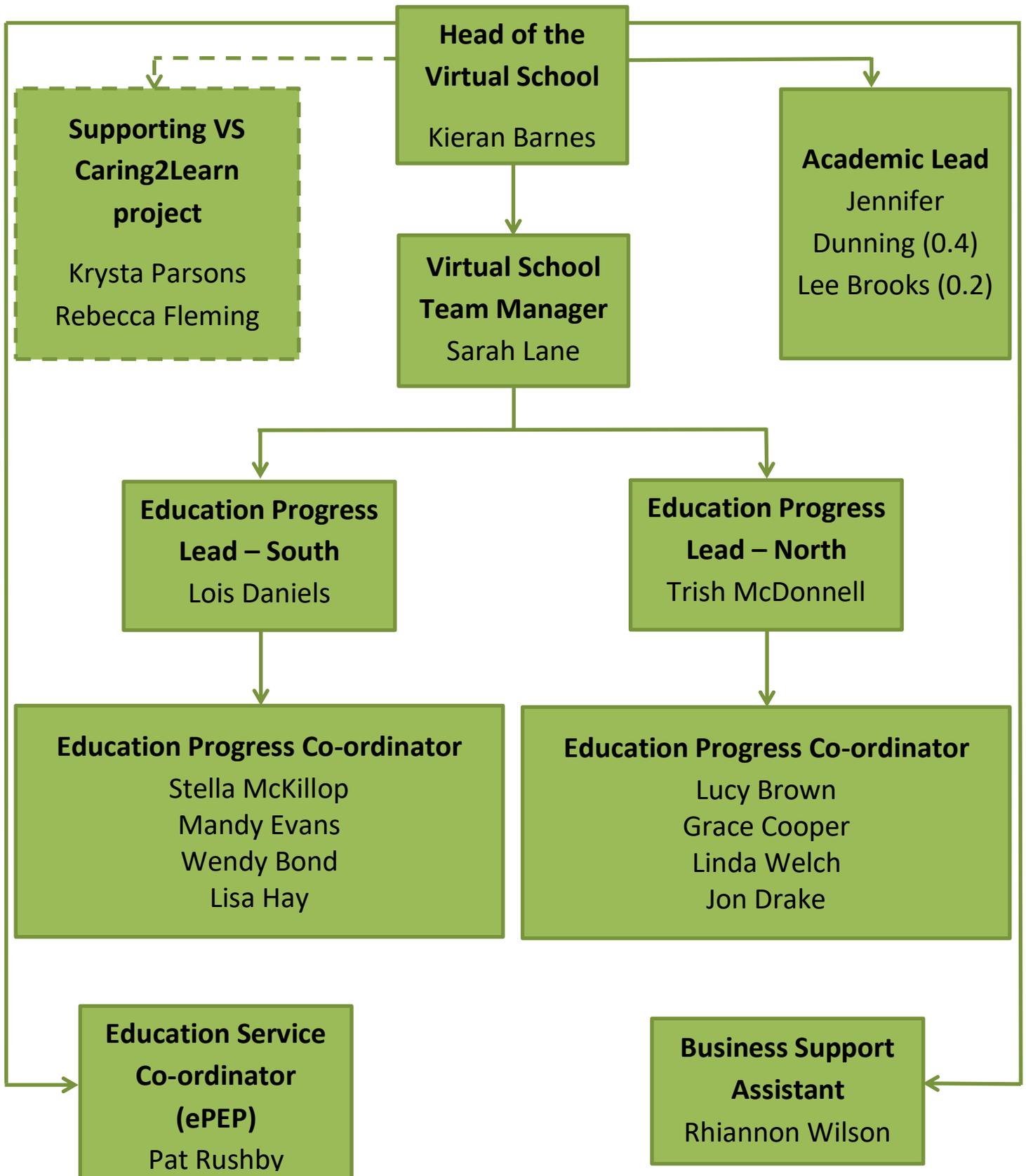
Attainment and progress 3-18 to ensure that all Personal Education Plans (PEPS) are high quality and effective with children's services staff, carers, children and schools working effectively and in partnership to promote wellbeing and learning.

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.

Building an emotional wellbeing pathway to promote self-confidence and support academic progress so that our children and young people fulfil their potential.

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 looked after and previously looked after children and young people to include 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 Caring 2 Learn to support them in their role in meeting the educational needs of looked after and previously looked after children and young people. The Virtual School is integrated into Children's Services with training accessed and the Virtual School Team provides support and training across our residential, early help, fostering teams and carer community as per below.

5.1 Designated Teachers

Termly locality based clusters for Designated Teachers were well attended and continued to provide attendees with opportunities to share good practice during the Autumn and Spring Terms 2019-2020. Remote support was provided as appropriate by the Virtual School Education Co-ordinators alongside training opportunities through Caring2Learn throughout the first lockdown period. Locality cluster meetings were reinstated and provided virtually from September 2020.

5.2 Social Workers

The Virtual School has continued to work closely with our colleagues in Social Care to ensure all of our young people are accessing education. This has included attending social care team meetings to provide updates on support for looked after and previously looked after children and providing bespoke support for individual staff when needed. During the Covid pandemic, regular communication between social workers and Virtual School co-ordinators ensured that, where appropriate, children continued to attend school or, if not in school, that carers and young people were supported to continue their education at home. Termly data reports show that Social workers' participation in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) has continued to increase in 2020 both before and during the pandemic.

5.3 Continuing Professional Development for the Virtual School

Colleagues from the Early Years team and the Food Education team have provided inputs at our monthly team meetings to ensure the co-ordinators are aware of key updates. The Virtual School staff have attended a Prevent refresher session and are completing mandatory courses in line with the LSCB 6 year training pathway. A number of the Virtual School Education co-ordinators have attended Caring2learn training events in order to further their own knowledge and signpost education settings and carers. Three of the team attended a solution focussed coaching session and cascaded the key points at a whole team meeting. The Virtual School is

represented at the termly Graduated Approach briefings organised by Lincolnshire SEND and staff regularly attend the Children's Services and Corporate Leadership Team briefings to ensure they are up to date with key initiatives and projects within the council.

5.4 Supporting Families and Schools Caring2Learn Update

The Caring2Learn project has been in operation since January 2018 and is currently funded through the Partners in Practice programme until September 30th 2021. The project has been very successful in engaging and supporting schools, education settings, foster carers, children's homes, residential settings and children's services teams to be part of this innovative and sustainable multi-disciplinary approach to improving academic outcomes, progress, life choices and opportunities for all Lincolnshire children in care, on the edge of care or previously looked after. The project has developed and implemented a clearly defined strategy that is supporting education settings to be able to nurture and promote wellbeing and ensure looked after children achieve better progress whilst in care and support foster carers to promote learning in the home and help children develop a thirst for learning so that education is valued and encouraged.

5.5 What's working well?

30 Fostering households and 4 Residential Children's Homes have achieved the Learning Homes Award this academic year. The Learning Homes and Caring Schools toolkits have been accessed by a further 120 fostering households and 120 education settings who are in the process of working through these good practice frameworks and compiling their evidence portfolios.

Further Fostering Households are currently being assessed and 33 Northholme will be the next of our children's homes to submit for assessment. 24 schools from North Lincolnshire are also working towards the Caring Schools Award and accessing the training programme funded by the North Lincolnshire Virtual School. Our version of the Learning Homes Workbook for new foster carers which incorporates the statutory fostering Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) is now issued to all carers directly following approval and they work to achieve these standards with their SSWs within their first twelve months as carers.

This means that from the start of their journey as Lincolnshire Foster Carers they will be focussing on supporting the highest standard of nurture, wellbeing and educational outcomes for our children in line with practice in schools and residential homes. These good practice toolkits continue to provide a framework against which we can highlight, celebrate and also challenge organisations and individuals to ensure the best practice in education and care for our children.

Over the last year we have been able to further develop and embed the Hub Support Network for foster and residential carers, designated teachers in schools, wider education and children's services staff which brings everyone together to support

each other, offer advice, share good practice, information and problem solve. This is co-facilitated by Foster Carer and School Based Education Champions. We have created a wide-ranging support hub which brings together all those involved in the care and education of vulnerable children and families which includes face to face and online support, including through social media for individuals, groups and organisations.

The support hub includes the delivery of regular meetings, events and training opportunities and also offers effective peer support through our Foster Carer and School-based Education Champions Team. This integrated multi-service approach which incorporates Designated Teacher (DT) Cluster Groups is jointly facilitated by the Virtual School and Education Champions and a variety of Foster Carer Support and Focus Groups, co-facilitated by Foster Carer Education Champions.

These groups form part of the wider support network and have grown into a highly effective network of support for everyone working with our children and young people. We have 20 Foster Carer Education Champions and 13 School Based Education Champions working to support the network in a number of ways. Education Champions are split into three working groups focusing on School Support, Foster Carer Support and Learning and Development.

Newly approved carers are now allocated a 'Hub Link' Education Champion who make contact with them, introduce them to a local network of carers, encourage them to engage with the Facebook and WhatsApp groups and begin the training pathway. We have also set up a Carers2Be group to support those going through the assessment process before approval.

Feedback indicates that carers have found this a very supportive approach which reduces feelings of isolation and reinforces they are part of a wider community who are accessible as and when needed. This support is also available to experienced carers who are also being referred into the Hub and provided with a Hub Link. We currently have over 50 active Hub Link supports. Since the pandemic the demand for our online and social media support groups has more than doubled. We now have 620 members of our Facebook Group and run 5 different WhatsApp support groups and 3 virtual social support groups.

We have continued to develop and deliver an effective joint training programme bringing together the Caring2Learn Cornerstones of Good Practice and supporting everyone in the Triad of Success to build their skills, knowledge and confidence in order to support our children and young people to achieve their full potential. We offer joint workshops and training sessions for carers, school and children's services staff which echoes our relational approach, as well as building links between individuals, settings and teams which helps to develop the support network. As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown we had to radically rethink the programme and

redesign the workshops so that they could be delivered virtually without losing this relational approach.

Since April 2020 the training offer has become more popular than ever and in five months we have delivered 85 sessions to over 1200 people during daytimes, evenings and weekends. Feedback about the virtual sessions has been extremely positive and carers, especially, have indicated that they have appreciated the flexibility and convenience of this training which they can access from the comfort of their own home without the need to arrange childcare or take time off work etc. As a result of delivering virtually we have been able to increase our capacity and deliver to whole school staff where we have worked with groups as large as 70. We have also been involved in the delivery of the DfE Wellbeing for Education Return programme where we have worked alongside Health Minds Lincolnshire to deliver a series of webinars to all of Lincolnshire's schools and in two months have so far reached 184 education settings with 322 school staff attending.

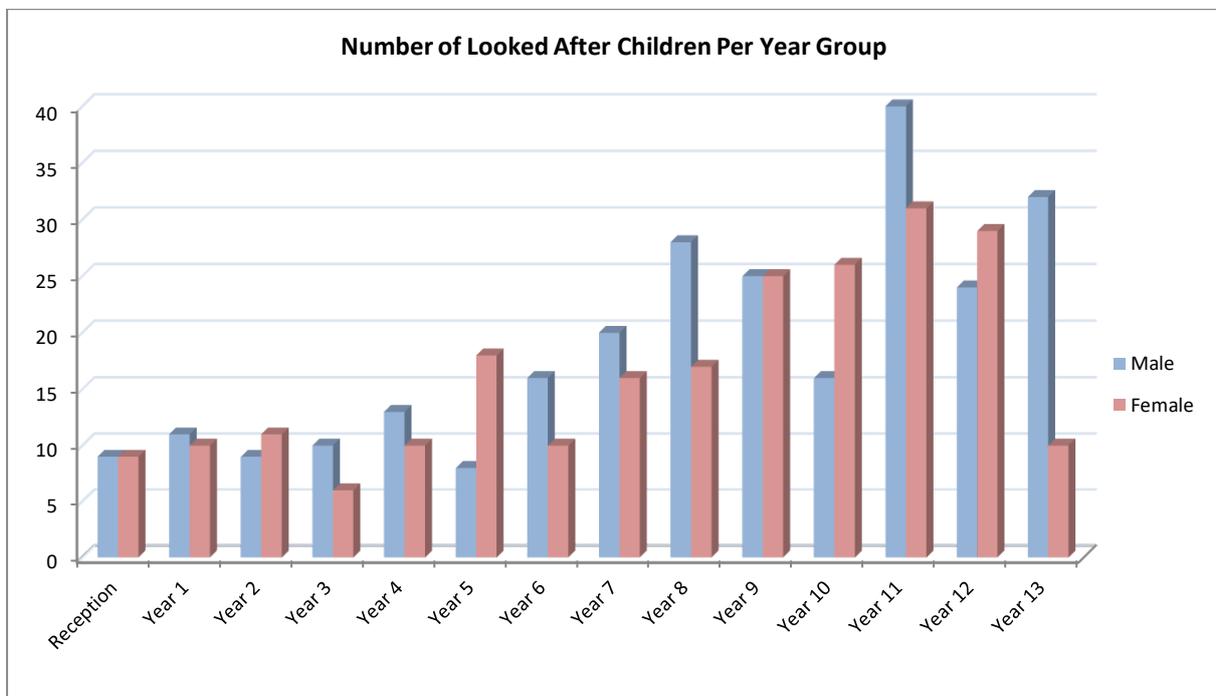
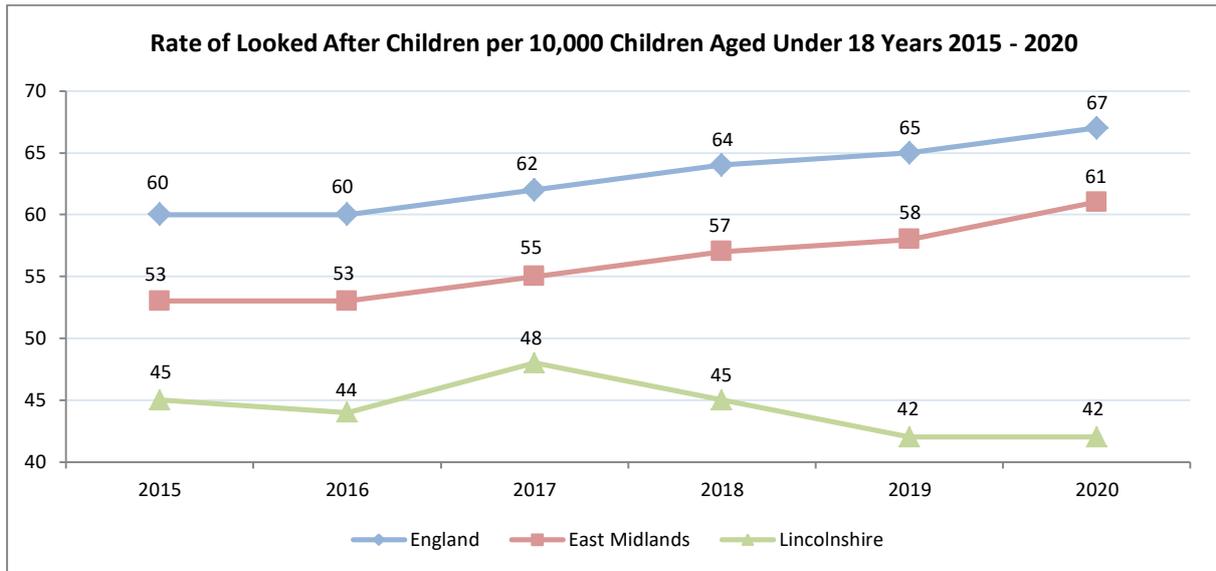
5.6 Next Steps

Caring2Learn has continued to expand and develop in scope. We have developed more opportunities for joint working and are currently working closely with the Early Help and Inclusion teams to develop a universal and targeted, extended parenting programme which is bespoke for Lincolnshire Carers and Parents. This will be jointly delivered by Caring2Learn, Parenting Programme Delivery Unit (PPDU) and schools staff and will form part of the overall Lincolnshire Parenting Pathway. We are also supporting the recruitment and retention of high quality foster carers and have reviewed and updated the delivery of the fostering Preparation and Induction courses and also contributed to the development of the new Fostering Friendly Employer scheme.

Together with the Virtual School we are working on developing a comprehensive training and support pathway for new and experienced Designated Teachers for Looked-after Children. We are also working to provide further guidance for parents and guardians of previously looked after children through the development of a Learning Homes Toolkit aimed at parents of adopted children and special guardians. We will continue to support North Lincolnshire Virtual School in embedding Caring2Learn in schools across their local authority. From Spring 2021 onwards we plan to roll out the positive findings of the first and second Literacy Intervention Studies, PALAC & Caring2Read, to support schools promoting effective 'catch-up' intervention strategies utilising the additional tutoring funding from the government. We also plan to run a second round of Peer Mentor Training for secondary schools which are aimed at supporting relational approaches in schools in order to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions.

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

The number of looked after children in Lincolnshire remained unchanged in 2020 after a period of decline between 2017 and 2019. This is contrary to the trend seen nationally and regionally where the rate of children becoming looked after (National: 26 per 10,000 and East Midlands: 24 per 10,000) is greater than the rate of those ceasing to be looked after (National: 25 per 10,000 and East Midlands: 21 per 10,000).

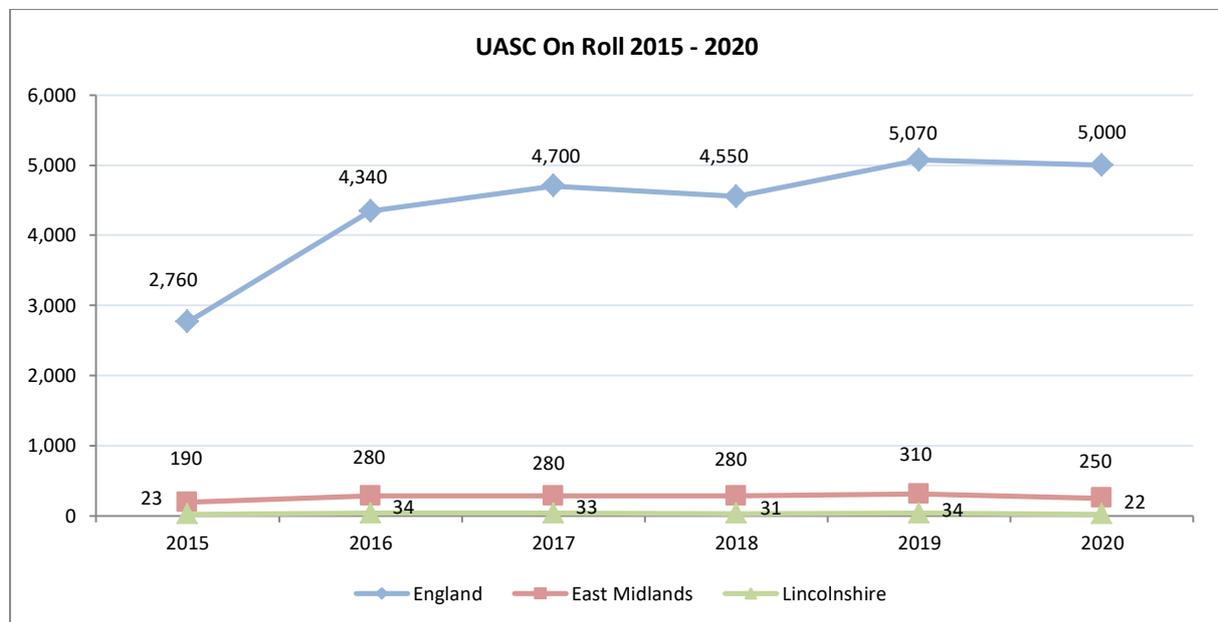


6.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

The numbers of young people entering care in Lincolnshire as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) dropped in 2020 after a period of remaining fairly consistent across the previous 4 years. The drop this year was mirrored for the East Midlands region but not for National where the figure remained reasonably consistent with last year.

The Virtual School team hold regular PEP surgeries involving college staff and wider children's services teams to provide advice and support for this cohort whether placed in Lincolnshire or out of county.

Following a successful bid to the Controlling Migrant Fund, the Virtual School has been working in partnership with the Barnardo's Leaving Care Team and Locate, the supported accommodation providers in Peterborough, on a one year project to pilot Education, Employment and Training provision and support for care leavers who were previously unaccompanied asylum seeking children. An extension of the project is currently under review. Building on the positive impact of Personal Education Plan meetings in promoting our looked after children's engagement in education, employment and training, the pilot has engaged with colleges and other providers in Peterborough and supported the leaving care team in strengthening the education focus in pathway plans to enable the young people to have increased and sustained access to education, employment and training appropriate to their legal status.



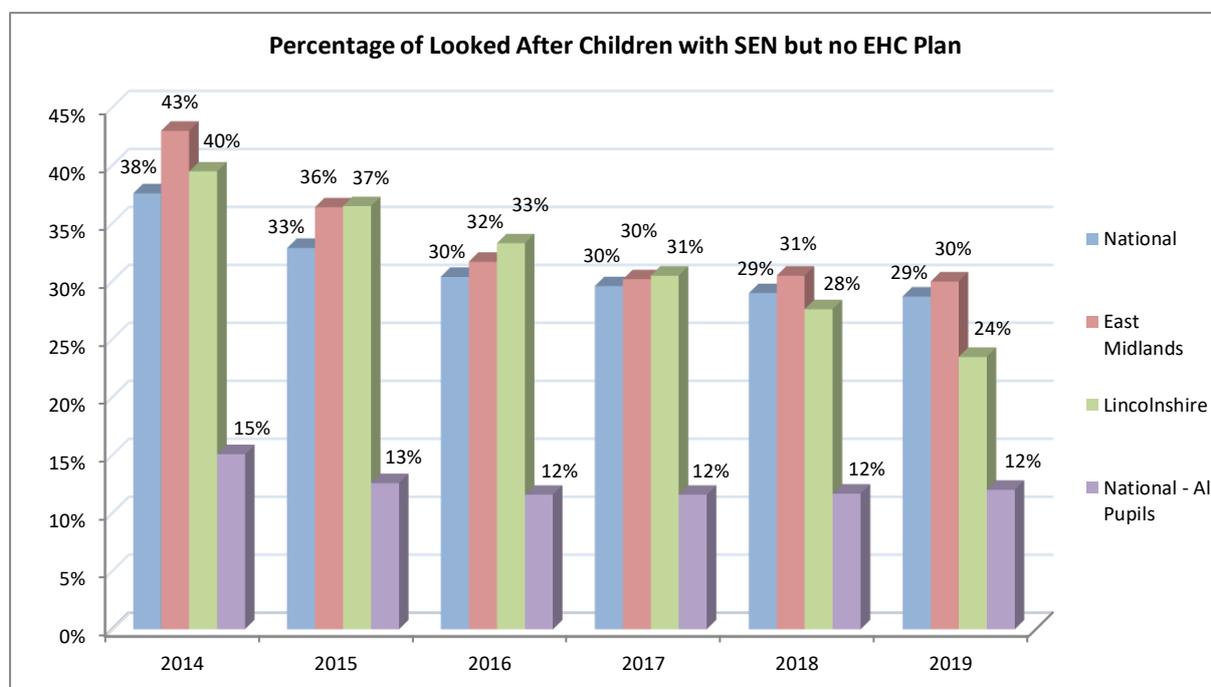
6.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

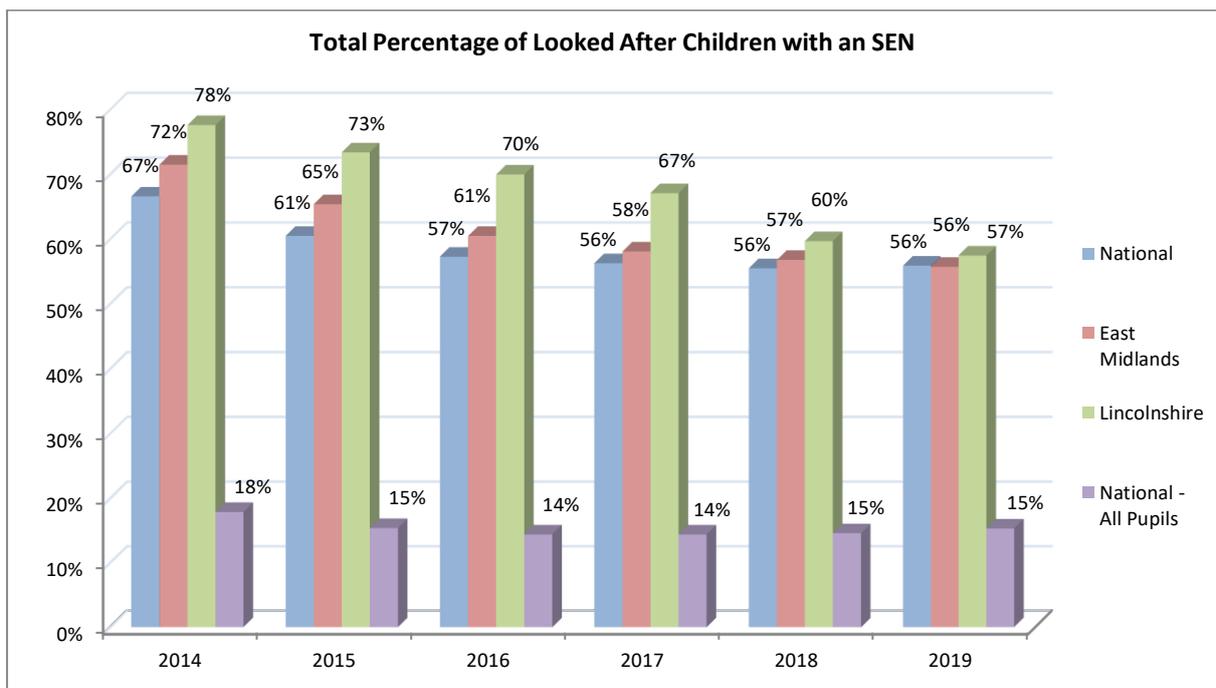
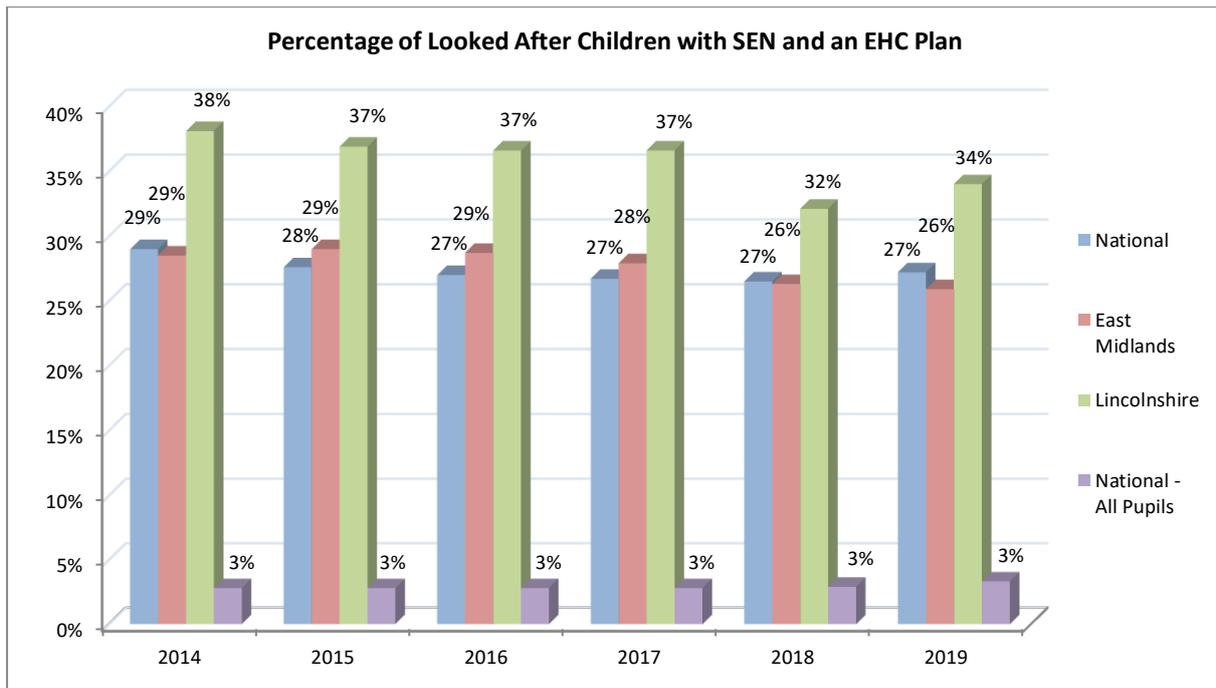
Nationally, 3.3% of the total pupil population have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

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

Nationally, this equates to 10,570 looked after children (27.2%). In 2019, 56% of looked after children had an identified special educational need, compared to 15% of all children. When reviewing primary need type; Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was the most frequently identified area of additional support for looked after children.

In England, the percentage of looked after children with a SEN is 55.9%; of which 28.7% are without a statement or EHC plan and 27.2% are with a statement or EHC plan. The regional East Midlands figures are roughly in line with national, with 55.7% of looked after children having a SEN, with 30.0% identified as SEN without a statement or EHC plan and 25.9% having a statement or EHC plan. Lincolnshire has a higher percentage of SEN when compared to National and Regional averages. The percentage of Lincolnshire children with SEN is 57.5% and comprises of 23.5% without a statement or EHC plan and 34.0% with a statement or EHC plan. The majority of the difference between Lincolnshire and its comparators comes for 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 of 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 (EYFS – K/S3). This provides the opportunity for early and effective school based interventions with progress monitored through the PEP process.

Our teams continued to provide this remotely wherever possible during lockdown with one to one remote language and communication support for carers and families continuing to support children identified with communication needs, to enable continued progress.

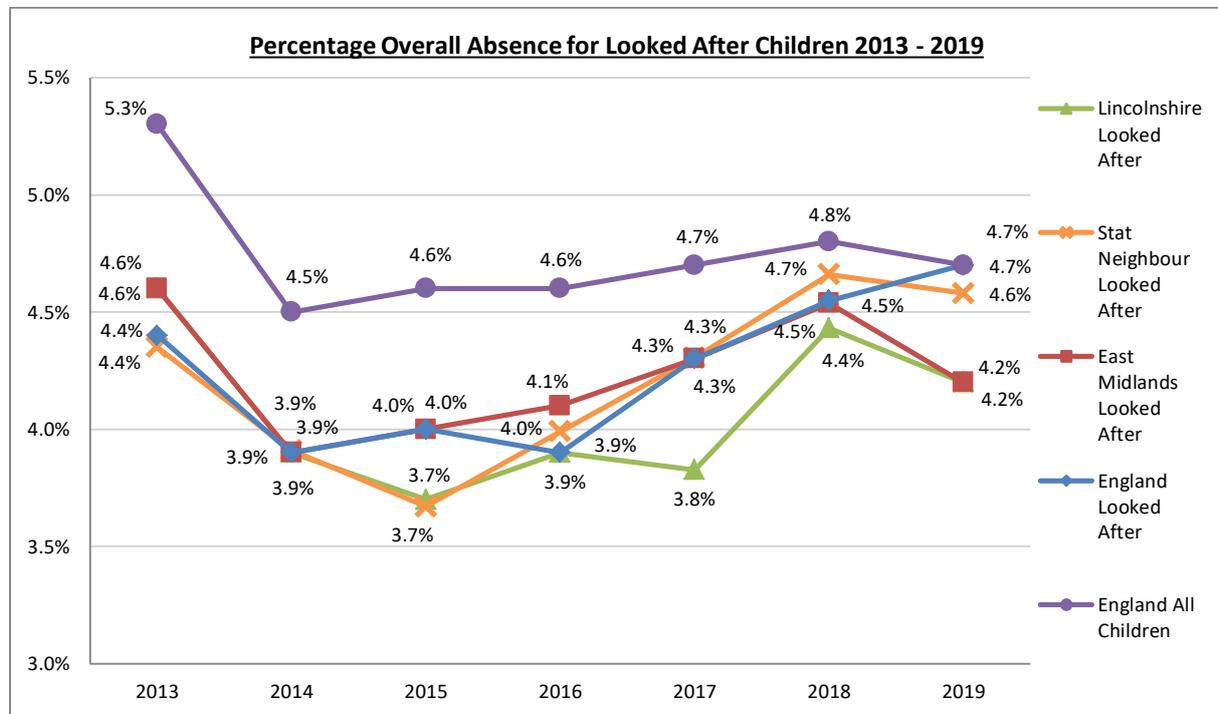
Further support included additional tuition through the LCC SEND Home Tuition Team. This is commissioned by the Virtual School utilising Pupil Premium to help develop key learning skills with targeted subject support in years 5 and 6, 9 to 11. During lockdown this was extended by using online platforms and offered to more children and young people unable to access school-based learning or requiring additional support to maintain academic progress. Support was also provided to: Residential Homes, for additional timetabled routine and school set learning; and to families to promote stability and engagement at home as identified through the PEP process. A total of 58 of our households accessed this. Tuition and mentoring was additionally offered over the Summer Holidays and 36 children and young people chose to have this additional support over the summer.

Working with colleagues in the Education and Performance Teams, the Virtual School has played a key role in allocating laptops to our looked after children as part of the Department for Education initiative to provide laptops to vulnerable children during the Covid pandemic. The Virtual School identified 41 of our looked after children who were on roll at education settings outside of Lincolnshire and delivered the laptops to enable the young people to continue to access education whilst their schools were closed. A further 50 laptops were allocated by the Virtual School and delivered to our looked after children in Lincolnshire to enable them to complete home learning tasks and participate in remote learning provided by their schools and colleges.

7.0 Inclusion - How regularly do our Children Attend?

Lincolnshire looked after children attend more regularly than their looked after peers nationally and regionally. This maintains a six year trend of Lincolnshire being in line or better than our national and east midlands comparators. The absence data for 2019 showed a decrease from 4.4% in 2018 to 4.2%; this was better than National with a consistent trend for increases seen over the past four years (4.5% in 2018 to 4.7% in 2019). Our regional East Midlands comparator and Statistical Neighbours each showed improvement in 2019 compared to 2018 (East Midlands: 4.5% in 2018 to 4.2% in 2019; Statistical Neighbours: 4.7% in 2018 to 4.6% in 2019).

Overall absence for looked after children in Lincolnshire is also much lower than the national average for all children. The Virtual School continues to engage with our schools and families to improve attendance.

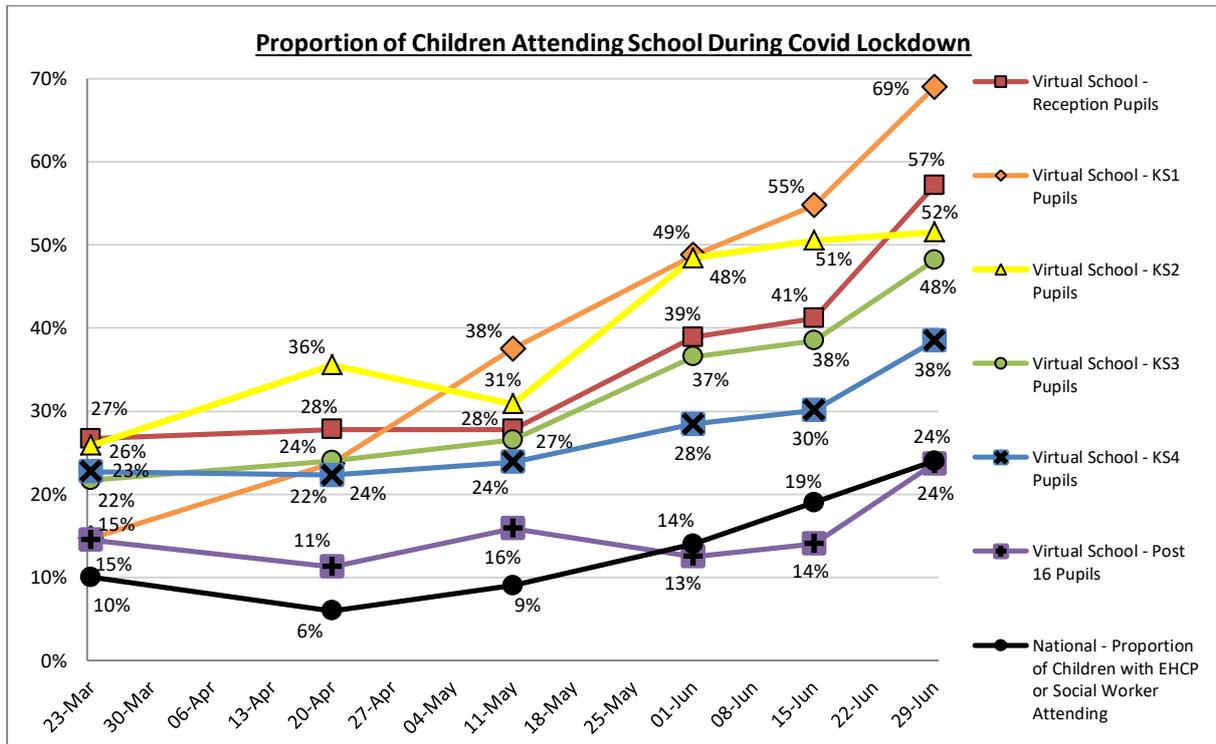


7.1 Attendance during Covid-19 Lockdown

Lincolnshire looked after children attended more regularly during the Covid lockdown than a proxy national comparator for vulnerable children (children with EHCP or Social Worker). Lincolnshire children started with a proportion attending of 23% at the end of March rising to nearly 50% by the end of June; the National proportion of vulnerable children attending started off with a proportion attending of 10% at the end of March rising to nearly 25% by the end of June.

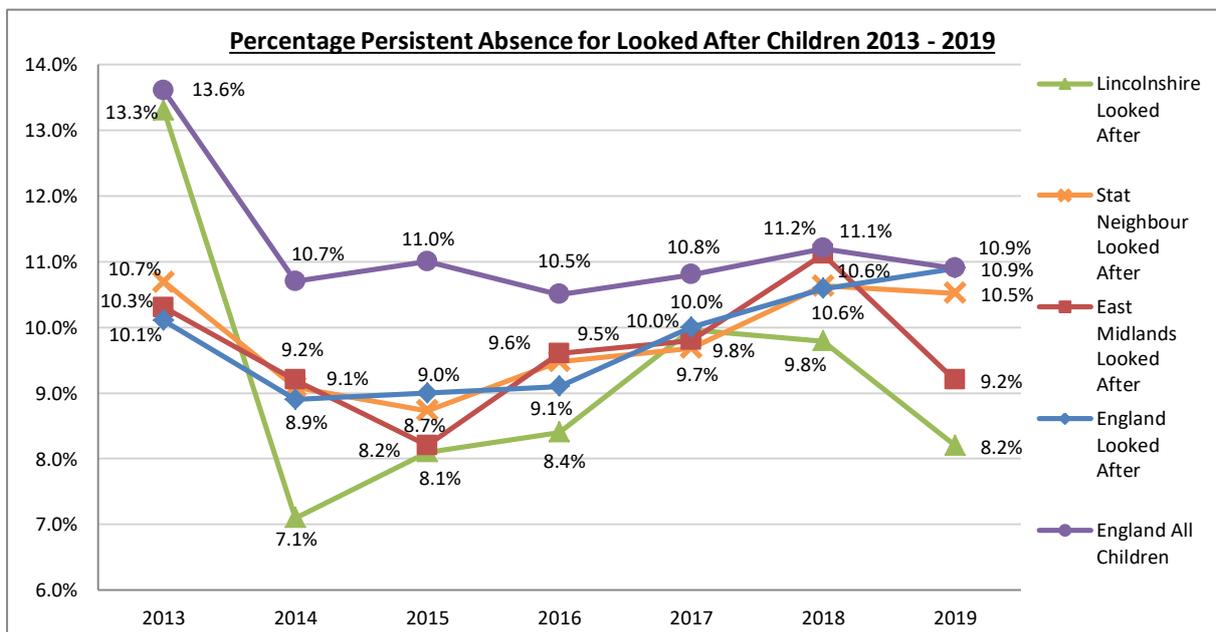
Lincolnshire looked after children generally attended more regularly by age with Primary children attending more often all achieving 52% to 69% attendance by the end of June, compared to Secondary children achieving 38% to 48% attendance by

the end of June. Our Post 16 pupils attendance was similar to the National average for vulnerable children.



7.2 Persistent Absence

Our children and young people continue to perform well in the area of persistent absence, for each of the past six years Lincolnshire has been in-line or better than national and regional averages for looked after children. Indeed, for 2019 Lincolnshire bucked the trend of increases seen nationally by showing a substantial reduction in persistent absence (9.8% in 2018 to 8.2% in 2019); compared to an increase seen nationally (10.6% in 2018 to 10.9% in 2019). Persistent absence for looked after children in Lincolnshire is well below the national average for all children.

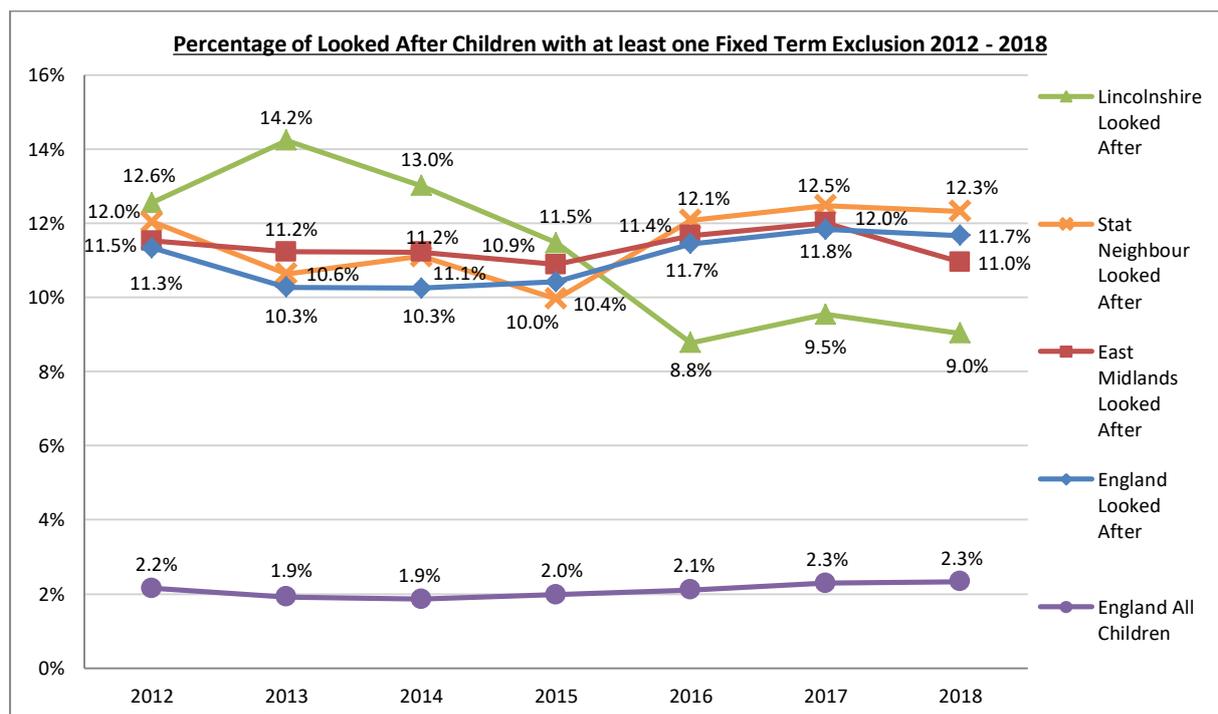


7.3 Inclusion - How likely are our looked after children to be excluded?

7.3.1 Fixed Term Exclusion

Nationally (2012 - 2018), looked after children have been 5 to 5.5 times more likely to be excluded from school for a fixed-term than the national average for all pupils. In 2013, Lincolnshire looked after children were 7.5 times more likely to be excluded from school for a fixed-term than the national average for all pupils. Between 2013 and 2016 we have seen the Lincolnshire fixed-term exclusion rate for looked after children drop consistently year on year to the point where in 2016, 2017 and 2018 a Lincolnshire looked after child is around 4 times more likely to be excluded from school than the national average for all pupils. This is well below the national and regional averages for looked after children; with national, regional and statistical neighbour averages showing an increasing trend for the fixed term exclusion rate between 2015 and 2017.

This welcome progress in reducing the number of exclusions is a consequence of more effective working relationships with the wider children's services team, families and our schools to ensure that fixed term exclusions are avoided.



7.3.2 Permanent Exclusion

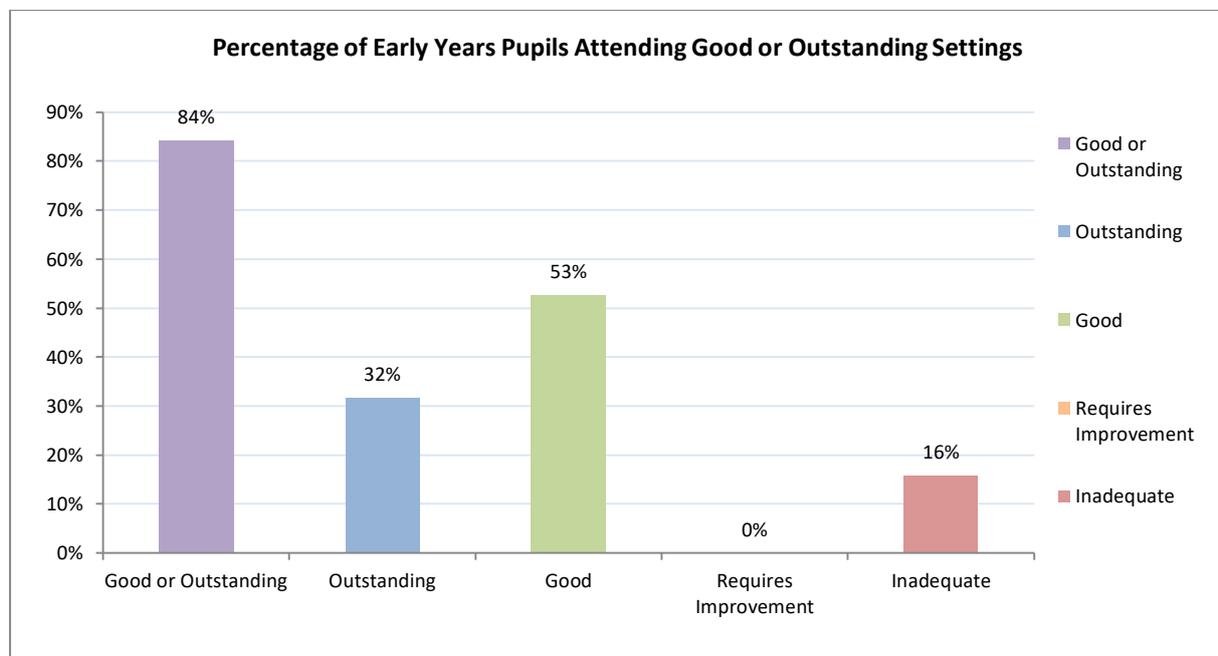
The DfE does not publish data relating to the permanent exclusion of LAC. Locally sourced data indicates that in the 2019-20 academic years, no looked after children received a permanent exclusion.

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, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the sector.

8.1 Early Years (Reception)

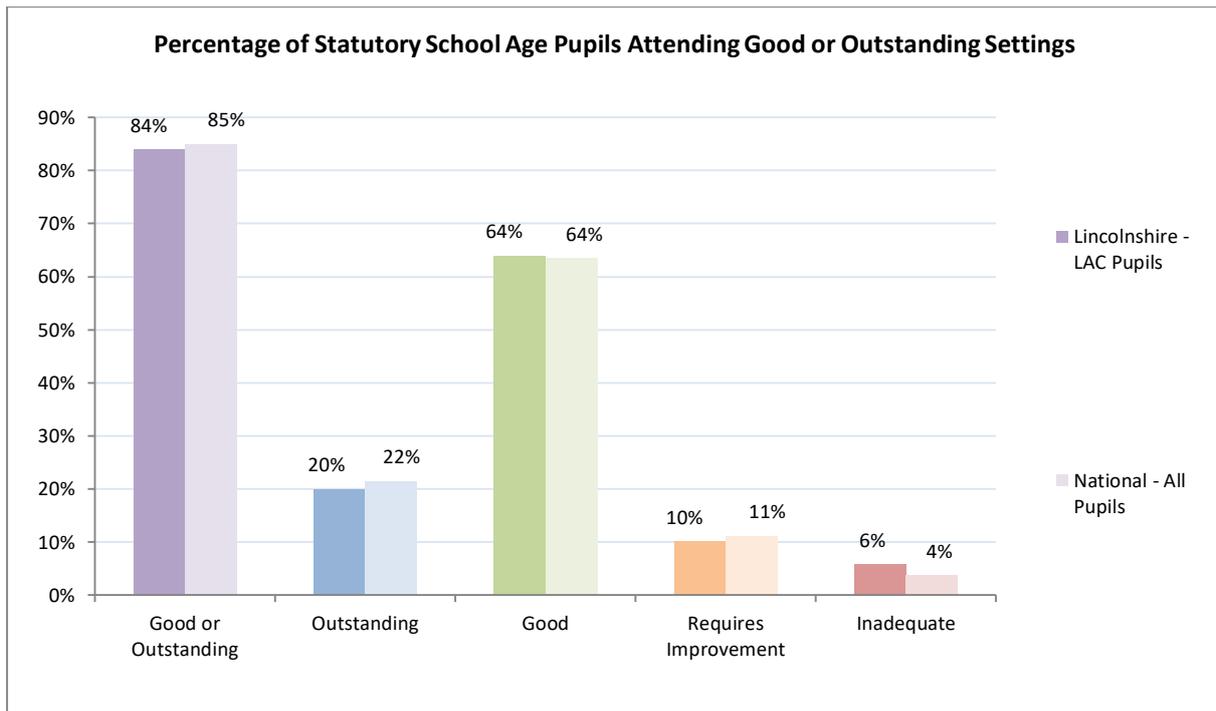
In accordance with data correct as at 12th December 2020, 84% of our looked after children placed both in and out of county who are aged four or five were attending good or outstanding settings as graded by Ofsted. This is an improvement of 1% compared with last year.



8.2 Statutory School Age

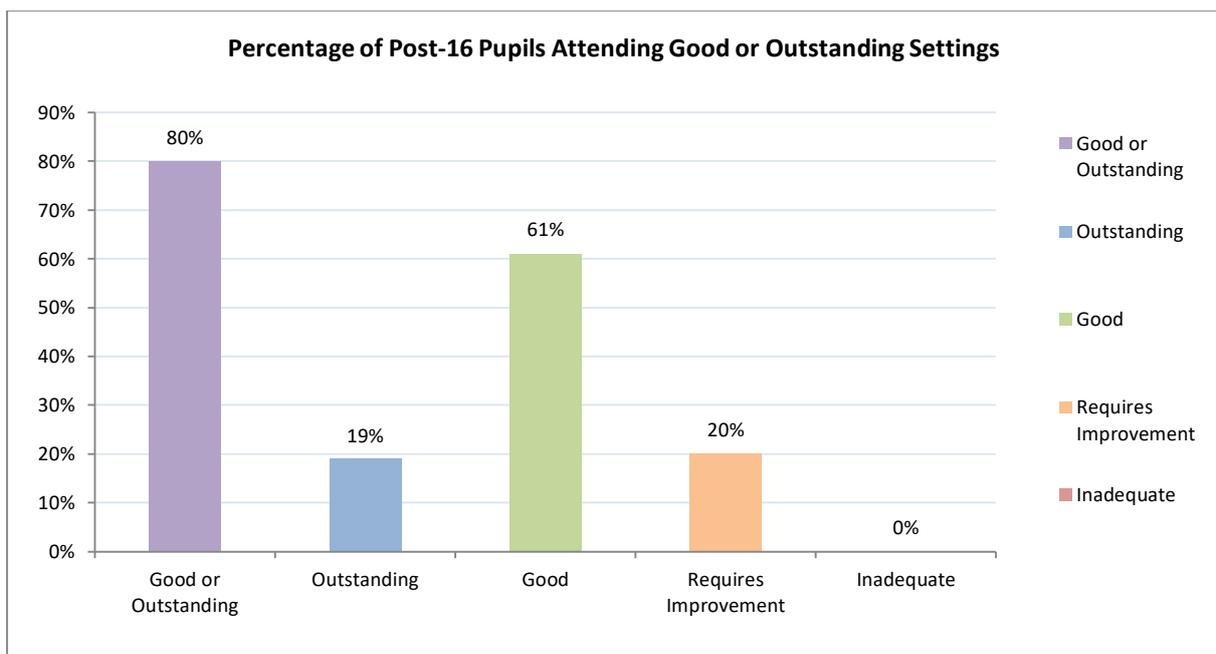
The percentage of children who are of statutory school age attending Good or Outstanding schools both in and out of county is 2% up compared to last year (84% compared to 82% last year).

The percentage of Lincolnshire looked after children attending Good or Outstanding schools is below the proportion of all children nationally (85%) 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 80% of our post-16 students are attending a good or outstanding setting with 20% requires improvement and 0% inadequate. This is an increase over 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 Compliance - Have we met our target?

PEP compliance for those of statutory school age for the academic year 2019-2020 has consistently exceeded target (94%). The PEP process in Lincolnshire requires for three face to face termly meetings usually held within the education setting. During the COVID lockdown period and school closures the Virtual School Education Co-ordinators have ensured PEP meetings were held and all partners had the opportunity to contribute either remotely or face to face where possible.

PEP Compliance	Autumn Term 2019	Spring Term 2020	Summer Term 2020
Statutory Age	100%	100%	100%
Early Years	100%	100%	100%
Post 16	100%	97%	98%

9.2 Personal Education Plan Quality Assurance - how has this helped to support Children in Care and improve participation?

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. Recent developments to the system have allowed LCC Virtual School to customise the ePEP to fit our individual requirements to support schools across the following key areas:

Pupil Premium tracking - The system supports schools to monitor and track pupil premium expenditure against SMART targets, schools can request funding directly using the ePEP system.

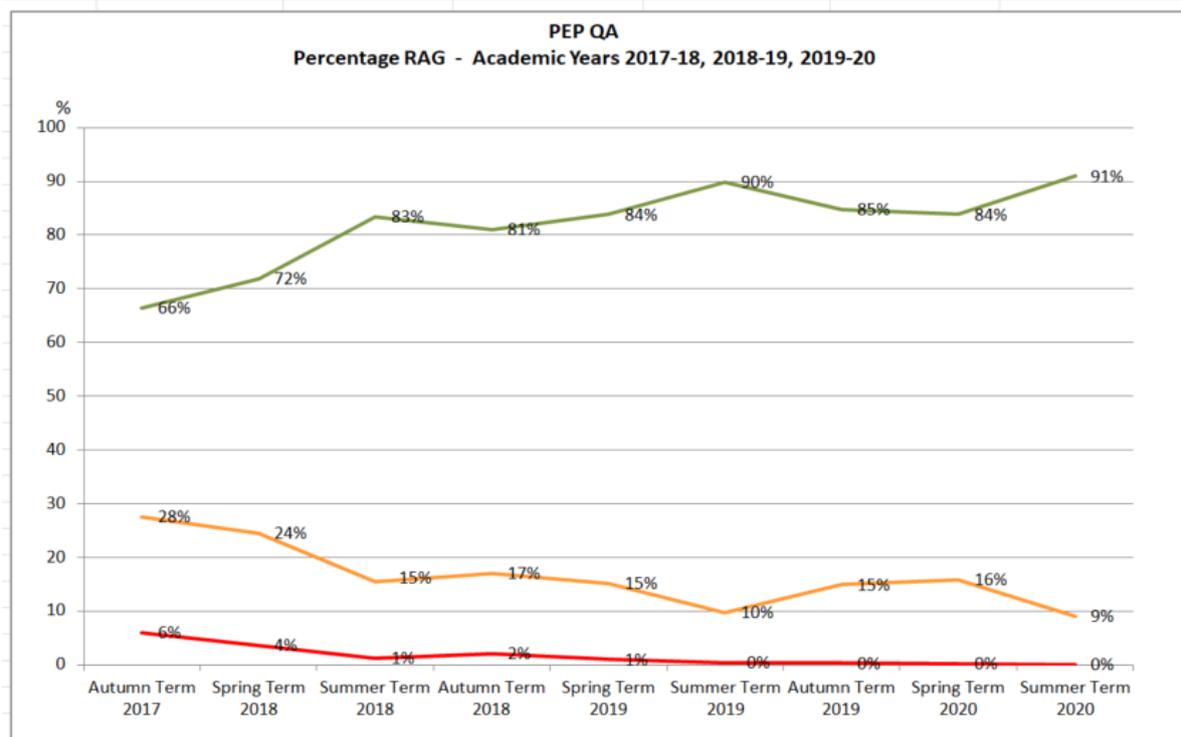
Attainment – The Virtual School captures attainment/assessment data five times within the academic year; the attainment section has been developed to enable teachers to use their own school measures to RAG rate and track live termly progress in core subjects.

Health and Emotional Wellbeing – The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) section has been developed to capture SDQ scores from teachers, and carers. This gives a wider insight on the child's level of health and emotional wellbeing and helps identify any causes for concerns.

9.2.1 Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Our QA processes have been updated over the last year with a view to better support schools, carers and other professionals to work more effectively together in

order to improve the quality of education plans. Monitoring is focused upon the content of the PEP - participation and engagement, what elements are supporting progress, any information that is missing or could be developed further and whether the PEP meets the "highly quality and effective" standard included within statutory guidance. This is fed back to carers, schools and others to ensure continuous improvement and informs our on-going training offer to all stakeholders. The graph and table below shows an upward trend in both the quality of PEPS and participation over the last three years and also a solid performance through the period of the first lockdown.



Stakeholder Participation			
Stakeholders	Academic Year 2018-2019	Academic Year 2019-20	Autumn 2020
Young Person	81.9%	79.0%	85.8%
Parent/Foster Carer	76.2%	83.3%	94.5%
School	92.8%	92.5%	95.4%
Social Worker	85.6%	90.2%	95.9%

9.3 Pupil Premium Plus Grant - How has the Virtual School allocated the Pupil Premium+ Grant?

The PP+ grant allocation per Looked after Child is £2300 as outlined in the DfE Pupil Premium 2019 to 2020 Conditions of Grant.

Responsibility for the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PP+) of £2300 rests with the Virtual School Head. The information below relates to the financial period April 2019-March 2020.

The revised allocation from the DfE for 2019-2020 was £1,055,700. This total is based upon 459 statutory school age looked after children as documented in the Final DfE Children Looked After (SSDA903 collection data report) 2019-2020.

A total of £712,175 went directly to schools through the allocation of an initial £1000 for each eligible child in care combined to additional requests from schools based upon academic targets outlined in the PEP. £27,883 was allocated to Alternative Provision settings to support students with exceptional needs and a further £155,899 was used to allocate 1:1 additional tuition support. £65,735 was utilised to commission interventions and a proportion of the grant, totalling £94,008 was utilised centrally for additional support of students including resources and the training of staff.

Pupil Premium Plus Grant 2019-2020 Allocation of PP+ funds	
£711,509 went directly into schools through the allocation of an initial £1000 for each eligible child in care combined with additional requests from schools based upon academic targets and additional support outlined in the PEP.	£712,175
Alternative Provision – Exceptional Needs	£27,883
Tuition and additional 1-1 support as requested by school	£155,899
Intervention Project – Wellcomm /Core Assessments/ECLIPS }	£46,226
Intervention Project – Letterbox }	£19,509
Additional support of students including resources and training of staff	£94,008
Total	£1,055,700

10.0 Early Years PP+ funding

The Virtual School also allocated £17,818 PP+ Grant to our early year's settings. The funding is requested via the PEP process and linked to intervention to improve outcomes. All of the 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

When A. came into care at the age of 4, he was non-verbal and had been identified as having special educational needs. An Education, Health and Care draft plan had been issued and Lincolnshire SEND was in the process of identifying an appropriate special school for him to attend. Consequently at the start of the Covid pandemic, he was not on roll at a school and the early years setting he had previously attended closed. At his Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting, foster carers shared the support they were providing in trying to meet A's educational needs whilst the settings remained closed. A. required a high level of 1:1 support and the carers were learning Makaton signing to support A.'s communication. Following the meeting, the Virtual School contacted Lincolnshire's Extended Communication Language Impairment Provision for Students (ECLIPS) team and asked if support could be offered whilst A. was not in a setting. Through coordination with the Virtual School, home, social care and ECLIPS, it was agreed that bespoke weekly Makaton signing sessions would be delivered remotely via Zoom to teach the carers further signs based on A.'s needs and interests. As a result, A.'s improved communication through signing has allowed him to express and show his thoughts, emotions and ideas with others. He has now started school with the Virtual School Co-ordinator communicating regularly with carers and his new school to support a successful transition. A. really loves school and looks forward to going to school every day.

11.1.2 Early Years – Cohort Characteristics

There were 9 pupils in the cohort completing Foundation Stage Reception in 2020. 1 pupil (11%) had an identified Special Educational Need and 1 pupil (11%) required SEN Support. Our cohort completing Foundation Stage comprised of: 3 boys (33%), 6 girls (67%), 2 pupils (22%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and no pupils (0%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of 9 pupils, 6 (67%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 3 pupils were educated Out Of County.

The average SDQ score for the cohort was 10.4. This is considered close to average. In total 1 pupil (11%) in Lincolnshire had an SDQ score of High (11%) or Very High (0%).

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

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year no Early Years assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Early Years assessment data and no national or regional comparator data for benchmarking our performance.

Local pupil tracking data for our pupils completing Reception in 2020 indicated 33% of our Children in Care would achieve a "Good Level of Development".

11.2 Key Stage 1

11.2.1 Case Example Key Stage 1

Prior to becoming looked after, G attended his local nursery and was meeting age related expectations. Following the death of his parent, G became looked after and moved to live with family members outside of Lincolnshire. The Virtual School supported his transition into a new early years setting by sharing information about his previous attainment and helping the setting identify how best to support him. G was unsettled in his new placement and due to the trauma he had experienced, understandably he regressed in his emotional development, his behaviour became difficult to manage and his progress stalled.

Early Years Pupil Premium was used to fund additional sessions in the nursery with his key worker to help G understand his emotions and enable him to express his feelings. A Worry Monster Book and toy was purchased for him to access at home and in his setting. A Special Guardianship Order was granted for the family members G was living with. At the final Personal Education Plan meeting, the Virtual School co-ordinator made the guardians aware of the educational support that was available for previously looked after children. The guardians were made aware of the need to identify G as 'previously looked after' to ensure priority school admission to their preferred school and need for them to inform the school in order for G to continue to access Pupil Premium.

G is now well settled in his placement and setting and is looking forward to starting school. He has continued to make progress and his keyworker has no concerns regarding his school readiness.

11.2.2 Key Stage 1 – Cohort Characteristics

11 pupils in the cohort completed Key Stage 1 in 2020. There were 4 pupils (36%) with an identified Special Educational Need, 3 pupils (27%) with SEN Support and 1 pupil (9%) with an EHC Plan. Our cohort completing KS1 comprised of: 5 boys (45%), 6 girls (55%), 8 pupils (73%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and no pupils (0%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In total, 10 pupils (91%) were educated within Lincolnshire with 1 pupil (9%) educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 13.6 and this is considered slightly raised. In total 27% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (9%) or Very High (18%).

11.2.3 Key Stage 1 – Attainment

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year no Key Stage 1 assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Key Stage 1 assessment data and no comparators data for benchmarking our performance.

Local pupil tracking data for our pupils completing Key Stage 1 in 2020, indicated that approximately 45% would achieve the expected standard or above in Reading, Writing and Maths. This would have seen significant improvement over our performance in 2019 (23%) and 2018 (31%).

11.3 Key Stage 2

11.3.1 Key Stage 2 case study

Prior to coming into care, C had been home educated for a period of time and then not engaged in any form of education for 6 months. On coming into care, foster carers enrolled C at her local primary school. At her initial PEP meeting, the school reported that C was a bright little girl who would have no difficulty in catching up on the 6 months she missed at school. C engaged well with her education and her attainment levels showed that she was working at age related expectations in reading and writing but she was below in maths.

Prior to the Covid Lockdown, C moved to a new school due to the foster carers moving house. The Virtual School co-ordinator facilitated a PEP meeting to ensure C's new school had a clear overview of her current strengths and areas of need. C settled well into her new school environment, she made new friends and her behaviour and attitude to learning was and still is excellent.

At the start of lockdown C did not attend school. Working with the school, C's carer put together a timetable for daily educational sessions, blocked into short 15 minute bursts of work. C's carer asked if the Virtual School could recommend any learning resources for 11+ non-verbal reasoning, as they were considering entering C for the

11+ and C also asked for some additional history work. These additional learning resources were provided by the school.

C returned to school at the start of June and enjoyed undertaking a range of activities. After consulting with the Headteacher and C's class teacher, it was agreed that C's Social Worker would enter C for the 11+. The Virtual School co-ordinator arranged for some home tuition, funded by Pupil Premium, to be delivered virtually over the summer holidays, to identify and close the gaps in C's maths knowledge and support her to feel confident that she has the skills to understand the 11+ test papers.

Feedback from the tutor is that C is very keen to learn and fully engages with sessions. C has reported to her social worker that she feels the maths and the 11+ tuition is really helping to build her confidence and is keen for this to continue in Year 6.

11.3.2 Key Stage 2 – Cohort Characteristics

There were 24 pupils in the Looked after Children cohort completing Key Stage 2 in 2020. 12 pupils (50%) had an identified Special Educational Need, 6 pupils (25%) required SEN Support and 6 pupils (25%) with an EHC Plan. The cohort completing Key Stage 2 comprised of: 15 boys (63%), 9 girls (37%), 14 pupils (58%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 1 pupil (4%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). 24 pupils (100%) were educated within Lincolnshire and no pupils (0%) were educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 16.3 and which is considered to be slightly raised. In total 29% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (13%) or Very High (17%).

11.3.3 Key Stage 2 – Attainment

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year no Key Stage 2 assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Key Stage 2 assessment data and no regional or national comparator data for benchmarking our performance.

Localised tracking data for our pupils completing Key Stage 2 in 2020, indicated between 21% and up to 38% to achieve the expected standard or above in Reading, Writing and Maths. This would have been roughly similar performance to last year (35%) and improvement over 2018 (10%) and 2017 (16%).

11.4 Key Stage 4

11.4.1 Key Stage 4 case study

E lives in a happy and stable home with her carers and is attending Year 11 in her local secondary school. Prior to the Covid lockdown, E was well supported in school and was on track to achieve her GCSEs. She had aspirations to study A levels at the 6th form of her local high school. The Virtual School co-ordinator has always had

a good working relationship with E and when the school closed to some year groups during lockdown, the co-ordinator regularly checked in with E and her foster carers to ensure she was continuing with her revision and had all the support she needed. The Virtual School co-ordinator was also mindful of her school check –in's so liaised with the carers to ensure E felt supported but not in her words 'badgered'. Therefore the co-ordinator checked in every 10 days, making sure that E was revising but also coping with the challenges and anxiety around lockdown and the uncertainty about her GCSE exams. The foster carer would often remark that E was working hard at her revision and even though she was not at school, E felt that she was getting the support and people were still 'looking out' for her to ensure that she was continuing to do what she should be doing.

At her PEP meeting, which was held remotely, it was agreed that Pupil Premium would be used to purchase revision guides, an Ipad to support her home learning and love of literature and vouchers and resources to support her with her preferred A level subjects.

E responded very positively and welcomed the support and help that she received from her carers, school and the Virtual School. She liked the fact that straight talking from all parties involved would get the best results and the level of support was just right. E lives in the countryside and they are a little isolated so E was pleased that she was not just 'left' to get on with it and we all pushed her to the very end. E was delighted on achieving her 10 GCSEs with grades 4-7.

11.4.2 Key Stage 4 – Cohort Characteristics

There were 49 pupils in the looked after cohort completing Key Stage 4 Assessments in 2020. Within this cohort young people accessed their education in a variety of settings:

- ❖ **Mainstream Schools 59% (29)**
- ❖ **Special Schools 22% (11)**
- ❖ **Independent Schools 10% (5)**
- ❖ **Alternative Provision 8% (4)**
- ❖ **Pupil Referral Unit 0% (0)**

Of the 49 pupils, 27 (55%) had an identified Special Educational Need (7 pupils (14%) received SEN Support and 20 pupils (41%) had an EHC Plan). There were 25 boys (51%) & 24 girls (49%), 24 pupils (49%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 1 pupil (2%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of the 49 pupils, 37 pupils (76%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 12 pupils (24%) were educated Out of County.

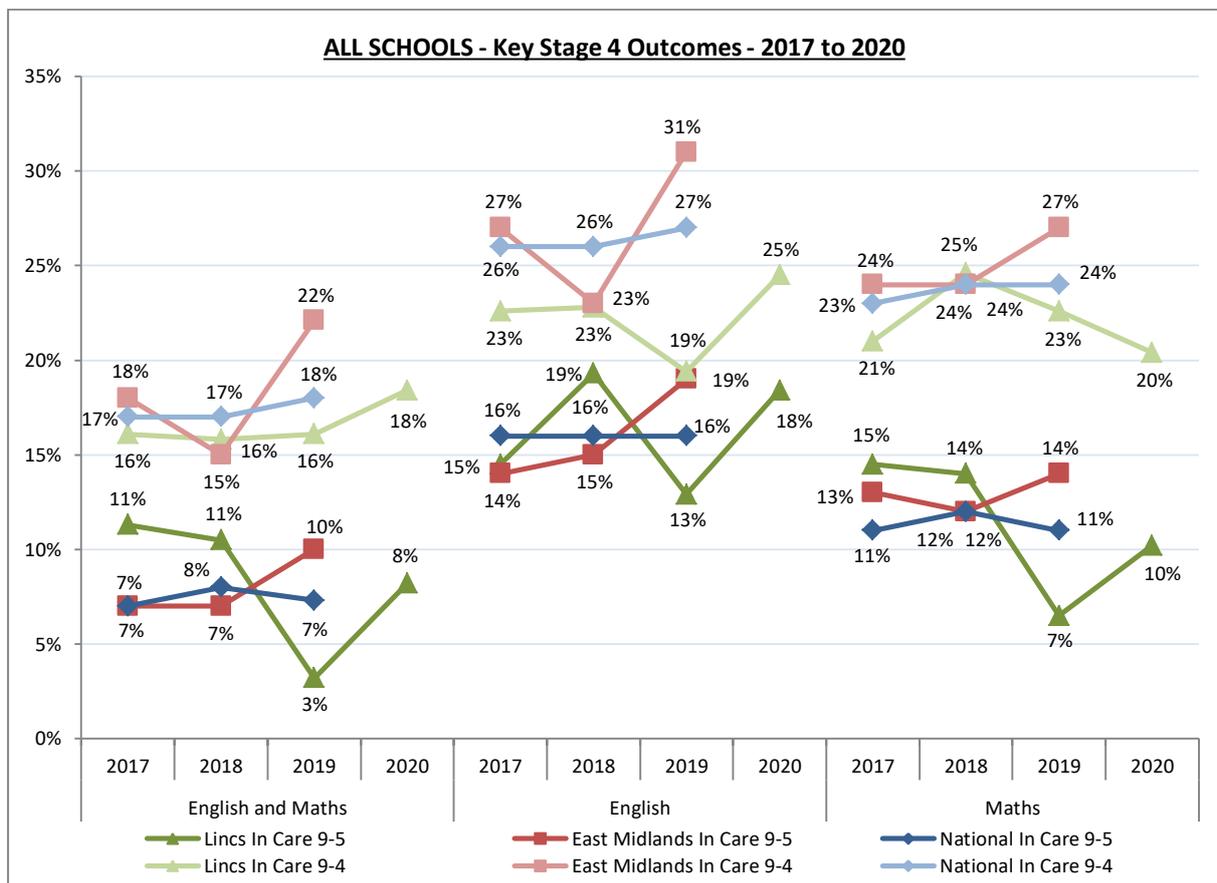
The average SDQ for the cohort is: 14.4 and this is considered to be slightly raised. In total 39% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (12%) or Very High (27%).

11.4.3 Key Stage 4 – Attainment

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year we have a greatly reduced dataset for analysis after exams were cancelled in favour of centre assessed grading. The use of centre assessed grade makes any comparison to previous years' exams data difficult.

59% of the cohort attended a mainstream secondary school in 2020. This is a substantial increase on last year where 37% of our cohort attended a mainstream school (previously 67% in 2018 and 60% in 2017).

The outcomes of grade 5 or above in English and maths have shown an increase of 5% to 8%, compared to last year. This is likely to have been more or less in line with the national average when compared to the previous 3 years national data (no national data in 2020). This was mainly driven by a 5% increase in our English grade 5 or above performance. The outcomes of grade 4 or above showed an increase of 2%, up to 18% achieving grade 4 or above in English and maths.



12.0 Individual Achievements of Children and 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. M achieved outstanding GCSE results including Grade 8 in Biology, Chemistry and Physics and

a Grade 9 in Maths. Despite struggles with her emotional wellbeing, S achieved a Grade 8 in English Language, Grade 5 in English Literature and Grade 4 in Maths. Despite having English as an additional language, N achieved his GCSE's with grades 4-8, including Grade 6 in English Language and Literature.

M, P, I and C all successfully passed their A levels and accepted offers to go to university.

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

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. Outside of the PEP process, the team 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 2019-2020 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.

It highlights the challenges that we faced and how they were overcome in this past academic year in promoting better outcomes and also shows that we are prepared to overcome these challenges through investment in the professional development of the wider workforce and by endeavouring to make the educational progress of Children In Care everybody's business whilst also looking to provide innovative ways to better support our children.

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 IRO's 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.
- Our work in supporting schools to provide stability and reduce fixed term exclusions means that our children and young people are much less likely to be excluded than their peers nationally and regionally. Our persistent absence rates are low and attendance is high.
- 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 will continue to promote improving educational outcomes for children and young people as outlined in our Lincolnshire Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021.

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 as we emerge from the Covid Emergency.
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 the opportunities presented in the recent crisis in our work to fulfil our statutory duties in our extended role to support previously looked after children.
3. That we continue to develop an emotional wellbeing pathway to promote self-confidence and support academic progress so that our children and young people are better understood and supported to fulfil their potential.

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