Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher

Academic Year 2022-2023

Virtual School Thurrock
Grow, Aspire, Achieve

As a Virtual School as part of the Corporate Parenting Team, we want the best possible educational experiences and outcomes for all the children and young people we serve.

Our role is a privilege which we take very seriously and strive in every way to push for good attendance, good attainment, and good provision.

Our young people deserve the best and we should do whatever we can to provide it.

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A summary of the key highlights is provided before the full report

<u>Summary of the Annual Report 2022-2023</u>

The period of reporting is from September 2022-August 2023

There are certain key aspects to this report which can be highlighted as part of this summary. These being:

- The Virtual School cohort has increased over the year. With 83 pupils entering our cohort.
- 43.4% of the overall cohort has a recognized Special Educational Need. Most of our young people with a need are attending a mainstream school.
- 95% of our Primary aged pupils and 71% of our Secondary attend a school with an Ofsted grading of good or above. In total, 80.3% of our CLA pupils attend a school graded good and above. There are 92.59% of schools in Thurrock with a grade of good and above.
- Overall attendance has improved this year and has increased to 93.7%. This attendance rate is higher than Thurrock all schools which was 93.3% and the national figure which was 92.6%. Significantly our unauthorized absence has decreased to 1.86% which has been because of specific interventions to address persistent absence (PA).
- Data for the year showed our CLA persistent absence at 18.1% compared to Local Authority of 19.4% and national of 21.3%.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA in this reportable period.
- The use of 1-1 tuition for key year groups has resulted in good attainment levels at key stages 2 and 4. This is an effective intervention to support progress and attainment.
- Attainment data is showing that Thurrock CLA continue to perform at a high standard compared to national CLA and have high rankings for our performance.
- Attainment 8 scores have increased over a 3 year period (based on published data).
- Case studies have highlighted some of the impact that our work has had this year on the educational lives and outcomes of our children and young people.
- Testimonials from other professionals have shown the good work of our advisers.

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1.   **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to detail the work of the Thurrock Virtual School for the academic year 2022-2023 and forms part of the statutory reporting processes. This report is used to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information in order that they can scrutinise and question our service. This report is also part of the Annex A documentation which is presented to OFSTED in times of inspection.

2.   **The Role of the Thurrock Virtual School**

A separate document is available named the Roles and Responsibilities of the Virtual School. This details the roles and actions that are taken in line with our statutory duties. The specific duties can be found in the Department for Education (DFE) document: Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children [February 2018].

In addition to this, new guidance was provided by the Department for Education in June 2021. This related to the extension of duties of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) to develop strategies to support the educational outcomes for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). This non-statutory role came into effect in September 2021. The document relating to this is 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker. Virtual School Head role extension' (DFE: 2022)

Staffing of the Virtual School 2022-2023

Mrs Keeley Pullen – Virtual School Headteacher

Mrs Mikaela Seddon – Virtual School Operations Co-Ordinator - Key Stage 3

Ms Rebecca Prince – Early Years and Primary Education Adviser

Ms Gemma Lilley – Secondary Education Adviser – Key Stage 4

Miss Lee-Anne Jenkins – Post 16 Education Adviser

Mrs Tina McGuinness – Business Support Officer for the Virtual School

Mrs Mary Ward – Project Manager for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

Mrs Grace Page – Education Adviser for Children with a Social Worker (Started employment November 2022)

3.	**Mission Statement**

At the core, is the aspiration to ensure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to learn effectively and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they are able to make informed choices about their futures from a range of options. This range will be at its widest when children succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school.

The Virtual School believes that every child and young person has a right to a childhood and has the right to a first class education that enhances their life chances as an adult. We believe that Children Looked After and Young People (CLA/YP) should be given every opportunity to aspire to be the best they can.

The Virtual School provides additional support, advice and guidance over and above the universal services that all Thurrock children and young people can access. In addition we provide information advice and guidance for Previously Looked After Children/Young People. In 2021-2022 we began to develop Thurrock wide strategies which will be targeted at supporting Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) and this has grown in 2022/2023 and the DFE has committed funding for a further 2 years until 2025.

We believe there should be no educational gaps between attainment and potential and there should be a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards.

The main outcomes we want for our children and young people accord with the Thurrock Children and Young People's Plan and are that CLA/YP:

- o value themselves and grow up to be fair, tolerant and supportive, learning to respect others and enjoy the respect of others;
- o are engaged in and are challenged by high quality education and enjoyable learning experiences;
- o are able to show resilience and cope with change;
- o are not disadvantaged by circumstance, poverty, disability or race;
- o seek out and engage in opportunities for self-improvement, with the guidance and support of multiagency teams;
- o achieve recognised and appropriate qualifications in line with their academic potential, so they access a wide range of training, employment and further education opportunities when they leave school, allowing them to take an active and full role in society as adults.

To achieve this, The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools, carers, educational settings, social care and additional services to create a high quality educational experiences for Children Looked After and Young People.

4. <u>**Guidance Documents Developed by the Virtual School**</u>

- Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Schools
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Colleges
- Thurrock Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Anti-Bullying Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- PEP Protocol for Social Workers and Designated Teachers – Schools, Colleges and Early Years
- PEP Flowchart for Social Workers
- Quality Assurance Process Flowchart
- Quality Assurance Criteria for PEPs
- Completing Attainment on EPEP
- EPEP and Target Setting
- Roles and Functions of the Virtual School
- Phonics Resources Packs for Foster Carers
- Quality Assurance Process of Education Provision
- Social Worker guidance for high quality PEP minutes
- Child Missing Education Policy/Process
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Previously Looked After Children Policy
- Pupil Premium Spending Strategy Document 2022/23
- Tuition Policy
- Laptop Policy
- Reading Policy

Additional Documents:

- School Improvement Plan 2022/23
- Headteacher Termly Reports for Governors 2022/23
- Phase Teacher Termly Reports for Governors 2022/23
- 3 year Strategic Plan 2021-2024

5. <u>**Corporate Parenting Committee**</u>

The Virtual School Headteacher [VSH] is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for the educational achievement of Children Looked After [CLA]. It exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together so that CLA/YP in Thurrock are provided with the best possible service that can be offered. The committee promotes the role of all Councillors as corporate parents and provides the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people. This committee meets quarterly and managers from different sectors of social care and education present reports and recommendations as part of a cycle. This process acts as a measure of accountability and supports the development of strategy and policy for meeting the statutory requirements for children in care.

6. **Current Contextual Data**

Number of Looked After Children by Year Group [Updated July 2023]

Numbers of Children Looked After by Year Group

Legend: ■ Summer 2023 ■ No of Male ■ No of Female ■ Non-Binary ■ No of UASC

Year Group	Summer 2023	No of Male	No of Female	Non-Binary	No of UASC
N2	5	5	0		0
R	6	4	2		0
Year 1	12	6	6		0
Year 2	6	5	1		0
Year 3	7	5	2		0
Year 4	10	5	5		0
Year 5	13	7	6		0
Year 6	19	7	12		0
Year 7	18	10	8		0
Year 8	17	11	6		0
Year 9	21	11	10		2
Year 10	27	17	9	1	3
Year 11	42	26	16		14
Year 12	63	43	20		24
Year 13	57	40	17		24
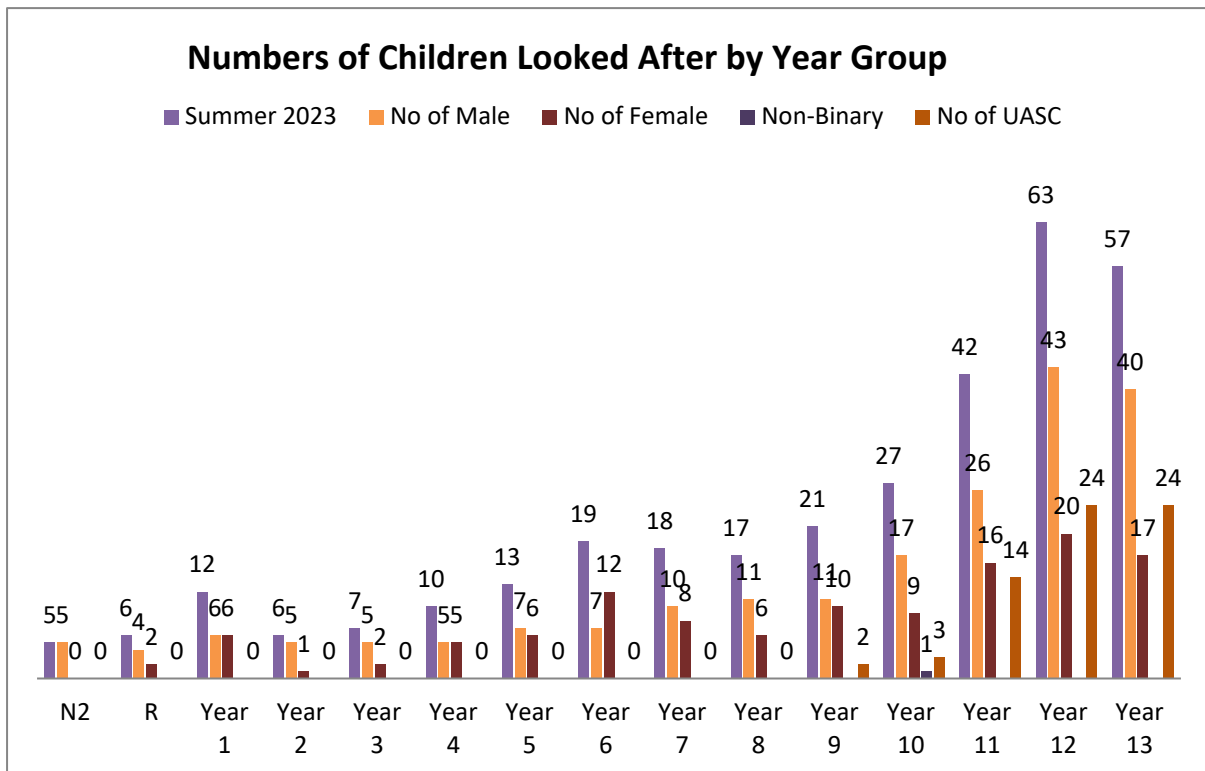
At the end of the academic year 22/23, the number of pupils aged 3-18 years in the Virtual School cohort was 323. This has increased compared to the previous year which had been 292 pupils. During the academic year, 36 pupils left care and 83 entered care. Points of entry varied across the year. 37 pupils joined in the summer term, 19 entered in spring term and 27 came into the cohort in autumn term. There were a further 3 who became looked after during the summer break before the start of the academic year.

42 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) entered care during this academic year and in total there were 67 UASC. This equates to 21% of the cohort which was an increase of 10% from the previous year.

Nationally the number of UASC who were CLA In March 2023 was 7,290. This figure was 22% higher than the previous year. (Statistical First Release Gov.UK)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Numbers have increased in this year compared to previous years. The Eastern region sharing protocol became a national protocol but the numbers of UASC that we were able to accommodate increased in number as the year progressed. This is due to national demand.

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To support our UASC who were school age, we provided them with online English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL], IT equipment and 10 weeks 1-1 ESOL tuition package to support education. In this last year we have also provided additional resources to support all UASC learners. These have included dictionaries in their native language, English based phonics resources, workbooks, reading books and stationary.

There were 8 young people who came into Thurrock, but these were transferred to other local authorities as part of the sharing protocol.

College applications were made to ensure that there was post-16 provision to support the young people. These young people who have transitioned into Year 12 have obtained college places and they are completing ESOL in Years 12 and 13. Please see further below in this report regarding UASC provision.

IMPACT

The high expectations that we have for our UASC pupils means that those that are able to access formal education are doing so in a timely manner.

Colleges and providers are supported and challenged to meet the varying needs of our young people.

Resources are available to support the acquisition of English language skills for various pupils who have different mother tongues.

Those young people who have aspirations for university and other further education are supported and able to achieve their goals.
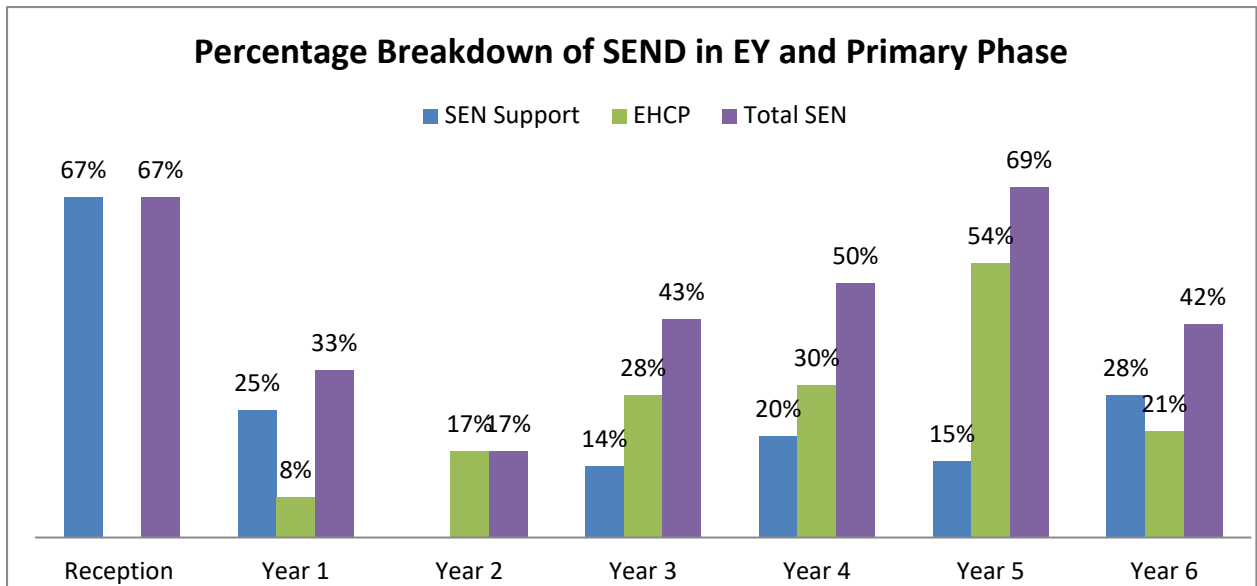
Number of CLA with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)

This data is maintained throughout the year and is used to target specific actions, interventions, support and challenge. By strategically looking at this data, we are able to pinpoint areas of need and check that educational provision is supporting the individual needs of these pupils.

Important national data to refer to shows that in 22/23 nationally there were 4.3% of pupils with and Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan) and 13% of pupils with a Special Educational Needs Support Plan (SEN Support).
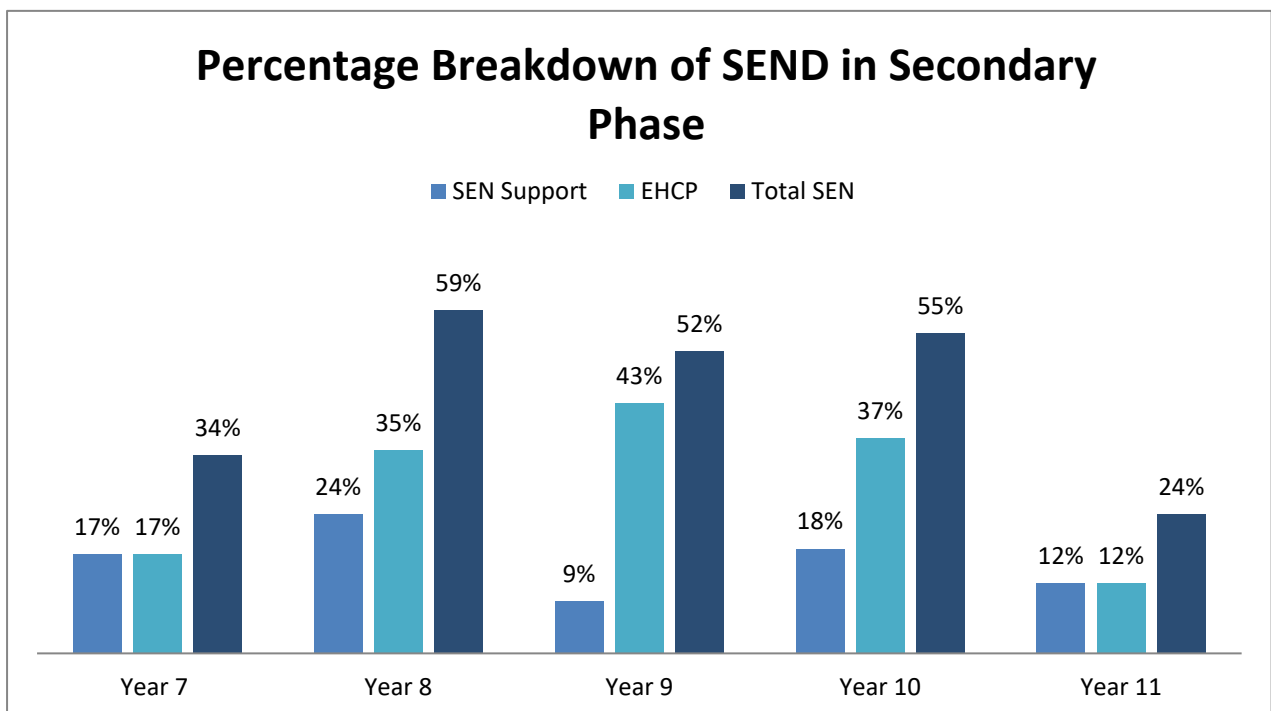
Primary Phase Data for SEND

In total there were 73 pupils from Reception through to Year 6. Of those, 18 pupils (24.6%) have an Education Health Care Plan and 16 pupils (21.9%) are categorised as needing additional SEN Support.

Percentage Breakdown of SEND in EY and Primary Phase

SEN Support ■ EHCP ■ Total SEN

Year	SEN Support	EHCP	Total SEN
Reception	67%		67%
Year 1	25%	8%	33%
Year 2		17%	17%
Year 3	14%	28%	43%
Year 4	20%	30%	50%
Year 5	15%	54%	69%
Year 6	28%	21%	42%

In total 34 pupils or 46.5% of the primary cohort has currently been identified as having a special educational need. This figure has decreased compared to the previous year. This is also below the national CLA with SEND figure of 57.4%.

The largest group in Primary phase with SEND was in Year 5. We have provided extra tuition for those pupils who accepted it. This started earlier in the academic year than usual. This tuition will remain until the end of Year 6 in 2024.

Secondary Phase Data for SEND

Percentage Breakdown of SEND in Secondary Phase

SEN Support ■ EHCP ■ Total SEN

Year	SEN Support	EHCP	Total SEN
Year 7	17%	17%	34%
Year 8	24%	35%	59%
Year 9	9%	43%	52%
Year 10	18%	37%	55%
Year 11	12%	12%	24%

Of the 125 pupils in Years 7-11, 53 pupils have been identified as having SEND. This equates to 42.4% of the Key Stage 3 and 4 Phase. There are 34 pupils (26.7%) with an EHCP and 19 pupils (14.9%) who have SEN Support. The highest number of pupils

in each year group was in Years 8 and 10. As last years' pupils transitioned into our current Year 10, we put the tuition offer into place earlier in the academic year so that those who need additional support can be boosted to support them to reach national age- related expectations. Due to the nature of some pupils' needs, tuition is not applicable for all and so those needing a bespoke timetable are receiving this instead.
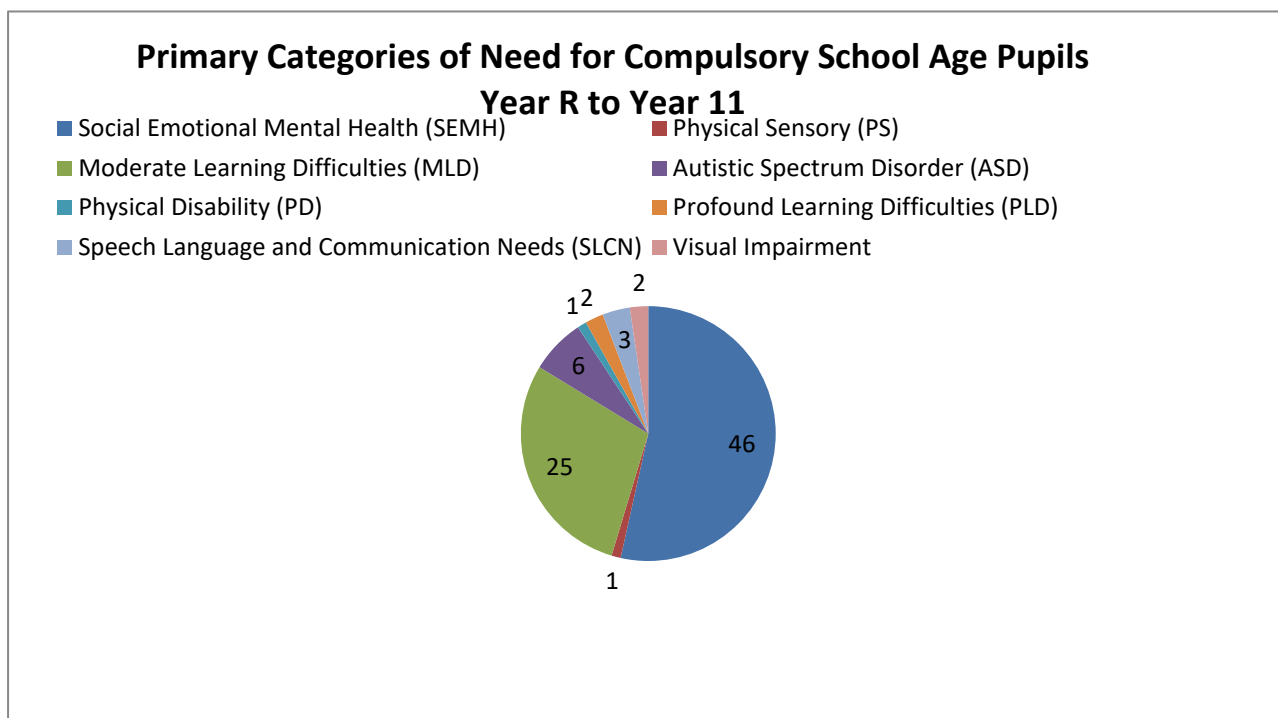
SEND Data Overall for Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

There were 198 school age pupils at the end of the academic year. In total 86 pupils (43.4%) of the school age cohort were categorised as having a Special Educational Need or Disability. Of these 86 pupils, 51 pupils (59%) have an Education and Health Care Plan and 35 pupils (41%) have SEN support.

Primary Categories of Need Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

It is important that the categories of primary and secondary need are ascertained during any Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting to ensure that the right targeted support is provided by their educational establishment or by additional services.

Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) are prevalent categories of need. This can usually be attributed to being as a result of previous trauma and adverse childhood events that our pupils have experienced. It is essential that this is highlighted with the professionals working with the children to ensure that provision matches need.

Primary Categories of Need for Compulsory School Age Pupils Year R to Year 11

- Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)
- Physical Sensory (PS)
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Physical Disability (PD)
- Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)
- Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Visual Impairment

Primary Category of Need for School Age Pupils	Number of Pupils

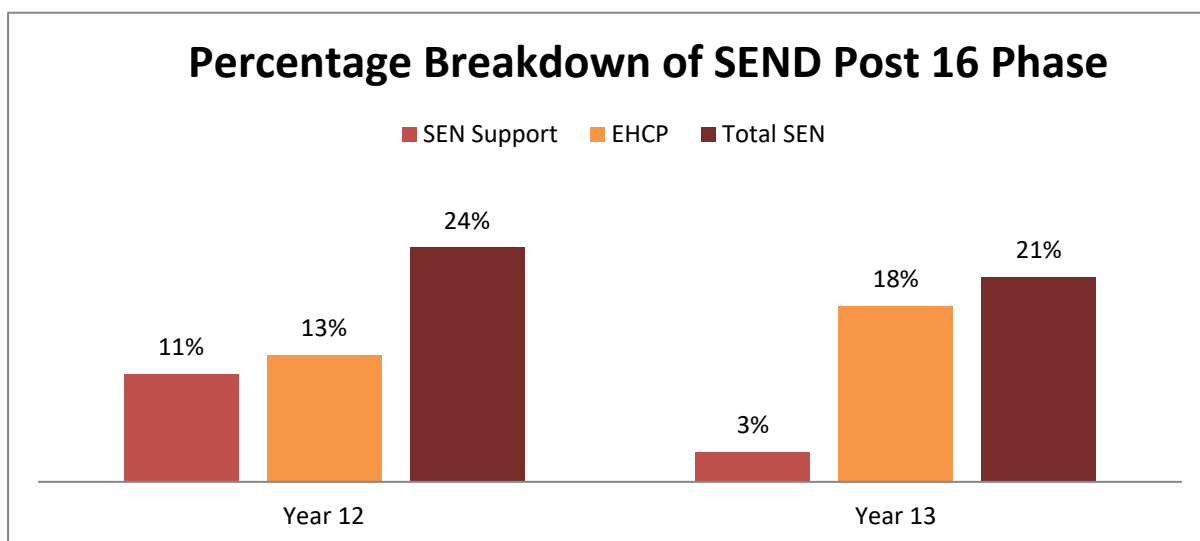|	
Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)	46
Physical Sensory (PS)	1
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	25
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	6
Physical Disability (PD)	1
Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)	2
Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	3
Visual Impairment	2

Type of Placement Attended by School Age Pupils who have an Identified SEND

Below is a table detailing the type of provision for the pupils with SEND. It can be seen that 58 pupils (65.9%) of this group are attending a mainstream school. There are some whose needs are very specific and require specialist support in a setting which is matched to these needs. These are either as part of a day school or residential special school. There is a mixture of pupils attending 52 week and 38 week per year education settings. In addition, there are some pupils receiving tuition whilst awaiting a school place and a small number are in alternative provision to support their behavioural and SEND needs.

Numbers of pupils places by type of provision compulsory school age

- Number of pupils

| Receiving Tuition	Alternative Provision	Resource Provision in School	Special School	Bespoke Package	HM Prison	Mainstream
5	2	2	17	3	1	58

Post 16 Phase

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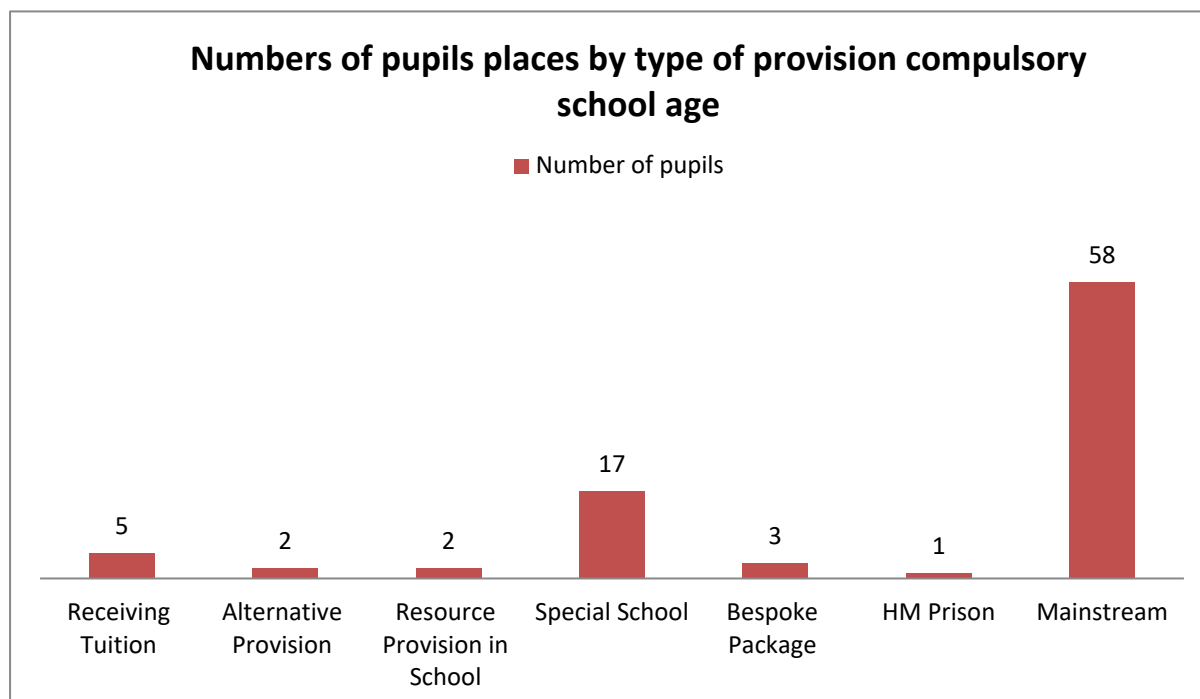
For those young people with SEND who are in the post 16 phase, years 12 and 13, they move to the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Team. The Virtual School work closely with this team to support transition and educational placements when these young people have left school. We still continue to monitor their education as well as ensuring there is a review of the Education, Health Care Plan and that this supports the next steps for our young people. For many of our young people, they are able to manage within a mainstream college setting with smaller classes and targeted support. However, some young people do require continued intensive support for their needs and as such they would attend a specialist placement.

Percentage Breakdown of SEND Post 16 Phase

■ SEN Support   ■ EHCP   ■ Total SEN

Year 12: SEN Support 11%, EHCP 13%, Total SEN 24%
Year 13: SEN Support 3%, EHCP 18%, Total SEN 21%

In summary there are 27 post 16 young people (including those who are 18 years old) who are currently on the Virtual School SEND register. This equates to 22.5% of the post 16 cohort. 18 pupils (15%) of the total cohort have an EHC Plan and are having services provided to support their needs. There are a further 9 pupils (7.5%) who receive extra support as part of SEN support plans.

Post 16 Phase Categories of Need

Primary Categories of Need for Post 16 Phase

ASD: 4, MLD: 3, SEMH: 16, SLC: 3, P: 1

■ ASD   ■ MLD   ■ SEMH   ■ SLC   ■ P
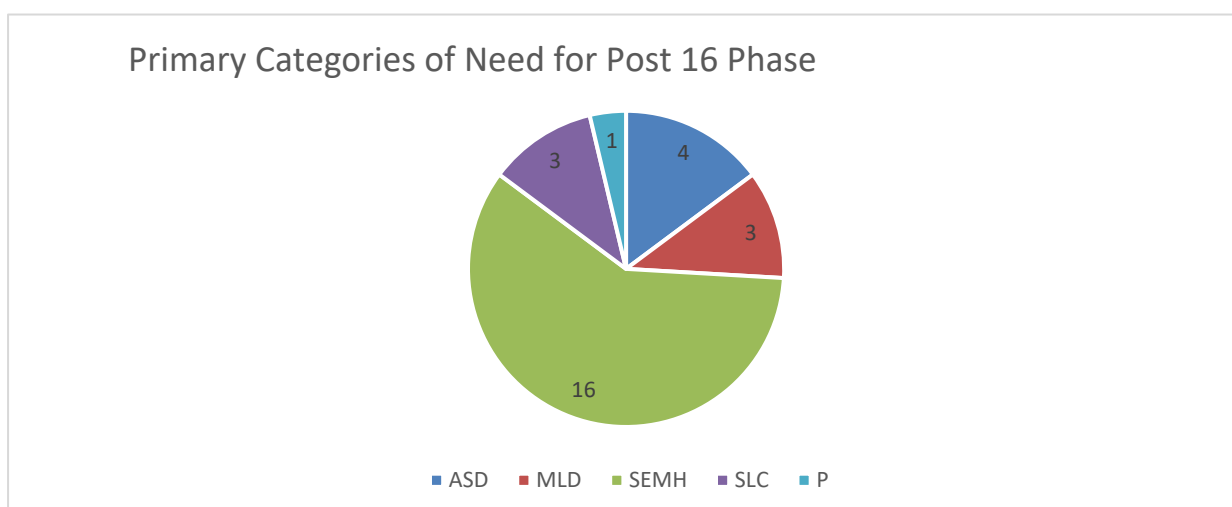
Phase	Category of Need	Number of Pupils

Post 16	Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	3
	Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)	16
	Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	4
	Speech, Language and Communication (SLC)	3
	Physical/Sensory (P)	1

Overall Actions to Support Pupils with SEND

There are a number of actions we have taken during this year to support our SEN cohort:

- Completion of provision maps for all pupils with SEND to check that interventions are meeting need. By doing this we are able to address any gaps in provision and look at ways to maximise progress.
- Promoting greater aspiration for our pupils. This enables schools/colleges to be focused on ensuring that our pupils are striving for accelerated progress.
- Focusing on academic and social, emotional and physical progress. This means we can celebrate all aspects of our children/young people's development.
- Using specific assessment programmes to look at evidencing pupil progress in addition to the Personal Education Plan.
- Use of the Action for Inclusion toolkit with schools to support those children and young people who have behavioural difficulties and/or trauma and attachment needs which may be a barrier to learning and engagement. This system enables practitioners to use strategies to support our children and young people in their education setting.
- Attendance at annual reviews for EHC Plans to ensure provision is still meeting needs and the pupil is making progress.
- Emphasis on transitions for pupils with SEN so that they are supported in new placements.
- Collating evidence and providing support and co-ordination of paperwork for EHCP applications.
- Provision of training and challenge to settings to support their inclusion of our pupils.

IMPACT

The impact of these systems has been that the Virtual School has been able to provide teaching strategies used by education practitioners to be more effective and to support pupils to overcome their barriers to learning.

Intensive tracking is enabling progress to be scrutinized and for providers to be supported and challenged to meet needs.

Pupils are making progress against their individual targets and achieving improved outcomes.

Education Health Care Plans are reflecting current strengths and areas for development for our pupils.

Transitions are supportive for pupils and this assists new destinations to be able to meet needs and adapt provision.

2023 KS2 for Pupils with SEN

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM* ≥ Exp	RWM* High	Avg. SS
NCER National (CLA)	1,540	100.0%	18.0%	1.0%	99.1
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	13.0%	0.0%	98.2
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	522	1.5%	24.3%	1.2%	98.6
Virtual School - Thurrock	8	100.0%	25.0%	0.0%	101.0

Thurrock CLA with SEN performed better in achieving the expected standard in reading writing and maths for key stage 2 in 2023 according to matched published data.

Progress for our CLA with SEN was good in the area of writing in 2023. This was teacher assessed, We do need to bear in mind that there were 6 pupils who were disapplied for their SATs in this year group with SEN those these would have affected the overall progress rates.

KS2 Progress Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) — 2023 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	READING Cover.	READING Prog. Score ≥0	READING Avg. Prog. Score	READING Conf. Int.	WRITING Cover.	WRITING Prog. Score ≥0	WRITING Avg. Prog. Score	WRITING Conf. Int.	MATHS Cover.	MATHS Prog. Score ≥0	MATHS Avg. Prog. Score	MATHS Conf. Int.
NCER National (CLA)	1,540	100.0%	5.5	91.0%	44.0%	-1.02	±0.33	91.0%	43.0%	-1.59	±0.32	91.0%	43.0%	-1.58	±0.31
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	5.2	88.0%	43.0%	-1.32	±1.13	88.0%	43.0%	-1.56	±1.08	87.0%	42.0%	-1.48	±1.07
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	520	1.5%	6.0	91.4%	40.5%	-2.26	±0.56	94.3%	47.2%	-1.06	±0.53	92.5%	45.8%	-1.79	±0.53
Virtual School - Thurrock	8	100.0%	5.1	87.5%	42.9%	-2.34	±4.66	100.0%	62.5%	+0.44	±4.19	100.0%	25.0%	-4.52	±4.10

Progress was better for our year 6 2022 cohort with this being good in all areas

KS2 Progress Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) — 2022 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	READING				WRITING				MATHS			
				Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.
NCER National (CLA)	1,670	100.0%	5.6	89.0%	43.0%	-1.44 ⊖	±0.32	90.0%	38.0%	-2.11 ⊖	±0.31	89.0%	39.0%	-1.88 ⊖	±0.30
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	5.5	87.0%	33.0%	-2.61 ⊖	±1.15	88.0%	32.0%	-2.17 ⊖	±1.11	87.0%	34.0%	-2.74 ⊖	±1.07
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	460	-	6.1	88.8%	37.8%	-2.11 ⊖	±0.62	94.1%	44.1%	-0.60 ⊖	±0.58	90.1%	45.0%	-1.12 ⊖	±0.58
Virtual School - Thurrock	3	100.0%	6.8	66.7%	50.0%	+1.19	±8.85	66.7%	100.0%	+1.14	±8.56	66.7%	50.0%	+0.39	±8.25

Achievement of reading, writing and maths combined was better than other comparable groups with SEND.

KS2 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE)

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*		Avg. SS
			≥ Exp	High	
NCER National (CLA)	1,670	100.0%	16.0%	-	97.8
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	18.0%	0.0%	98.0
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	456	1.1%	19.2%	1.1%	97.7
Virtual School - Thurrock	3	100.0%	33.3%	0.0%	96.0

Key Stage 4 Results for CLA Pupils with SEND

In 2022 CLA pupils with SEND performed better than other CLA with SEND nationally and in the eastern region but below all SEND pupils for Thurrock.

KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) — 2022 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Entry			
				Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2380	100.0%	16.7	92.0%	-1.44 ⊖	±0.06	11.0%	8.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	16.1	87.0%	-1.43 ⊖	±0.20	11.0%	8.0%	4.0%	6.0%	1.26	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	338	-	28.2	95.0%	-0.81 ⊖	±0.16	22.8%	21.9%	14.5%	17.8%	2.34	2.2	2.3	9.2%	0.6%
Virtual School - Thurrock	10	100.0%	18.4	90.0%	-1.38 ⊖	±0.94	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.30	1.4	1.7	-	-

In 2023, although we have not achieved as well in Progress 8 scores the data for Attainment 8 and achieving English and maths combined at grades 5+ Thurrock CLA with SEND have performed better than CLA comparisons.

KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) — 2023 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Cov.	Progress 8 Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	9-5 EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	EBacc Entry	APS	Entry EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2350	100.0%	16.3	92.0%	-1.36	±0.06	10.0%	8.0%	5.0%	6.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	15.8	92.0%	-1.26	±0.20	11.0%	10.0%	6.0%	7.0%	1.25	1.4	1.5	4.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	354	-	25.4	92.9%	-0.54	±0.15	19.8%	17.2%	12.1%	16.7%	2.02	2.1	2.3	6.5%	0.8%
Virtual School - Thurrock	6	100.0%	18.1	100.0%	-1.49	±1.13	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	1.34	1.5	1.5	-	-

For 2022 our students with SEND achieved better than those national and eastern region peers.

KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) — 2022 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

|	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Cov.	Progress 8 Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	9-5 EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	EBacc Entry	APS	Entry EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2380	100.0%	16.7	92.0%	-1.44	±0.06	11.0%	8.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	16.1	87.0%	-1.43	±0.20	11.0%	8.0%	4.0%	6.0%	1.26	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	338	-	28.2	95.0%	-0.81	±0.16	22.8%	21.9%	14.5%	17.8%	2.34	2.2	2.3	9.2%	0.6%
Virtual School - Thurrock	10	100.0%	18.4	90.0%	-1.38	±0.94	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.30	1.4	1.7	-	-

When comparing our CLA against all SEN pupils in Thurrock we must bear in mind the small amount of numbers for these pupils in the cohort compared to over 300+ pupils in Thurrock. Additionally many of our students with SEN attend specialist provision which means they may not be entered for a full range of GCSEs or those qualifications due to their needs.

School Placement of CLA by OFSTED classification

It is important that our CLA/CP attend a school that is graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. Therefore, we track the grading of each school and educational establishment that our pupils attend. If a pupil has to change school, we do our uppermost to ensure that applications are made to schools that are rated good or above by Ofsted. However, we only ever place a pupil into a school that has a grading of Requires Improvement if there are no other possible solutions. For example, if a child was placed into a stable care placement but schools in that local area were graded as below good. Although our first priority would always be to find a good school. There are situations where a pupil may be in a good school that then receives a poor Ofsted grading. We would not automatically move a pupil if they were happy and making good progress and if they were being well supported. However, we ensure

that schools are closely monitored every term to check that pupil progress is good. The data below illustrates the gradings of schools our pupils attend.
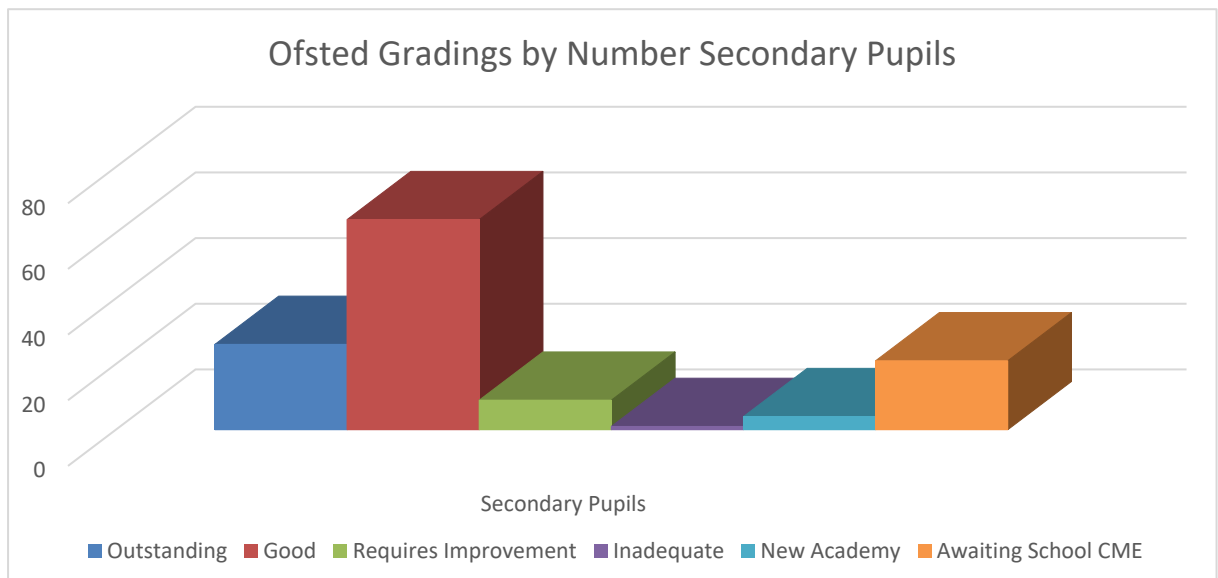
Primary Phase

Ofsted Gradings by number for Primary Pupils

■ Outstanding ■ Good ■ Requires Improvement ■ New Academy
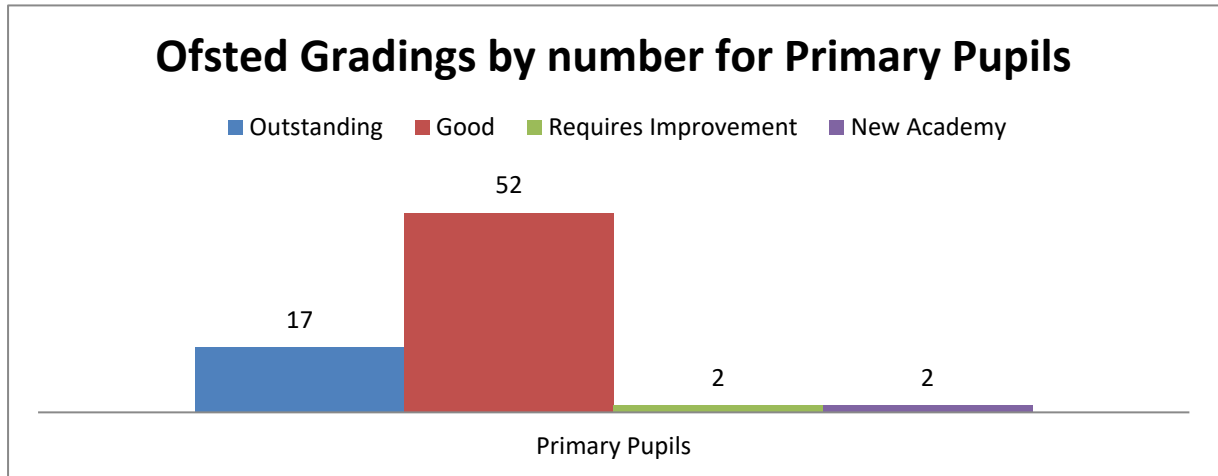
Primary Pupils

The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Primary phase who are attending different graded schools.

This equates to 71% attending a school rated GOOD, 23% attending an Outstanding school and 2.7% attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. **In total 95% of our Primary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

Secondary Phase

Ofsted Gradings by Number Secondary Pupils

Secondary Pupils

■ Outstanding ■ Good ■ Requires Improvement ■ Inadequate ■ New Academy ■ Awaiting School CME

The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Secondary phase who are attending different graded schools.

This equates to 51% attending a school rated as Good, 20% attending an Outstanding school, 7% attend a school with a Requires Improvement grade and 73.2% are attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. There were 21 pupils who were awaiting a school place in the secondary phase and this is 16.8% of this cohort. **In total 71% of our Secondary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

The overall school Ofsted grading Year R to Year 11 is:

- 80.3% of pupils attend a school graded good or above.
- 58.5% attend a good school.
- 21.7% attend an outstanding school.
- 5.5% attend a school that requires improvement.
- 0.5% of pupils attend an inadequate school.
- 2.5% of pupils are attending a school which is awaiting an Ofsted grade due to recent academy conversion
- 10.6% are receiving tuition in the home due to waiting for a school place.

The Virtual School attends the PEPs for all pupils placed in schools less than good and provide additional challenge and support for schools where applicable. The team also rates the provision of every school/college regardless of their Ofsted grade. This is to ensure that we are monitoring all provision for our pupils for the quality of education they are receiving. We then target support, training or challenge according to the level of concern that we may have.

Impact

The general provision of training we offer enables settings to be upskilled in areas that particularly concern our young people whilst benefitting all pupils within a school/college.

The individual support and challenge that we provide enables settings to be better able to cater for the varying educational and emotional needs of our children and young people, although we do need to review this frequently to ensure that there is the best offer possible for our pupils. (Please see testimonials further in report for some examples)

7. **Attendance**

% of Attendance for CLA
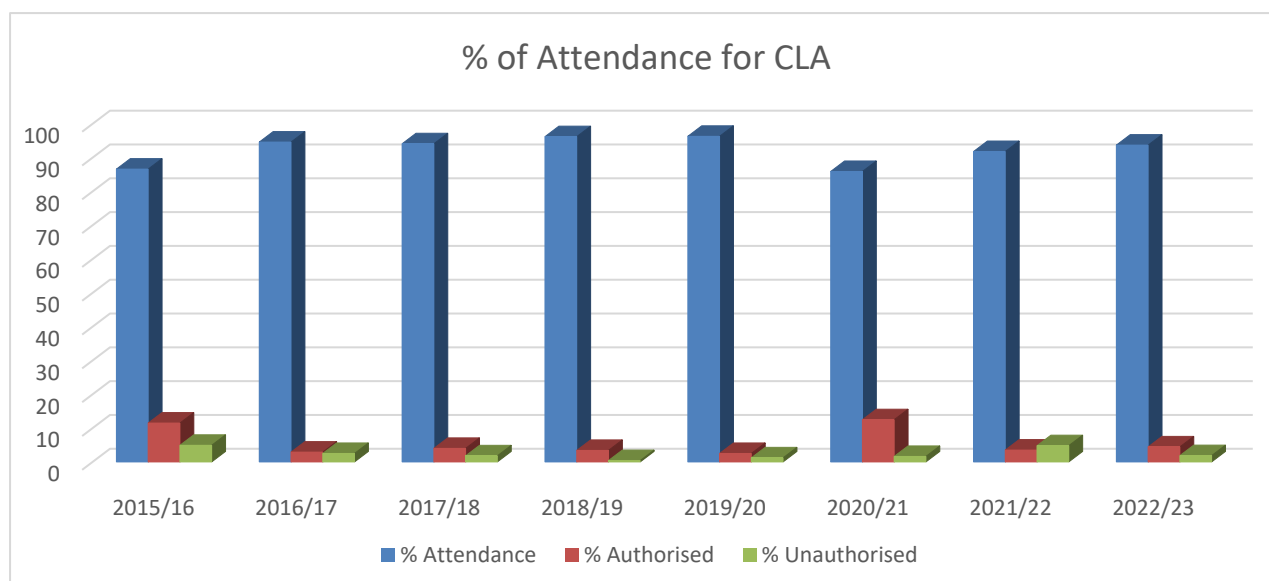
	% Attendance	% Authorised	% Unauthorised
2015/16	86.6	11.49	4.91
2016/17	94.6	2.9	2.5
2017/18	94.1	4	1.8
2018/19	96.2	3.4	0.4
2019/20	96.3	2.5	1.2
2020/21	85.9	12.48	1.62
2021/22	91.8	3.5	4.8
2022/23	93.7	4.44	1.86

The attendance figure of 93.7% represents attendance of school age pupils across the academic year for the Virtual School. This attendance rate is higher than Thurrock all schools which was 93.3% and the national figure which was 92.6%. Attendance rates nationwide have been affected since the pandemic and the number of school refusers and applications for Elective Home Education (EHE) has increased.

Authorised absence increased and unauthorised absence has decreased. In the past academic year there has been a focus on Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and the Virtual School have created a range of resources, training and individual support to promote better attendance and school engagement.

In total we have had 36 pupils or 18.1% of the cohort with attendance below 90%. Some of this was due to pupils who came into care during the year who had very poor attendance. Other low attendance was due to school refusers.

Actions to Address Low Attendance

For those pupils who were persistently absent, the Virtual School have worked intensively with our pupils and worked creatively with social workers and foster carers to try to encourage better attendance. For example, by commissioning specialist provision and vocational learning experiences for pupils who are refusing academic/more conventional schooling, completing school stress surveys with pupils, referring to Child and young Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or other mental health services. For our young people it is necessary to have a multiagency approach to look at the needs holistically and to support the educational establishments who may not have access to those resources.

Every pupil who had low attendance had an action plan to improve their engagement with school. We had some successes but there were some pupils that were very hard to motivate and engage and refused to attend. Higher rates of school refusal have been mirrored across the country with national attendance declining as well as a rise in anxiety and mental health needs which are affecting the attendance of young people.

The Virtual School have developed resources and have provided training offers for all settings to look at Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) in order to develop skills, understanding and strategies for school staff to support any pupil who is struggling to attend school.

The Virtual School team meet regularly with each other and the VSHT to look at tricky cases and those with high rates of absence so there is direction and oversight on these cases. This enables creative solutions to be developed which the advisers can then lead on to support the young person, carer, school and social worker.

IMPACT

We aim for high attendance as this directly affects outcomes. Our multiagency work linked to emotional based school avoidance is influencing those pupils who are school refusers.

By carefully monitoring all attendance and focusing on those who are on the cusp of persistent absence we can apply interventions before it becomes a serious concern.

For the forthcoming year we are applying a graduated response to attendance and rewarding various areas of good attendance with vouchers. So those pupils who attend more, are rewarded. The aim is to not discriminate between those who are ill or those that are school refusers, as one approach does not fit all.

Some success has been made for some young people who had very low attendance before entering care and who are then able to achieve 100% attendance once in care. This shows that with the right support and aspiration, the young people can access education.

8.   **Exclusions and Suspensions**

There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA for over an eleven year period. Wherever possible we encourage schools to avoid fixed term suspensions. In the academic year 2022/23, suspensions have increased compared to the previous year. This is in line with the national trend which has also seen an increase in suspensions and permanent exclusions.

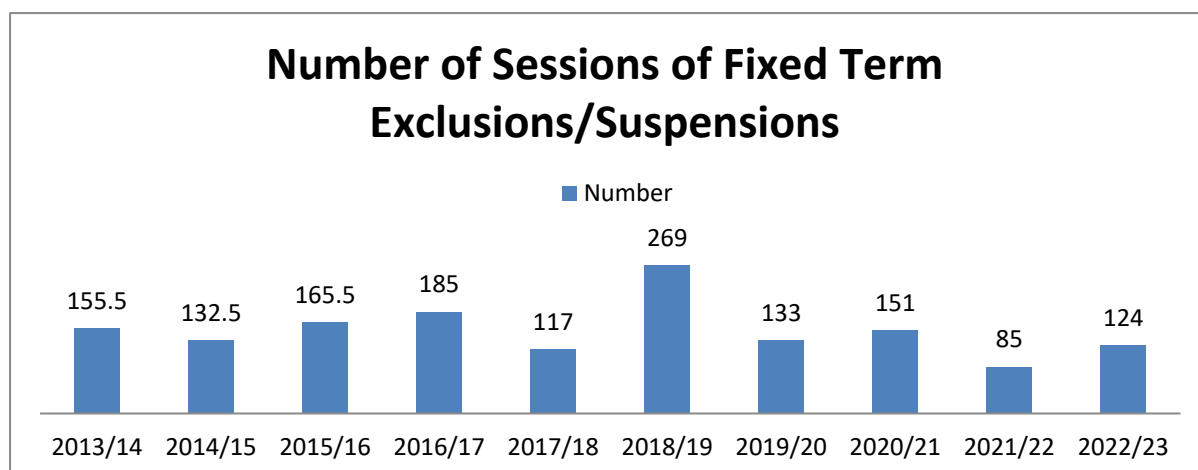**Data from 2022/23 shows that we had 62 days of exclusion for school age pupils. This equates to 124 sessions.**

There were 16 school age pupils out of the CLA cohort have experienced a fixed term exclusion (FTE) during the course of the year. **This equates to 8.1% of the total school age cohort and has increased by 2% the previous year.** The suspension rate for national CLA is 12.55%. Our data is, therefore, lower than national data.

Some of the pupils who experienced a suspension were new into care during the academic year. Prior to being looked after they had a high level of suspension rates. However, due to the intervention of the virtual school team and provision of additional resources, these pupils did manage to have fewer exclusions after becoming looked after. Some pupils were suspended during the time of coming into care. This behaviour could have been communicating a more significant need relating to their home life and then responding when becoming looked after. These pupils need additional support to cope with this situation and we work with schools to try to better understand and their needs. The Virtual School works with schools to reduce suspensions, however, some of our pupils are participating in activities that would warrant the need for exclusion. We have managed to negotiate alternatives to exclusion off site through measures such as:

- Internal support
- Action plan meetings for suspended pupils
- Alternative provision
- Managed moves to new settings

As a Virtual School we have planned clear actions to continue reduce rates of suspension. These being to:

- Continue to monitor suspensions and continue to actively reduce the amount through support and challenge
- Use of the Action for Inclusion Toolkit (AFIT) to enable schools to better understand the underlying cause of behaviours and propose supportive interventions
- Provide additional funding to target appropriate support and intervention for the pupils
- Provision of intensive Trauma and Attachment training to key schools that have experienced high levels of suspensions.
- In the next academic year, we will be visiting Thurrock schools with high rates of suspension for Children With A Social Worker in order to provide support and challenge regarding provision.

Number of Sessions of Fixed Term Exclusions/Suspensions

■ Number

| Year	Number
2013/14	155.5
2014/15	132.5
2015/16	165.5
2016/17	185
2017/18	117
2018/19	269
2019/20	133
2020/21	151
2021/22	85
2022/23	124

Impact of work to reduce suspensions and exclusions.

A Case Example

A young person entered care in the autumn term of 2022. She had previously had high rates of non-attendance and suspensions prior to being looked after. Upon coming into care, she received a 5 day suspension but was also told that she could not return to school due to her extreme behaviour. The Virtual School intervened. Several professional meetings were held, and the school was challenged regarding this decision. We listened to the voice of the young person in meetings and advocated on her behalf. We negotiated a return to school under close supervision and developed a timetable of support. The young person was then able to fully reintegrate back into school and did not experience any further suspensions for the remainder of the academic year.

9.   **Children Missing Education [CME]**

The Local Authority carefully monitors any child missing education for those CLA/YP placed in and out of borough. The Virtual School produces weekly data for any child who is missing education due to lack of a school place. Monthly CME data is available and provided to Governors on a termly basis. The Virtual School takes action which is individualised to meet the needs of the pupils and where necessary, works with the Admissions Team, Inclusion Manager and SEN Service teams in Thurrock and other boroughs to secure school places or alternative provision. For pupils who are without an educational placement, a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting is held to plan actions for how to secure education provision. Wherever possible the Virtual School provides tuition through commissioned tuition services whilst a student is between educational placements. The biggest challenge for securing education is when those pupils with an EHC Plan move out of borough and an alternative provision is sought. The consultation processes and changes of local authorities do not enable action to be completed in a timely manner. This matter is discussed weekly at SEN Priority Panel. There is also a lack of specialist placements nationally and as such it is

becoming increasingly difficult for SEN teams around the country to allocate suitable provision that can meet need.

CME 2022-2023
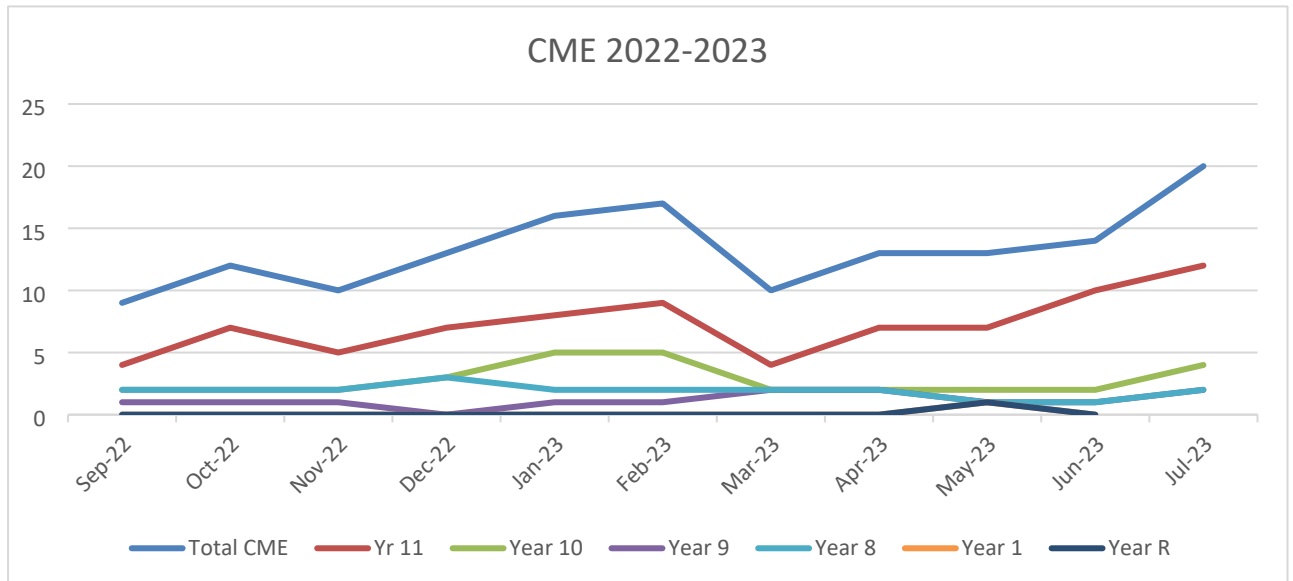
Context of CME (Causes of CME)

Context of Pupils who are CME July 2023
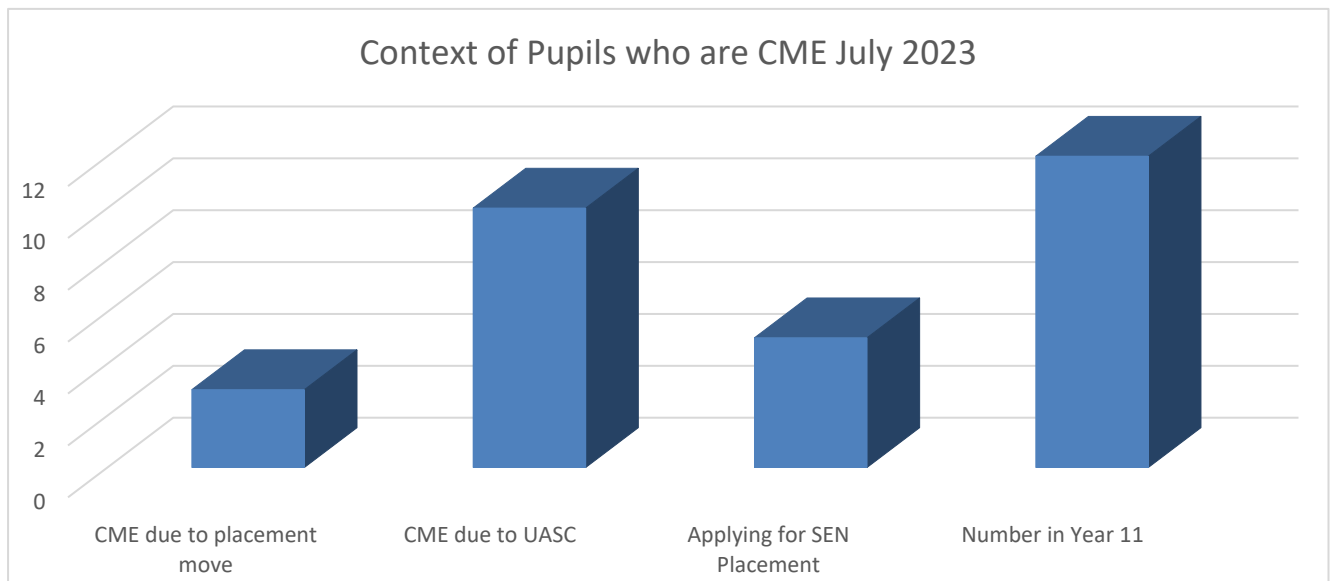
We have been unable to secure places for Year 11 pupils, especially for our UASC who entered care in the academic year. Applications for school places have failed despite taking these cases to independent appeals panel.

Every pupil who is CME is offered a tuition package and additional resources to support them as necessary. Our 10 UASC pupils were all provided with school places or college placements for September 2023. Additionally, we were able to secure a school placement for 1 of the SEN pupils needing a specialist placement.

Analysis of reasons for high numbers of CME in Year 11 – 12 pupils in total

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We had a high rate of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children that came into care, 8 out of the 12 year 11 pupils were UASC. 5 of these entered the country after March 2023 and so it was not possible to have access to year 11 school places due to exams starting in May. 2 UASC pupils became CLA in October 2022. Another 1 young person became CLA in January 2023. We immediately applied for school places for these young people. The schools were resistant to consider our applications due to the young people not being able to speak English and because it was for a Year 11 place. We said we would happily accept a Year 10 place if possible. All 3 applications were refused. We appealed and went to an independent panel. We lost all 3 appeals. The VSHT escalated concerns regarding schools resisting UASC pupils to the deputy regional schools commissioner and made enquiries to see if it was possible for the Children's Commissioner to support us but we were not successful with this avenue of action. All our UASC young people were heavily supported by the Virtual School to obtain some educational experiences before starting college in post 16. (Please refer to UASC sections in this report). We have found that there is some drift and delay from schools that are managing their own admissions.

Of the 4 non-UASC children who were missing education and were in Year 11, 3 were living in residential placements without education on site. 2 required alternative provision and due to the timing of their placement moves and their location, they were unable to access local alternative offers. Another young person was suitable for mainstream education and a school place was applied for when this young person moved in March 2023. However, this application was denied.

There was 1 other year 11 pupil who has a high level of Special Education Need and was at a specialist residential placement. This young person was receiving a highly specialised non- school based education and made excellent progress. The young person's mother requested that this continued due to the successes achieved by this approach.

We challenge schools that refuse our CLA a school place and do everything that is in our legal power to obtain school places. Many of the schools we apply to are academies and so we are not able to direct, although we do request to admit. We challenge the view that they are at their Pupil Admission Number (PAN) in that year group and follow all necessary processes that we are able to.

In the next academic year, we will start to refer to the Secretary of State when we have explored all other options. We have not needed to take this course of action in the past. However, since Covid, it has been increasingly difficult to obtain school places especially in certain parts of the Eastern region. We have sought support from local authorities to address these issues but due to the academy status of schools, they have limited power to influence admissions decisions.

10. **Attainment Data of CLA**

2023 Phonics – Year 1 Pupils aged (5 and 6)

This table highlights the comparison between pupils looked after to Thurrock, national and eastern region CLA data and compares it against the performance against all Thurrock pupils and national non-looked after pupils. The cohort size for 2023 was who had been in care for 12+ months was 5 pupils.

	Thurrock CLA	National CLA	Eastern Region CLA	Thurrock Non-CLA
2018	66.70%	62%	61%	83.90%
2019	40%	63%	58%	82.70%
2021	84.60%	65%	68%	78.40%
2022	83.30%	59%	52%	76.20%
2023	44%	61%	56%	78.2%

In 2019 we started to expand our offer of phonics packs and practical resources to Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils. We also used PP+ top slice to purchase additional resources for pupils in the early years and KS1. These included phonemes, diagraphs, trigraphs etc which would help to boost what they could do in the home.

The vast improvements in data began to show. We believe that this is a direct result from using the resources we provided as well as asking schools to track phonics scores and school based interventions within the Personal Education Plans of these key year groups. However, for this current year we have only had 5 pupils in care for 12+ months out of a cohort of 12 pupils and 33% of the cohort has a special educational need. The pupils who did not achieve working at standard will need further support moving forward in year 2.

What next?

We will continue to support the acquisition of phonics knowledge through resources and home learning guidance. As the year 1 transition into year 2 in 23/24 the schools will be providing additional phonics interventions and these will be monitored through the PEP process.

Key Stage 2 Data (This is for pupils in Year 6 aged 10 and 11)

Formal testing took place in May 2023. The data detailed below has been extracted from the Department for Education matched data using a data tool called NEXUS/NCER. This data is updated by the system as more pupils are matched throughout the year. There is a delay in published data available on the Local Authority Interactive Toolkit and so this will be provided at a later date.

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM* ≥ Exp	RWM* High	Avg. SS	READING < Exp	READING ≥ Exp	READING High	WRITING TA ≥ Exp	WRITING TA GDS	Avg. SS	MATHS < Exp	MATHS ≥ Exp	MATHS High	Avg. SS	GPS < Exp	GPS ≥ Exp	GPS High
NCER National (CLA)	2,660	100.0%	36.0%	2.0%	102.0	45.0%	54.0%	16.0%	47.0%	4.0%	100.1	49.0%	50.0%	8.0%	100.9	49.0%	50.0%	13.0%
DfE Region - East (CLA)	270	100.0%	34.0%	-	101.9	48.0%	51.0%	17.0%	46.0%	5.0%	99.7	49.0%	49.0%	6.0%	100.2	51.0%	48.0%	11.0%
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	2,580	0.5%	62.4%	9.4%	104.7	26.8%	72.2%	25.3%	77.1%	18.9%	104.5	24.0%	75.1%	24.4%	105.2	25.9%	73.1%	30.5%
Virtual School - Thurrock	14	100.0%	50.0%	7.1%	105.7	35.7%	57.1%	35.7%	50.0%	21.4%	103.4	42.9%	57.1%	7.1%	103.7	35.7%	57.1%	14.3%

This year has seen a decline in our overall data for matched pupils. Out of the cohort of 18 pupils we had 6 disapplied for SATs due to their special educational needs and so they did not sit the tests and instead had teacher assessed gradings. Our children looked after are still performing better than national and eastern region CLA. However, this particular cohort as depicted in Nexus has not closed the gap against non CLA pupils.

Data below represents the whole year 6 cohort who were in care at the end of the academic year. Out of the 12 who were eligible to take SATS the results are as follows:
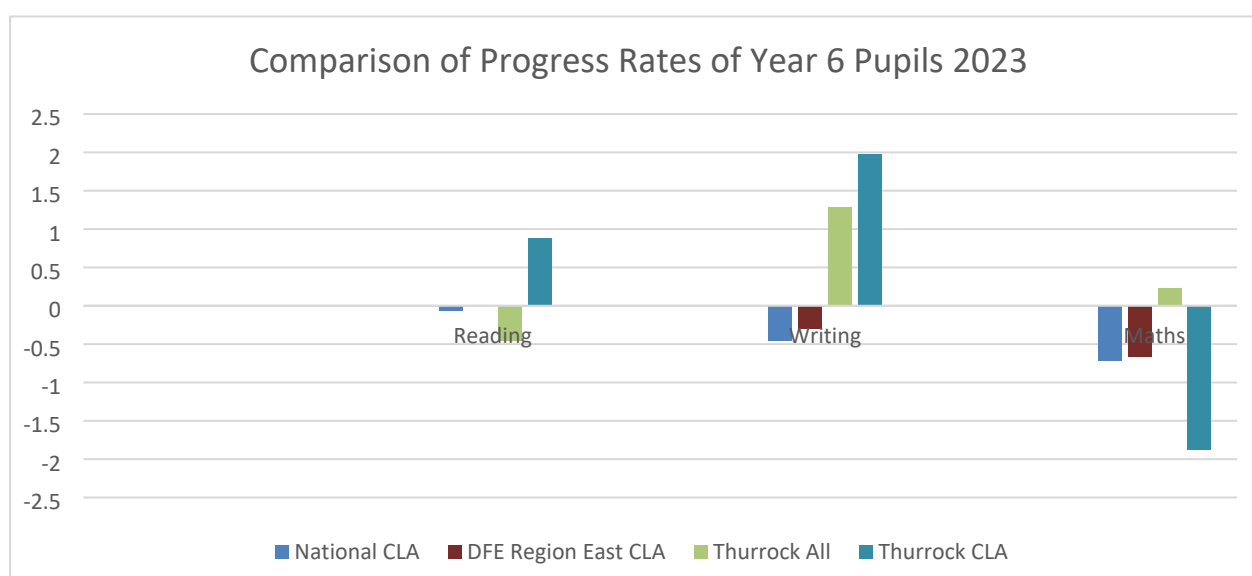
	Reading	Writing (TA)	Maths	GPS	WA (In all areas)- RWM combined)
Thurrock CLA	9 pupils (75%)	8 pupils (67%)	9 pupils (75%)	9 pupils (75%)	8 pupils (67%)
National CLA	54%	47%	50%	50%	36%
Region (CLA)- Dfe East	51%	46%	49%	48%	34%
LA- Thurrock	72.2%	77.1%	75.1%	73.1%	62.4%

Based upon this data our pupils in our current year 6, those who were eligible for testing have performed well compared to non-CLA pupils.

This can be attributed to the offer of tuition for pupils from Year 5 throughout to the end of year 6 in maths and English. As well as provision of various writing guides, phonics resources, maths resources and additional learning resources that were requested.

Our CLA also accomplished very good rates of progress. Progress is measured against their previous attainment when in Key Stage 1 and then measured against the attainment achieved in Key Stage 2. Good rates of progress are above the baseline which is 0 points. This is illustrated in the data below.

KS2 Progress Benchmark (CLA) (DfE)								2023 | DfE | Matched pupils only | CLA 12 Months							
				READING				**WRITING**				**MATHS**			
	Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.
NCER National (CLA)	2,660	100.0%	6.4	93.0%	50.0%	-0.06	±0.25	93.0%	53.0%	-0.45 ●	±0.24	93.0%	48.0%	-0.71 ●	±0.23
DfE Region - East (CLA)	270	100.0%	6.3	92.0%	50.0%	+0.00	±0.79	91.0%	54.0%	-0.30	±0.76	91.0%	47.0%	-0.67	±0.75
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	2,580	0.5%	7.7	92.1%	48.4%	-0.45 ●	±0.25	92.9%	68.3%	+1.29 ●	±0.24	92.2%	53.4%	+0.23	±0.24
Virtual School - Thurrock	14	100.0%	6.3	85.7%	58.3%	+0.88	±3.56	92.9%	69.2%	+1.98	±3.29	92.9%	30.8%	-1.88	±3.22

Comparison of Progress Rates of Year 6 Pupils 2023

Legend: ■ National CLA ■ DFE Region East CLA ■ Thurrock All ■ Thurrock CLA

Thurrock CLA made better rates of progress than National and Eastern region CLA and better progress than that of all Thurrock children. The Virtual School team commissioned the use of extra tuition for our pupils. We used government tuition grants which enabled us to extend the amount of tuition we would usually provide with the Pupil Premium Plus top slice money. This tuition has enabled our pupils to make accelerated progress and provide them with a good footing to starting secondary school.

However, our pupils did not make as much progress in maths as others based upon the matched data. Therefore, this is an area that needs further intervention for current Key Stage 2 pupils and also for the pupils who are moving into year 7.

Interventions we will put into place for next academic year include:

- Continuation of the tuition offer for year 7 pupils to support transition and to close gaps against age related expectation.
- Start the tuition offer for year 5 earlier on the academic year.
- Purchase resources to support acquisition of maths concepts and skills.
- Continue the tuition offer for year 6 pupils and promote this offer with those who may be refusing this.

- Source additional guidance materials which can be shared with foster carers to promote mathematical concepts and skills in the home. Such as using shopping as a learning activity.

Key Stage 4 Data (Year 11 GCSE aged 15 and 16)

Attainment 8 Score
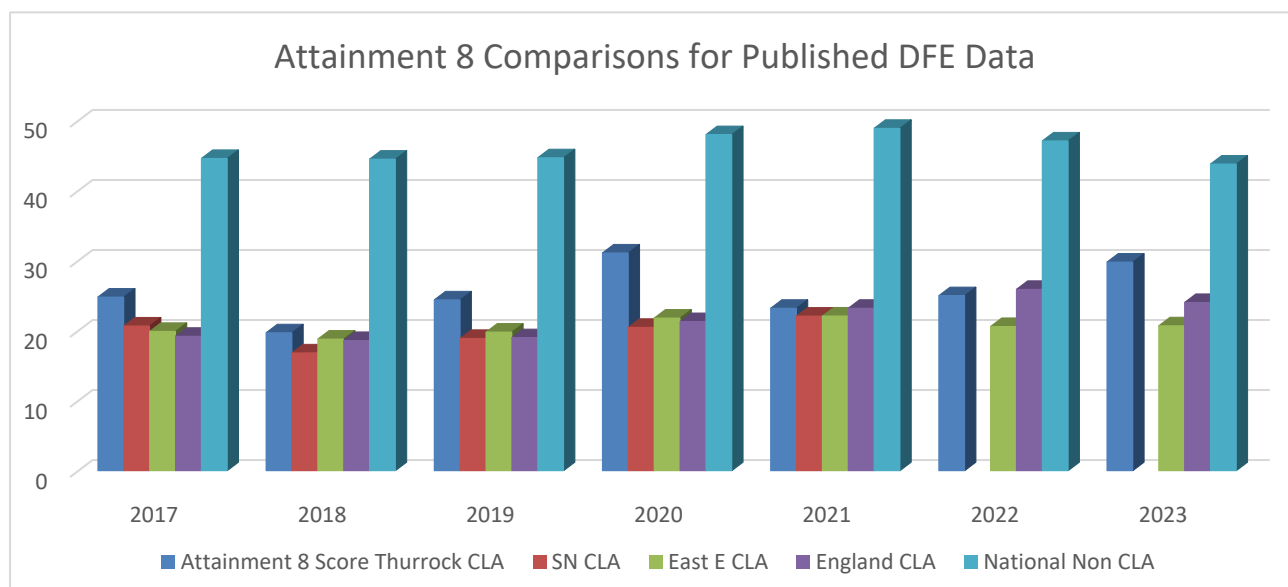
The above chart shows the improved performance of Thurrock CLA since 2017. We need to bear in mind that the size of the cohort fluctuates and we have seen an increase of UASC entering Year 11 and the majority of these young people are not able to sit GCSEs.

Attainment 8 data would suggest that we are doing better than CLA with our statistical neighbours and nationally against CLA cohorts. We are also starting to close the gap against non-looked after pupils. Updated DFE data from 2022 is reflected in this report and so there has been a change in the 2022 result that was reported in the previous annual report as the DFE has matched an extra pupil in 2022. Attainment 8 data is showing a 3 year upward trend.

Progress 8 Scores

	Progress 8 Score Thurrock CLA	SN CLA	East E CLA	England CLA	Thurrock Non CLA
2017	-0.64	-1.05	-1.04	-1.18	-0.07
2018	-1.39	-1.28	-1.13	-1.2	-0.19
2019	-0.97	-1.22	-1.22	-1.23	0.03
2020	No test data				
2021	No test data				
2022	-1.11		-1.2	-1.06	-0.19
2023	-1.11		-1.05	-1.24	-0.14

The data in the table has been obtained from a data system called Nexus. It is based upon the results of 22 pupils in 2023 that had matched data. However, there are some differences between pupils listed in Nexus due to submission dates of the local authority census and of those who were in care in year 11 for the academic year. Therefore, this data is not completely representative of the current cohort. Our internal data which is listed below is relating specifically to who was in care for that academic year. The progress 8 and attainment 8 data for 2023 is based upon fewer children that are matched and in care and so does not fully reflect the actual cohort. (More data to follow if available nationally at a later date.)

Progress 8 Data 12+ Months Published DFE Data - Matched Pupils
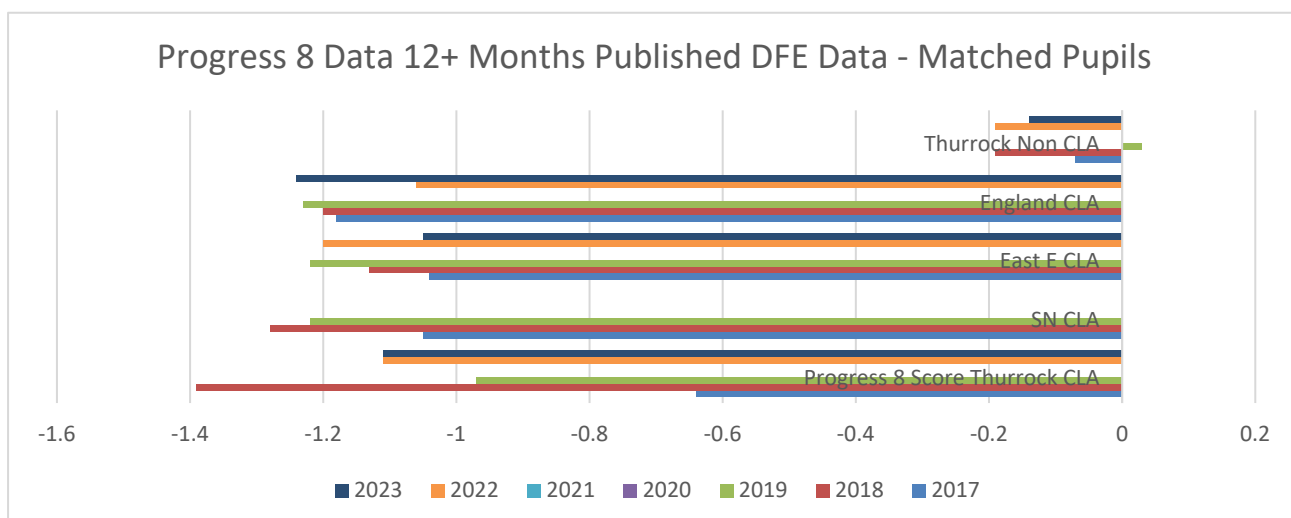
GCSE Results internal data 2023

The following information details data relating to the pupils who were in care at the end of the academic year and who were in the Virtual School Cohort of Year 11 in August 2023. This is based upon live data that is matched to all pupils and their results. Overall in the cohort there were 42 pupils.

20 young people were entered for GCSE in the Year 11 cohort.

Of these 20 pupils achievement was as follows.

English Lit 4+	English Lit 5+	English Language 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 55%	8 pupils = 40%	8 pupils = 40%	12 pupils = 60%	8 pupils = 40%	9 pupils = 45%	6 pupils = 30%

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There were 19 pupils who had been in care for 12+ months and they took GCSEs					
English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 59%	8 pupils = 42%	12 pupils = 63%	8 pupils = 42%	9 pupils = 47%	6 pupils = 32%

In care for 12+ months and took GCSEs - 19 pupils
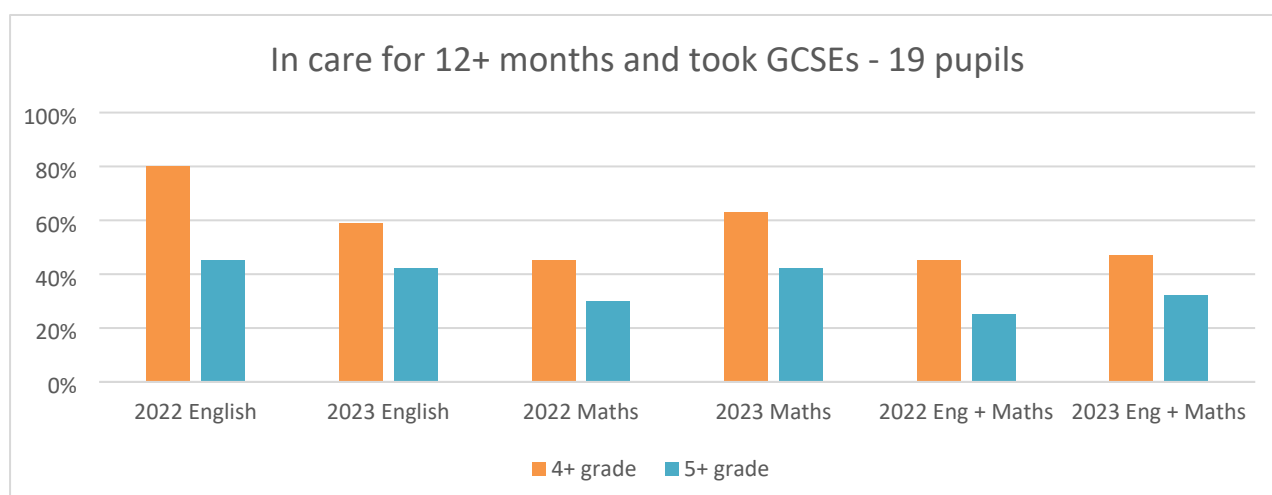
When comparing data between 2022 and 2023, results have improved for English and maths combined and for maths. English this year has not had an improvement. Due to the nature of the cohort and the size, we need to apply an individualised approach to attainment and match the right intervention to needs. Not all pupils accepted English tuition compared to maths for example.

In the whole cohort of Year 11 there were 26 pupils who had been in care for 12+months and of these 19 that took GCSE the results for the whole cohort of 26 are as follows.					
English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 42%	8 pupils = 31%	12 pupils = 46%	8 pupils = 31%	9 pupils = 35%	6 pupils = 23%

All Children in Year 11 in care 12+ months - 26 pupils
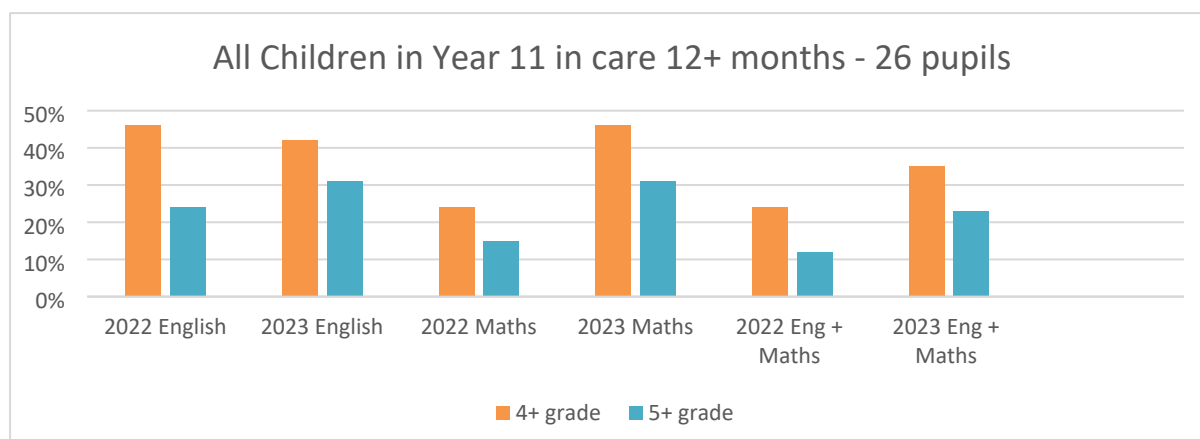
What can be seen from the graph above is that we have achieved higher grades for the Year 11's in care for 12+ months compared with internal data from the previous year for maths and for English and maths combined.

Of the 7 young people who did not take GCSEs, this was for the following reasons.

2 pupils EHCP and one receiving bespoke tutoring package. 1 other took functional skills.

3 pupils were missing education and were receipt of tuition. They were offered functional skills exams and 1 passed, the other 2 pupils declined to take these.

2 were in alternative provision and took functional skills as part of their education offer.

Data for the entire Year 11 cohort (42 Pupils)

Out of the entire cohort of 42 year 11 pupils the data for the year group is as follows:

English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 26%	8 pupils = 19%	12 pupils = 29%	8 pupils = 19%	9 pupils = 21%	6 pupils = 14%

Contextual Profile for Year 11 Cohort

As Corporate Parents it is essential that we have an overview of the entire cohort of Year 11 who were in care at the end of the academic year.

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| Number in care for 12+ months	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	Children Missing Education UASC	Children Missing Education Other	Number taking functional skills in alternative provision	Specialist Residential with EHCP	In care less than a year
26	14	8	4	2	2	16

Pupils who were CME were provided with tuition and the opportunity to take functional skills exams if appropriate to their level.

UASC were provided with English as an additional language tuition.

Pupils who have SEN needs were provided with bespoke education packages in line with their needs and provisions attended.

Published Data Comparisons 2020- 2022 and comparison with current cohort data

In addition to this – published data in the Local Authority Interactive Toolkit details the following in terms of Thurrock CLA performance. We are making gradual improvements and we must note that 2020 results were purely teacher assessed grades.

Published Data 12+ months for grades 4+ Eng and Maths Combined National CLA Data
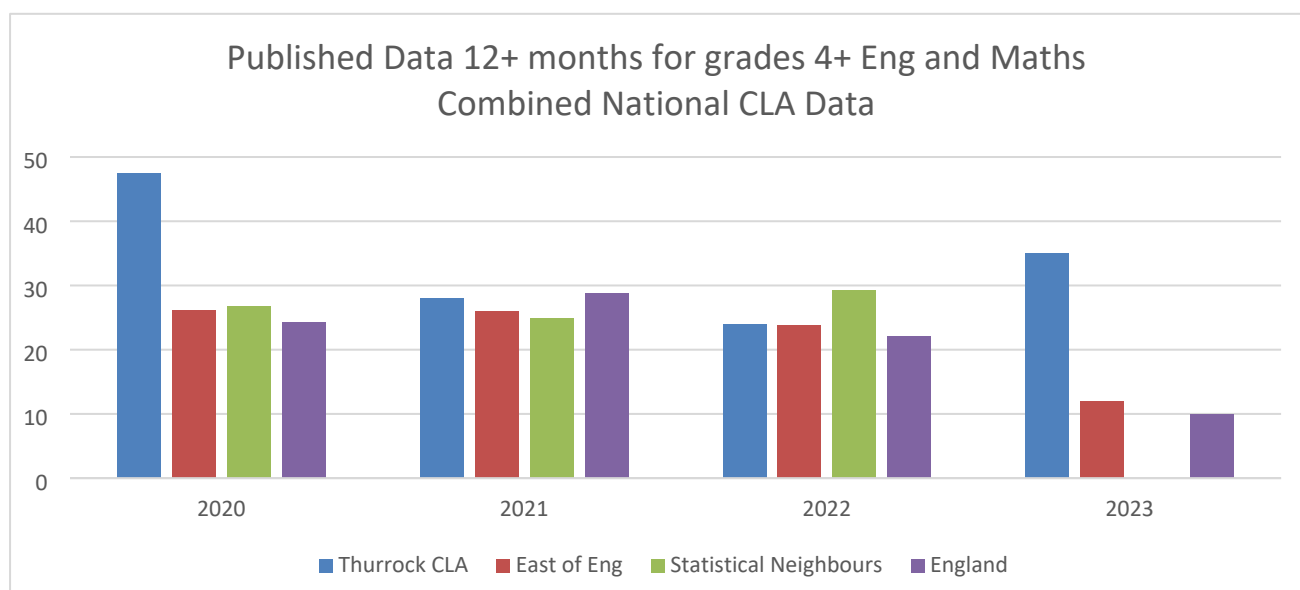
Summary Notes

Those pupils who complete tuition really benefit from improved grades. Of all the pupils who were identified for tuition and who engaged with the offer, they made the most significant progress and achieved better. The impact of tuition and additional resources that have been provided by the virtual school has improved overall outcomes for this group.

All pupils in the cohort of 42 had an education offer including any who were not in receipt of a school place.

Increased number of UASC pupils does affect the eligibility of being able to complete GCSEs and so this does impact the overall cohort results.

By the end of the academic year all year 11 pupils had a plan for their post 16 pathways which included further opportunities for learning and college places were allocated for all.

Case Study Tuition Impact

Pupil a)

One of our pupils had to move school and the new school did not provide the languages that she was studying for French and Spanish. The Virtual School provided tuition for these subjects and the young person was able to achieve grade 9 for both.

Pupil b)

Another young person was working at grade 1 for English literature in the autumn term. When the exams were taken in the summer, she achieved a grade 4. The young person was working at a 2 in English language at the start of the academic year and after tuition she achieved a 3 in the exam. The tuition enabled her to meet her flightpath for language and exceed it for literature.

11.   **Summary of Actions for all Key Stages to improve 2024 data**

What are we doing to improve academic performance?

- Provision of Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to those aged between 3-9 years old
- Provision of 1-1 tuition throughout Year 11 in maths, English and science
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 10 pupils starting in the spring term of year 10
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 5 starting in the spring term of year 5
- Provision of 1-1 tuition in maths and English throughout year 6 for this year group
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 7 to prevent data decline and support those not meeting national expectations in year 6.
- Conducting termly school visits for key year groups of children and those who are not making expected progress
- Attendance at PEPS for key year groups to track progress and provision
- Creation of action plans for those pupils who are not making progress
- Provision of tuition for those requesting it in Year 12 to support the transition into post 16 learning
- Evidencing the work of the Virtual School through PEPS, visit notes and case notes
- Development of SEND support materials to further improve the outcomes for this group of children

- Development of a range of interventions for certain year groups and needs
- Continuing the interventions and key actions developed over the previous years to build upon good practice and successful outcomes
- Provision of phonics resources for N2 through to Year 2 pupils
- Provision of kindles upon request to promote reading
- Provision of maths resources for Year 4 and 5 to support multiplication testing.

12.   **<u>Case Studies - these need changing</u>**

Case studies provide some insight into the individual work that is completed by members of the Virtual School to improve outcomes for children and young people. Each phase leader provides a case study for the Governing Body every term as part of our reporting and accountability mechanisms. These can be seen in reports to Governors. Below are some examples of some case studies we have collected over the year.

Key Stage 3 Pupil

Background

Pupil G was in year 9. The young person started a new school due to a placement ending. He moved area and school. He joined his new school in the spring term om 2022. In September 2022 the suspensions started. G struggled with managing his behaviour and regulating himself in school. Behaviour in lessons worsened, he began to abscond from lessons, run away from key staff and became abusive to staff when dysregulated. During the October Pep meeting, pupil G made it clear he felt unsafe in school and could not name 1 staff member whom he trusted. The VS adviser raised concerns with the social worker that the school were not making sufficient adjustments to support him and suggested several very easy strategies for the school to adopt.

G's social worker and the adviser discussed a school move with the foster carer to another school, but she felt this was too far away. The carer would be unable to transport him there and that the use of public transport was triggering for him, and this would lead to further issues. The foster carer was urged to visit local schools, but she did not feel this was appropriate.

Pupil G's first exclusion from school was because of unsafe and abusive behaviour towards the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. During the reintegration meeting after the first suspension, it was clear that the school had little understanding of his needs and anxieties around school. The adviser began to support school and a plan was established to support G in school and provide key worker support. G was removed from mainstream lessons and provided with a clear workspace in the pastoral area. Having ownership and a 'safe place' in school away from peers who further increased the dysregulation was key to supporting his needs.

The adviser liaised with the foster carer and social worker and called a meeting to discuss G's concerns and reasons for the high level of dysregulation. He still felt no one in school knew him and understood him, this was clear when completing the Action for Inclusion tool. The staff at the school who should have known him best struggled to answer the questions.

G received several more exclusions from school, each getting longer in length, he was placing himself at risk by wandering around the school site and refusing all staff instructions as well as being abusive to teachers.

The adviser met with the carer and G. It was agreed that we should reduce his timetable to morning sessions only at school and then working from home in the afternoon. It was our view that G was becoming more traumatised each time he went to school, and we needed to break this negativity. The Virtual School agreed to put extra tuition in place to bridge the gaps in learning from the missed education while excluded and support the work set from school. The adviser and social worker again addressed the potential of transferring to a new school, however, the carer felt that this was the best place for G and school were making progress in supporting him more effectively.

Since this plan has been in place G has been more settled and feels better about school, he is developing a more positive approach to school and has been reintegrating back into 1 lesson a day while on site. He has had one incident of significant dysregulation on site (due to a family issue in the morning) he went off and walked around, however he eventually came back to the pastoral base and complied with the staff. This was a big step forward.

Action

Regular 'catch up' meetings to address support and progress.

Action for Inclusion assessment completed and shared with key staff in school so that strategies could be used to support his needs.

Offer of support and strategies shared with school by the adviser.

There was further discussion at SEN Panel with educational psychologist to gauge needs and suggest interventions.

All reintegration meetings were attended by the adviser to monitor support and challenge the school if necessary.

Alternative timetable discussed and suggested to school, an individualised approach was applied.

Extra funding to support tuition was provided in afternoon home sessions to ensure that he did not fall behind in his subjects and could feel safe.

Therapy (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) has been funded by his PP+ and this started in the summer term. G engaged with this and is still being supported.

Impact

G and his foster carer report that he prefers the afternoon sessions at home and feels calmer and much less anxious. This has meant that he is now much calmer and happier in school. There has only been 1 significant incident at school since the intervention took place. No suspensions have taken place since interventions and support have been provided. G is continuing to access 1 mainstream lesson per day with the view that this will increase when he is able to cope with this.

Next Steps

The aim for the summer term is to continue to strengthen G's bonds with key staff in school, begin to reintegrate him back into more mainstream lessons and build his timetable up to aim for 100% by the end of the summer term.

Post 16 Young Person

Background to case

S has been a looked after child since April 2018. During this time, he had several placement and school moves and presented with significant trauma. The trauma manifested both physically and emotionally. During year 11 the police were involved with S and there were suspicions of physical and cyber problematic sexualised behaviour. During this time the young person was also transitioning from year 11 to year 12 and had made college applications. As there was an ongoing police investigation this information had to be shared and the two identified colleges had to carry out risk assessments based on the information provided. Both colleges after carrying out a risk assessment and it going to complex case panels decided that they were unable to offer the young person a place at their college as they felt unable to keep both him and others safe and unable to provide the monitoring and supervision they felt needed. This left the young person without an education provision for year 12.

Actions to support

Lengthy discussions and varied forms of communication between the adviser, placement, the social worker and potential colleges to see who could meet the needs of S.

Monthly meetings held between the adviser, the young person, the home, and the social worker. After listening to his views there was a focus on the exploration of other educational opportunities that could be accessed both in the community and in the home.

Where possible there was signposting to other agencies.

Outcomes/Impact

S accessed Flash Academy programme to learn Japanese which led to VS purchasing a license to Rosetta Stone for him to learn other languages in line with his wishes and feelings.

S is accessing Barefoot Learning courses provided by VS and has so far completed over 6 modules. All of which are accredited.

S accessed Curriculum Vitae and employment support via Inspire Youth Hub. He also accessed English tuition via Inspire.

S is accessing education now via TCHC (previously Lifeskills) and is being monitored closely.

S is now accessing the last part of his course from home (due to safeguarding concerns). He is being well supported by the College staff as well as placement staff to ensure he achieves a qualification this academic year, which will be a good outcome for S and a good steppingstone for onward learning and employment.

Primary Aged Pupil

Background

P is the youngest of four siblings. They are placed in long term foster care and this has been consistent from the very beginning. P attended pre- school before starting at the infant school she attends. P is currently in Reception. Contact has been significantly reduced which has helped in some ways. However, contact was having a negative impact on P. The siblings have recently found out that mum has a baby and that the baby lives with her. This has affected the sibling group and has added to their trauma. After the Christmas holidays, P's behaviour escalated considerably, she was extremely aggressive, emotionally distressed and highly anxious. The behaviours seen were violent for a young child and she became very volatile. She kicked, bit and scratched staff, threw furniture and hid in different places. S was suspended for half a day.

Action

From the time the school called to explain what had happened, daily communication was vital. The education adviser called for a meeting to discuss what had happened and the behaviours as well as how P was presenting and what she was trying to communicate. The education adviser in the VS has received intensive Lead Attachment Teacher training course. One of the ways to support was to develop an 'Inclusion Development Plan' (IDP), this is a document which is collated with the school, foster carers, social worker and other involved professionals. It looks in detail at what the child likes, what helps regulate, when stress factors may occur and why.

As a result of this discussion the professionals were able to pull apart the school day, looking at potential 'hot spots' for P, transitions and looked at what works best for her. The VS also offered some financial support in addition to the Pupil Premium Plus so that the school could ensure the IDP could be fully applied, and that P could be supported.

Impact

The review meeting took place just before half term and the school are completely amazed at how P has settled and feel that the IDP has had a very positive impact. She is a lot more regulated and less anxious. The school use the IDP to work together so that all relevant staff have the same information and strategies that help support P. The carer is aware of the plan and uses this to support P at home. There have been no further incidences of the volatile behaviour and P is being supported well.

13.   **School Improvement Priorities**

These are detailed in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is updated at the start of every academic year. Priorities are identified and actions are detailed related to targets and actions which form the basis of the Virtual School's work. The aim of this document is to promote the raising of educational outcomes for all of our Children Looked After and Young People. This is reviewed every half term and reports to the Governing Body detail progress towards each priority. These can be found in additional documents which are produced termly for the Governing Body.

Key School Improvement Priorities for 2022-2023

To improve achievement of all pupils by:

[KP 1] Improving the attendance of CLA with a particular focus on pupils who may have persistent absence and provide strategies and solutions to overcome barriers to attendance

This is being tackled in several ways and impact is being seen through improved attendance data. Emotional School Based Avoidance guidance is being distributed and used in schools. Training was provided to schools relating to this so they could support their pupils. Resources to support attendance are being shared with schools such as the school stress survey. This is listening to the voice of pupils and by gauging triggers, schools are better able to support. Individual work is taking place between the education advisers and schools to support pupils who have low attendance. This is helping to pupils to have improved attendance. The Action for Inclusion Toolkit is being used to assess needs and identify strategies of support. Bespoke plans and timetables are created based upon need. Suspensions are being challenged and rates are being reduced.

[KP 2] Increasing the use of assessment tools to meet needs and ensure that interventions match academic, social and emotional needs.

The Action for Inclusion Tool is being used in more schools and advisers are working with teachers to assess needs and identify strategies of support. This is having a positive impact on the provision for pupils, as evidenced in case studies.

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The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire continues to be completed termly by schools to indicate areas of concerns linked to emotional well-being. This is being used to triangulate the scores with those of carers. This means that we can refer to the SDQ panel to discuss the appropriate mental health intervention.

A new programme called IASEND has been purchased to support the evidencing of pupil progress. This is being used in 8 schools now. This programme enables mainstream schools to track the progress of pupils with SEND against smaller steps of achievement rather than trying to just show gradings or standardised scores. This should enable better evidence of progress.

Resources have been distributed to all key year groups to support learning. For example, phonics, reading, bilingual dictionaries, revision packs. These resources help to support the young people and children in the home and know that we are keeping them in mind and focused on their education.

Looking at how to use IASEND with Children Missing Education so that their progress is monitored. This would need to be completed by the tutors that are commissioned and so they will need support and training. This will, however, enable us to obtain information about progress for those pupils who are not accessing school.

The use of different assessment tools such as the sensory toolkit and school stress survey has enabled pupils to be appropriately supported in their settings based upon their needs.

SEN provision maps are in place for ALL pupils with SEN to measure interventions and these are linked to the termly tracking of progress. By completing these we can challenge provision if it does not match need.

[KP 3] Continuing to embed processes of quality assurance of educational provision.

The Quality Assurance document is now being used within educational establishments and the advisers are visiting targeted settings where practice may be weak or need improvement. The document is being used as a method of self-assessment and key actions are being discussed because of this process. We will continue to use this approach in the next academic year to target those schools that need additional support.

All Thurrock schools have been visited by the Children with a Social Worker team. Discussions have centred on identification, data collection, tracking and interventions. A good practice guide has been created which will be shared with schools and social care. In addition to this we have more up to date data about this cohort of pupils and can then strategize further actions based upon this intelligence.

With every new setting that we work with, we have to begin the process of building relationships, setting expectations and providing training.

[KP 4] Enhancing the provision of support, training and challenge to all professionals to ensure that provision meets need.

A comprehensive training plan is in place and being delivered by the Virtual School team. In addition to this we have provided drop-in sessions for educational and social work staff to

discuss cases, general enquiries, or ad hoc training. We have extended our training offer to Designated Safeguarding leads and all social care staff in order that we can meet the duties relating to Children with a Social Worker as well as Previously Looked After Children.

Over vision relating to training is one of everyone is welcome and good practice for all children and young people applies to all.

Additionally, we have written additional information and guidance which pertains to specific policy and practice. This is to set expectations and promote consistency of practice.

Social Worker PEP training is now available on Oracle, this is on demand training which can be accessed at any time. This makes it more convenient to complement their busy schedules.

Support and challenge regarding the quality of PEPs and EHC Plans, including sign off PEPs within agreed timescales, a clear escalation process and monthly audits are in place.

[KP 5] Continuing to create a Thurrock wide initiative to support the education of pupils with a social worker.

All Thurrock schools have been visited at least once since November 2022.

More joint working with social care is happening. Drop-in sessions for social workers have and are taking place. Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) team attending social care team meetings.

CWSW regularly speaks with Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and present to Thurrock Association of Secondary Schools and Thurrock Primary Heads Association.

Unique Pupil Numbers are being included on the Common Assessment Framework. This will ultimately support the matching of data from social care to education systems and Department for education attainment and attendance data because the UPN is the key matching criteria that is used. The team are currently working on changing the forms for meetings between social care and schools so that educational needs have more of a focus.

Collection of data from schools has included attendance, ever 6 and basic cohort numbers. This has enabled a good overview of the current dynamics of CWSW in Thurrock schools.

14.   **Allocation and Impact of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)**

The management of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children Looked After is detailed in the DFE guidance Pupil premium grant 2022 to 2023: conditions of grant and Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities.

The Pupil Premium Plus Policy (PP+) details the rationale and method behind the allocation of this funding.

Settings receive £1,800 which is released in three equal installments of £600 every term. The Virtual School Headteacher tracks spending on a termly basis in line with the quality assurance process of Personal Education Plans (PEP). This tracking centres on how this money is used to raise the achievement of the child/young person and assesses if funds are being used appropriately. This process, alongside the PEP process is supporting the pupil to have targeted support and intervention which directly affects and plans for his/her academic and overall school achievement with a personalised approach. It is enabling the Virtual School to be updated on progress data and enables discussion with the school to center on appropriate intervention. This system promotes accountability and improved dialogue in how to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the gap. [Separate Pupil Premium documentation is available on request].

Educational establishments mainly use the Pupil Premium Funds for intervention and support such as:

- Counselling
- Tuition
- Key adult support
- Learning based interventions

Overview of Spending by the Virtual School

The Virtual School received PP+ funding for pupils aged from year R to Year 11. £481,770 was received from the Department for Education. This amount was derived from the SDA903 census return by social care for the previous year, although Virtual School Heads are required to distribute the funds for any CLA in a particular academic year. Academic establishments received £329,445. this was based upon the number of eligible pupils and extra funded support. The Virtual School top sliced £152,325 for the academic year and used this to provide resources to support the most vulnerable in the cohort.

Of the pupils who were without a school place, they were provided with additional tuition which exceeded the £2530 per pupil. We also ensured that once they had a school place, pupil premium plus was paid to the new school.

When a pupil enters care at any point in the academic year, the educational setting immediately starts to receive PP+ funding for the term the pupil entered care. In some cases, the pupil may require additional funding for specific needs and to support the transition into care. This is allocated from the top slice. When a pupil moves school, the PP+ funding follows that child/young person to ensure that needs are met in their new setting.

When a pupil leaves care during an academic year the school/educational placement receives the remaining amount of PP+ up to the sum of £2,530. This is to cover any shortfall in funding in the interim between leaving care and being eligible for PP+ funding for being Previously Looked After [PLAC].

In line with our Pupil Premium Plus Policy, schools can claim for additional funding to meet the needs of the pupil in excess of the allocated £1,800. This is used to support those pupils who have high needs and need significant intervention to remain in school. This has proved to be a very successful use of the top slice as this has ensured that we have had zero permanent exclusions.

All of the pupils who attended a school and were eligible to receive the funding were provided with the allocation of £1800. This was dependent upon the conditions of grant. For example, pupils in specialist independent schools would already have Education Health and Care Plan funding as well as school fees and so they would be double funded. However, each application is carefully considered and if PP+ can support learning, then we would allocate it.

Additional income was obtained for Children with a Social Worker. This was £100,000 but this funding was not to be allocated to individual children. The intended use for this money was to support the development of strategy to raise educational outcomes across Thurrock for CWSW. This grant has also been provided for the financial years 23/24 and has been guaranteed until March 2025.

An additional grant of 'catch up' tuition funding was also provided by the Department for Education (DFE), and this was £57,573 as well as receiving £57,979 for Recovery Premium funding. This money went towards our tuition costs.

In total interventions that were used to raise educational outcomes were £237, 313.34. The top slice combined with additional tuition and recovery funding were used to boost the top slice amount.

Pupil Premium Received	481,770
Pupil Premium Released	329,445
Pupil Premium Retained	152,325
Pupil Premium Spent by Virtual School	237,313
Additional Tutoring Funding from DFE	57,573
Additional Recovery Premium Funding from DFE	57,979

Overview of Pupil Premium Funding 22/23

- Pupil Premium Received
- Pupil Premium Released
- Pupil Premium Retained
- Pupil Premium Spent by Virtual School
- Additional Tutoring Funding from DFE
- Additional Recovery Premium Funding from DFE
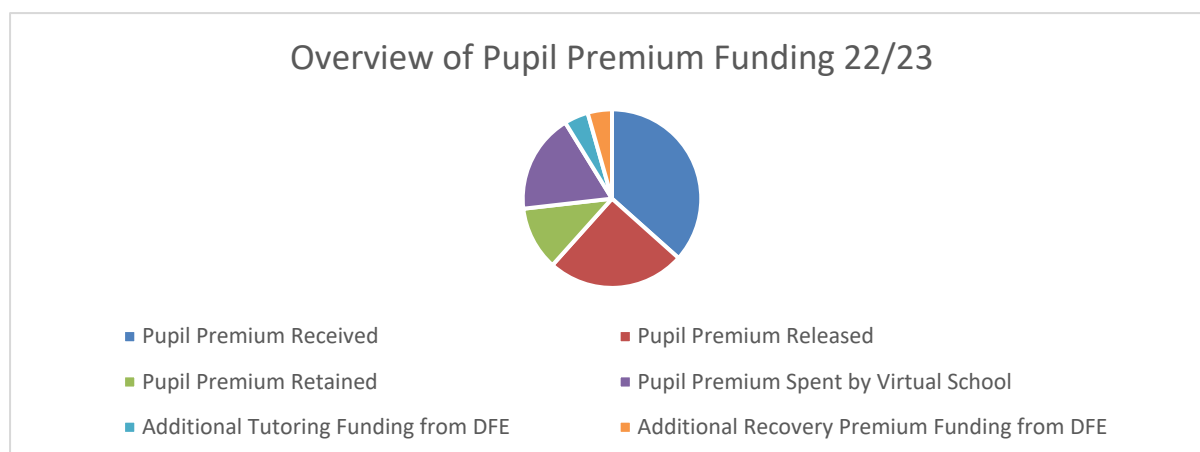
Spending Overview of Pupil Premium Plus using top slice and additional grants and Virtual School core budget

Resource	Cost	Justification of Spend
Letter Box Book Trust Reading Materials for Nursery to Year 4	£8,951.81	To promote reading activities in the home. Foster positive relationships in the home via games and joint activity. Make CLA feel special to have own post
Commission of AC Education to Provide Trauma and Attachment to schools	£983.90	This training is being provided to Thurrock schools to support all Thurrock pupils and not just those who are looked after or for Children with a Social Worker.
Action for Inclusion Toolkit	£1063.00 £1200	Licences for schools to assess behavioural and emotional needs and then plan strategies for support. (as highlighted in case studies above)
Bespoke Learning	£1549	Alternative education package for 2 pupils including Rosetta Stone
Flash Academy	£3,000	ESOL - Learning Lab for young people to access for learning English
Bare Foot Learning	£1,000	E Learning course for NEET young people to access in subjects such as health and safety, accounting etc.
Trauma and Attachment	£349.90	Tina Rae Books. Supporting young people with behavioural needs.
Provision of IT resources for Children/Young People Looked After	£4363.73	These resources which include software and virus protection have been used to support the education of pupils. This enables them to complete online tutoring, home work and school led projects.
Tutoring	£203,482 We obtained an additional	This tutoring involves the employment of 1-1 tutors who either work face to face or virtually with a range of our pupils across the year.

	£57,573 from the DFE for catch up tuition. This was all spent and allocated to key year groups. Additionally we received £57, 979 for the Recovery Premium funding.	The impact of tuition has been seen with the progress and attainment data for our key year groups. In addition to this we ensure that when a pupil is missing education (i.e with no school provision) tuition is used to support education whilst a provision is found. Additionally some of our Year 12 and 13 pupils have received tuition to help with exams or new courses. Our UASC pupils are also provided with online learning materials and tuition to support their learning of English.
Commissioning of Open Door Mentoring Services	£8,000	This service is used to support individual pupils with mentoring based upon needs. This is an intervention which is bespoke and works on different areas such as conflict resolution, gangs, self-esteem, choices etc. This is reserved for 10 pupils per academic year, but we can commission more if necessary.
Equipment for pupils – dictionaries for UASC, Functional Skills workbooks for UASC, phonics packs for Nursery to Year 2 ages ranges, maths resources for Year 4 and 5, revision resources for year 10 and 11.	£3,370	Pupils are supported with the relevant materials they need to support home learning and revision. This is to support achievement in testing and home work.

Although the total amount of intervention funding exceeded our top slice amount, we were able to utilise some funding obtained in April 2023 when the new financial year started. The PP+ is allocated across a financial year but we use the funds across an academic year. This means we are able to allocate resources to schools and pupils according to need. It is essential that all of this money is allocated because Thurrock would be obliged to pay back any underspend at the end of a financial year. The Virtual School Head is committed to spending this money carefully and that is has the maximum amount of impact on pupils as possible.

The majority of funding this academic year was spent on 1-1 tuition for pupils. This is funded at between £48 and £55 per hour of tuition, depending upon the tuition provider and the type of provision package.

Our tuition offer was:

- Year 5 tuition English and maths
- Year 6 tuition for English and maths
- Year 10 tuition English, maths and science
- Year 11 tuition for English, maths and science
- Tuition for any UASC without a school place in line with our Children Missing Education policy.
- Tuition for pupils who were not making sufficient progress and who were not in receipt of school based interventions.
- Tuition for all pupils who were missing education. 15 hours per week to support learning until a school placement was secured.

As parting of the reporting process, The Virtual School Head submits spending overviews to the Governing Body of the Virtual School to detail the planned intent of top slice spending.

Additional income

This was obtained from the DFE for the extension to the role of the VSH to support the strategic improvement for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). This was £100,000 but this funding was not to be allocated to individual children. The intended use for this money was to support the development of strategy to raise educational outcomes across Thurrock for CWSW. This grant has also been provided for the financial years 23/24 and has been guaranteed until March 2025.

There was also £30,000 to support the information, advice and guidance role that we fulfil for Previously Looked After.

This funding is used to employ staff to fulfil these roles.

15.   **Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans**
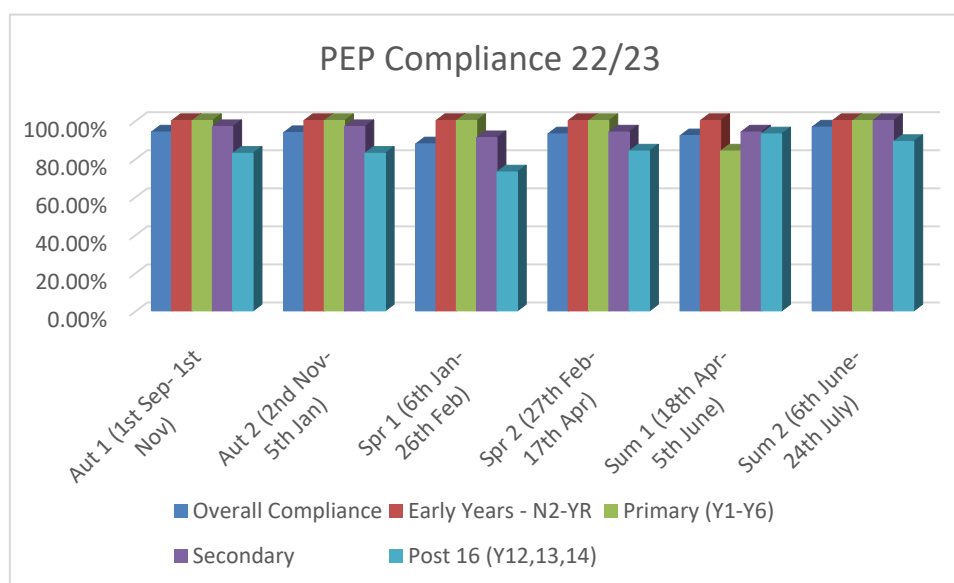
The Personal Education Plan [PEP] is a key document to support the child's/young person's education. Where possible the Virtual School attends specific PEP meetings. It is also important that the Virtual School attends PEP meetings for particularly vulnerable students or when a potential issue has been identified. For example, a concern regarding progress. The VS team is responsible for Quality Assuring [QA] PEP. Compliance data is shown in the table below. This shows that PEP compliance remained above 90% throughout the year except for during Spring term 1. Some PEPs were out of timescale due to absence of staff in schools or in social care. A PEP is compliant when the following has been completed:

- A meeting has taken place to discuss education relating to that pupil
- The meeting is recorded and statutory areas for the PEP are completed by social care, the young person and the educational establishment

- Statutory guidance states that all CLA must have a PEP every 6 months, however, at Thurrock we expect that all CLA will have a PEP every term which equates to 3 PEPs a year

PEP Compliance Data for Academic Year 2022-2023

Month	Overall Compliance	Early Years - N2-YR	Primary (Y1-Y6)	Secondary (Y7-11)	Post 16 (Y12,13,14)
Aut 1 (1st Sep- 1st Nov)	94%	100%	100%	97%	83%
Aut 2 (2nd Nov- 5th Jan)	94%	100%	100%	97%	83%
Spr 1 (6th Jan- 26th Feb)	88%	100%	100%	91%	73%
Spr 2 (27th Feb- 17th Apr)	93%	100%	100%	94%	84%
Sum 1 (18th Apr- 5th June)	92%	100%	84%	94%	93%
Sum 2 (6th June- 24th July)	97%	100%	100%	100%	89%

Quality of Personal Education Plans

In addition to the PEP compliance data the Virtual School track the quality of PEPs. Every Personal Education Plan document is quality assured for each pupil across the year. We have a clear quality assurance framework which is shared with social workers and the schools/colleges and it is embedded into our electronic PEP system.

PEP quality has remained a focus for improvement, and we have provided training, support and challenge to attempt to mitigate the production of a poor quality PEP. We have placed PEP training onto the Thurrock system so that social care can access the

training at any time. We provide monthly social worker training sessions and termly training sessions for Designated Teachers. There is a range of written guidance to support practitioners to complete a high quality PEP. Virtual school staff also provide personalised training to social care, teachers and foster carers.

PEPS are only graded RED (poor quality) if there are no minutes or the young person's views are missing.

PEP quality improved over the year, however, we know there is still more that we would like to do. New staff in school and in social care has affected quality as they have needed to be aware of the processes and expectations that are in place. This emphasises the need for all stakeholders to invest in attending or accessing our training and resources.

Month	Overall Good Quality %	% Amber	% RED
Aut 1	65%	7%	11%
Aut 2	77%	10%	14%
Spr 1	69%	12%	6%
Spr 2	64%	12%	7%
Sum 1	91%	3%	0%
Sum 2	85%	6%	6%

What Next?

- In the forthcoming year the VS will continue to provide PEP training, support and challenge to social workers, carers, schools and colleges
- Pupil Premium Plus funding will be withheld from schools if the education section is not completed to a high standard
- PEPs will still be scrutinised every term for the quality of educational targets and how they are linking to Pupil Premium Plus applications
- Continue to reflect on the young person's views sections for ease of completion. For example, fewer questions.
- Embed PEP templates for Children Missing Education, Not in Education, Employment or Training and School Refusers into the electronic system so it is a single point of reference for all and less reliant on people attaching the relevant document.

16. **Post 16 Update**

The Virtual School supports pupils who have left Year 11 and are moving onto the next stage of their education. Pupils take a variety of paths either through level 1, 2 or 3, Further Education or Higher Education qualifications. Others combine apprenticeships with obtaining qualifications. Every pupil is supported appropriately to create the next step that is suitable for them. Conversations regarding post 16 pathways are discussed in Year 10. Transition conversations and post 16 aspirations are looked at as early as Year 9 and then finalised before the student leaves Year 11 and they are

supported with applying for college positions and courses. All pupils should receive a careers interview before leaving school and our CLA also have access to careers advice via the Inspire Youth Hub team. After the students receive their qualifications, they are further supported to apply for places again if they were unsuccessful with their original choice and all can access support from the Virtual School 16+ Education Adviser if necessary. Such activities that are supported include applying for a bursary, receiving additional tuition, interventions and attendance at disruption meeting with colleges and employers. Further Education Personal Education Plans are put in place for every student, even those without an educational placement. The Virtual School works closely with the aftercare team to support pupils in Year 13 and beyond.

Actions taken by the Virtual School to Support 16+ education include:

- Seek, listen and act in response to the young person's views
- Attending a variety of panel meetings and ensuring that aspirations for the future are embedded
- Ensuring that enrichment activities are discussed at PEP and LAC review meetings
- Ensuring that career aspirations are evidenced as part of the PEP
- Ensuring that Key Stage 4 pupils have received appropriate careers advice
- Supporting transitions through documentation such as attaching the career interview to the PEP and logging exam results onto the Liquid Logic Children's social care reporting system
- Having robust processes in place to reduce NEET – for example creation of a NEET panel which is held monthly to discuss cases and provide solutions
- Having regular monthly or bi-monthly contact with NEET young people to support them, keep in touch, provide advice
- Providing learning resources to UAS young people to support acquisition of English
- Providing learning resources as requested by young people, for example, Information Technology as appropriate, study books, revision guides
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for students requesting this to support their aspirations and reduce gaps in knowledge
- Tracking pupil progress for every post 16 student in the cohort and challenge poor progress
- Supporting enhanced transition for pupils with SEND into Key Stage 5 through attendance at annual reviews, professionals meetings and PEPs
- Enhancing the allocation of pupil premium plus to support aspirations. For example: funding for specific courses, CSCS card, workwear, protective specialist clothing, fork lift truck license
- Completion of transition meetings and handovers for those transitioning into post 18
- Provision of mentoring for those requesting it through Open Door
- Regular interactions with after care, personal assistants and Inspire Hub to support young people and signpost to the appropriate service
- Completion of the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire with those young people who will engage to look at mental health needs and signpost for support

- Actively promoting the Make Happen Programme which supports those with aspirations for university
- Reward young people for good attendance at education with vouchers of their choice
- Quality assuring PEPs for post 16 pupils to ensure that all young people have a PEP regardless of their situation and that aspiration and opportunity are in place
- Attendance at key meetings such as PEPS, serious breech, low attendance, disciplinary, LAC reviews, strategy and professionals
- Provision of training to post 16 settings so they can better support our young people
- Monitoring and providing challenge to settings to promote good educational experiences for our young people.

Our additional area of focus for the following year is to forge even better relationships and transitions with the aftercare team. For example, promoting attendance of personal assistants at PEPs, regular meetings with the after-care team manager and creation of a joint action plan for supporting educational outcomes for care leavers.

<u>Testimonial from a Care Experienced Advisor Lead Post 16</u>

'L works tirelessly to ensure the young people she is responsible for have access to a high standard of education and achieve the best outcomes possible. The partnership working with L means the college have as much information as possible around support needs for our new applicants, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. L is always looking at how she can best support the college, whether that is through providing resources to our learners, challenging other professionals around attendance, or offering advice on a different approach to take. L acts as an advocate to our young people, ensuring their voices are heard and they are fully supported'.

<u>University Students</u>

Although the Virtual School does not hold responsibility for these students, we still like to support our young people as they leave care and head off to university. This is in the form of IT resources and vouchers for their living costs as they leave Year 13. It remains the aspiration of Thurrock Council that as many care leavers as possible can access higher education if they choose to. We currently have 23 care leavers who are attending university or completing a degree through the Open University.

17.   **<u>Not in Education Employment or Training [NEET]</u>**

The Virtual School closely monitors any post 16 young person who has CLA status and who is NEET. They are monitored at least monthly and the Post 16+ Education Adviser works with the young person, social care, personal advisors and local colleges and businesses to create the best possible opportunity for the young person to be placed in education, employment or training. NEET data is provided to the Virtual School Governing Body every term as part of the Headteacher's report.

Not in Employment Education or Training [NEET] Strategy Meeting

Each month the virtual school team meet with social workers for NEET young people to discuss the cases. There is an action matrix which is created to detail all actions planned and then evaluate the impact of these. A representative from Inspire Youth Hub attends this meeting so there is a co-ordinated approach wherever possible. The aftercare team manager is also invited as well as the service manager of CLA. This approach enables discussion and actions to be prioritised to support the young person back into EET.

Barefoot E Learning for NEET Young People

This is an online course package which is used in addition to the offers provided by Inspire. Our young people are given this as an option to access a variety of academic and vocational courses which they can choose depending upon interests and their chosen next steps. Feedback from our young people has been that they have found this interesting and manageable to do. It has given them the confidence to try new things and to access this learning at their own pace.

Access to Exams

Where our NEET pupils have requested tuition or access to re-sitting exams we have supported this via commissioning individual tutoring and paying the entrance fees for exams or functional skills.

Access to vocational learning

In the past year we have supported young people who have requested help to access courses that have needed funding. Such as nail tech, CSCS card, building courses.

Contact with NEET Young People

The post 16 adviser contacts every NEET young person every 2-4 weeks. Some young people require more contact than others and so this could be several times per month.

Not in Education, Employment or Training Data

These figures include those who have recently come into care and those who have recently left care due to being 18 years old. If a pupil becomes 18 during Year 13, the Virtual School still monitors and supports alongside the aftercare team.

Strategies for NEET support are noted above in this report. Some NEET young people have been involved with re-engagement activities throughout the year and this has meant that they can complete some training and tuition.

Month	NEET Year 12	NEET Year 13	NEET Year 13 excluding 18+

September 2022	7 – 18%	8 – 15%	0 – 0%
October 2022	7 – 17%	6 – 12%	7 – 11%
November 2022	10 – 24%	8 – 15%	6 – 5%
December 2022	9 – 21%	10 – 19%	8 – 18%
January 2023	11 – 23%	13 – 23%	10 – 26%
February 2023	10 – 20%	12 – 21%	6 – 20%
March 2023	11 – 21%	15 – 25%	5 – 22%
April 2023	11 – 21%	15 – 25%	5 – 22%
May 2023	12 – 21%	16 – 28%	5 – 9%
June 2023	12 – 21%	16 – 28%	5 – 9%
July 2023	19 – 30%	17 – 30%	2 – 3%

Number of NEET Young People Across the Academic Year
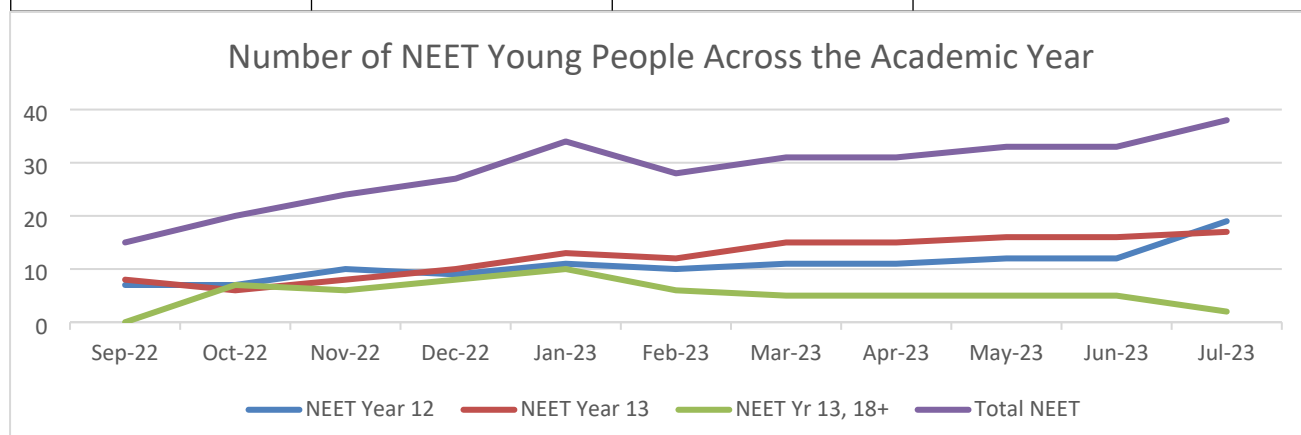
NEET figures have increased over the course of the year. There have been several reasons for this including:

- Young people entering care during the year who did not have EET before – there were 3 young people who entered care from March 2023 onwards and so could not access a college placement.
- Unaccompanied Asylum seekers entering care at a point in the year where there was no ESOL provision run by colleges or existing provision was full. For example, 9 UASC entered care during or after March 2023 and a further 2 entered care in January 2023 and were in locations with no ESOL provision.
- Young people have been withdrawn from college due to poor attendance
- Young people have changed their mind about their course of study and have left college to work part-time before engaging in another course

There have been some barriers to young people becoming EET. Care experienced young people are still experiencing longer term effects of Covid measures, which led to severe disruption to education and employment. The return to traditional exams has led to many students receiving lower grades that expected, and not being able to progress onto desired courses. This has led to higher drop-out rates. Care experienced young people are also reporting mental health challenges. For some, this is having a negative impact on their ability to engage in EET.

At the end of the academic year there were 119 pupils in years 12 and 13. There were 38 young people who were NEET. Therefore, EET in this post-16 cohort was 68% which was broadly in line with national data for care leavers which was 66%.

Things that have made a difference

There have been far more young people being able to stay put which has really supported those in education. This has meant that they have not needed to move placement and they are able to continue their studies.

At placement and transitions panels, education is discussed and social care are very supportive of enabling the young people to continue in their current placement which provides stability and reassurance to the young person.

For those who have aspirations for university, staying put agreements are put in place for these young people if requested. This means that the young person has somewhere to live when they return home for the holidays.

The courses and support we have offered from the Virtual School has shown the young people that we care and are invested in their future. If they have requested a course or opportunity, we have done our best to make that happen.

What Next?
- Ensure that all NEET pupils continue to have a NEET PEP which is reviewed every 3 months
- Continue to provide challenge to semi-supported accommodation key workers to ensure they are promoting EET to our young people
- Liaise with social care to check that mental health and well-being is being supported
- Collection of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores to check mental health is being supported
- Creation of an action plan which is shared with after care and social care managers to support aspiration and challenge
- Reinstate the offer of mentoring for young people through Open Door and work ready mentoring through Prospero tuition services
- Continue to work with the opportunities offered by the Inspire HUB to compliment the work they are doing with post 16 and post 18 pupils.

18. **Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

There continues to be a demand for the Virtual School team to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. We currently have 21% of our Virtual School cohort classified as UASC. The national transfer scheme regional sharing protocol arrangements has enabled young people to be transferred to boroughs with fewer numbers than Thurrock. The number of UASC coming into Thurrock has not reduced and as some of our previous UASC have left care, Thurrock

Local Authority are distributing fewer young people to other boroughs. This year we have continued to support the educational needs of these young people. This has included 1-1 tuition of school age pupils and the provision of online learning packages to all young people. The priority with all is to obtain school or college placements as soon as possible to promote the learning of English. We have also created stationary packs, provided dictionaries in native languages and Entry Level 1 and 2 materials to support with ESOL and basic maths and English. We also provide every UASC pupil with access to a programme called Flash Academy which enables young people to have mini lessons in key vocabulary. We have also provided IT resources for homes so that young people can access online learning. These have been well received by our young people. Our older UASC pupils continue to do well in their colleges and schools and those who have been with us for over 12 months are making good progress with their English.

We have continued to use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which has been translated into different languages so that our young people could access this. We require all our pupils to have up to date SDQ scores and so we needed for them to answer their own set of questions to triangulate against the scores from other professionals.

What Next?:

- Creation of a monthly UASC panel where cases can be discussed at an individual level and for strategy to be developed further between Virtual School and Social Care
- Continue to provide a range of resources to support the acquisition of English language skills
- Continue to liaise with good practice forums in the eastern region to share ideas and resources
- Update the UASC PEP
- Secure school and college places as soon as possible when a young person enters the country
- Trial the use of reading pens which will automatically translate text to support language acquisition.

19.   **Virtual School Governing Body**

The Virtual School Governing Body [GB] was formed in the autumn term 2016. Meetings are held once per term. The Governing Body is used to hold the Virtual School to account and ensure that the team are maximising positive outcomes for CLA.

The members of this GB 2022/23 were:

Chair: M Lucas [Assistant Director of Learning, Skills and Inclusion]

Headteacher: K Pullen [Virtual School]

In Borough School Representative Secondary: Mrs A Hughes [CEO Osborne Academy Trust]

In Borough School Representative Primary: M. Curtis [HT Somers Heath Primary School]

Out of Borough School Representative Designated Teacher: Vacancy

Alternative Provision School Representative: M. Hunnisett (HT/CEO The Olive Academy)

Education Representative: A Winstone [Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND]

Post 16 Education Representative: K Kozlova-Boran – Service Manager Learning and Careers

Social Care Representative: L Froment – Service Manager Children Looked After Services

Staff Governor: members of the VS team take turns to attend.

The purpose of the Governing Body [GB] is to hold the VSHT to account and to ensure that clear and regular lines of reporting are in place. The VSHT prepares a range of documentation for the GB to approve and to question the strategy and decisions made by the VSHT.

In addition, the VSHT reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee on a regular basis.

20. **Staffing**

Staffing has remained stable throughout the year. An additional full time adviser was employed to support with the Children with A Social Worker actions.

Staff receive the necessary statutory training to complete their roles as well as to further develop their skill set.

21. **Additional Strategies to support the educational progress of Thurrock Children in Care**

Working in Partnership with other Teams in Thurrock Council and out of borough councils.

The Virtual School works with a range of teams within Thurrock to enable the best possible outcomes for our CLA and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). These include School Effectiveness, Social Care, Special Educational Needs including Educational Psychologists, Fostering, Health, Admissions and Education Welfare. This cohesive approach works together around the child/young person to create a supportive, knowledgeable level of service aimed at serving the best interest of the CLA.

The Virtual School also works with the relevant teams in other boroughs for our CLA who are placed out of borough. Actions to work with a range of partners included:

- Provision of training to Designated Teachers
- Provision of training to social workers
- Phone call support for foster carers, social workers and teachers
- Frequent liaison with educational establishments
- Provision of training, information advice and guidance for professionals and parents linked to Previously Looked After Children
- Attendance at the Children in Care Council when invited.

Additional Services [commissioned by Virtual School in 2022/23]

- EGov Digital Solutions – to monitor the attendance of our CLA
- EGov Digital Solutions – an electronic platform for Personal Education Plans
- Fleet Tuition Service – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Prospero – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Teaching Personnel – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Equal Education – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Open Door – Provision of 1-1 mentoring for pupils
- Currys PC World – Provision of Digital Technology to support learners
- Literacy Book Trust – provision of reading materials to pupils
- National College – Provision of CPD for staff and provision of safeguarding materials, advice and guidance for foster carers and schools
- Barefoot Learning – online courses for NEET young people to access a variety of training online linked to enabling them to be ready for work or education
- Flash Academy – online learning materials for UASC pupils. This translates their own language and supports the learning of English vocabulary

22. <u>**Children with A Social Worker**</u>

Defining the cohort of children with a social worker

56

Virtual school heads are, with agreement and support from their local authority, strategic leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker.

'Children with a social worker' refers to this group of children. It includes all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding or welfare reasons. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a children in need plan or a child protection plan.

Children with a social worker face significant barriers to education as a result of experiences of adversity, most commonly abuse and neglect. The review of children in need showed that at least 1.6 million children needed a social worker between 2012 and 2018 – equivalent to one in 10 of all children, or 3 children in every classroom. The review showed that these children do significantly worse than others at all stages of education, and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

The review recognised the crucial role that virtual school heads have in helping education settings and local authorities work together, and made a commitment to explore the capacity needed to extend their leadership to the cohort of children and young people with a social worker.

Virtual school head leadership is vital now more than ever, given the impact the pandemic has had on the learning of all children – none more so than the most vulnerable. For example, in the 2020 to 2021 academic year, children in need lost an average of 4.1 months of learning in secondary school reading compared with 2.4 months for all children. In September 2021, local authorities began receiving funding to extend the role of virtual school heads to include strategic responsibility for children with a social worker.

Using their expertise and knowledge from working with looked-after and previously looked-after children, virtual school heads have made progress in:

- understanding and addressing the barriers and challenges this group face in attending school
- strengthening partnerships between education settings and local authorities
- establishing a culture of high aspirations that helps these children to progress in education

All local authorities are eligible to receive continued grant funding to support virtual school heads in delivering this responsibility.

Department for Education (DfE) is asking all local authorities to take part in the research programme to help:

- improve understanding of the impact of the new duties
- identify emerging practices that could help virtual school heads deliver their role

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Funding for this strategic leadership role for children with a social worker is confirmed until the end of March 2025.

This extended role does not require virtual school heads to provide direct intervention, help, or support for individual children with a social worker or their families. It does however, request that Virtual school heads should take note of the review of children in need, including the findings on how to improve children's outcomes. Although virtual school heads will adopt a flexible leadership approach to meet the needs of their local area, there are some activities which are critical for all, including:

- enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together in a child focused manner
- identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes to ensure pupils make educational progress
- offering advice and support to key professionals such as social workers, DSLs, designated teachers, and school leaders to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions.

Although this extension to duties is non-statutory, we have embraced the opportunities it has provided us to promote the education of children with a social worker. This will have great benefits for Thurrock community and young people. We are hoping that the Department for Education will make this a statutory duty for Local Authorities. So far, the funding of £100,000 has enabled us to employ 2 staff members. They work closely with Thurrock schools to analyse what works well and what needs developing relating to the education of children who have a social worker. There has been a greater focus with our social care colleagues to look at provision for those on the edge of care and how education and good attendance is promoted. The team are working with the data team to enhance the type of data that we can collect and analyse for this cohort so that we can then better plan for provision or intervention. Trauma and Attachment has been a big focus this year and we are working in conjunction with the Educational Psychologists to promote and provide training to educational settings.

23.   <u>**Testimonials from Those we Work With**</u>

Senior Curriculum Manager ESOL 16-18

'In my experience, L has been very reliable and effective to work with. She is generally available and responsive and, despite what is presumably a heavy caseload, she often offers to arrange ad-hoc meetings to address issues with students, such as attendance or behaviour. Often, these interventions have had a proven positive impact on the issues they are intended to address. In my view, L's tone with the young people in our college always strikes the right note, balancing support, empathy and praise with clear expectations and explanations of consequences if an issue persists. I find this in line with our college ethos. I look forward to working with L further in future'.

Commissioning Manager| Adults, Housing and Health

'You've been an amazing help this year.

Thanks for all your help – you have been brilliant!!!!'

Feedback from teachers who attended Emotional School Based Avoidance

'Firstly, thank you so much for the training tonight! My colleagues and I were discussing, and we said it was incredibly eye opening and informative'.

Designated Safeguarding Lead who had been asked to send data relating to a request to track Children with A Social Worker

'This is actually a good exercise for us because, I'll be honest, I knew at the time who had a social worker but didn't keep track of levels and things, so I'm pleased we have to do it'.

Care Experienced Adviser

'L is a dedicated and caring educational advisor who goes above and beyond for her students. Over the past months working with her, I have been struck by her commitment to seeing her students succeed. She takes the time to listen and understand each student's unique situation and goals, and provides thoughtful guidance tailored to helping us move forward in our academic journeys. Even when students face setbacks or challenges that threaten their continuation in school, L advocates fiercely for them. She helps identify resources and solutions, and her encouragement inspires students to persevere.

Beyond just advising academic matters, L also mentors students on personal growth and finding purpose. She has a special talent for asking questions that prompt self-reflection with the academic and support team in the college and pushes back. Literally takes one out of their comfort zones. PEP meetings are often a time to readjust support and service to suit a young person. I'm grateful to have built a meaningful work relationship with such a dedicated and uplifting advisor over this past year. L is always happy to help through the PEP portal (Epep), her guidance has made all the difference in keeping me on track towards achieving a good PEP report. She goes far beyond the call of duty, and her students are lucky to have such a fierce advocate on our side. Thank you.'

Head of Safeguarding at a local college re Trauma and Attachment Training

'I just wanted to say a huge thank you for funding the Attachment & Trauma Training for the college. It has been so well-received by staff and feedback so far has been great. It has really supported the work we are developing around safeguarding and behaviour so perfect timing. I hope you enjoyed the sessions too and can see how well staff engage.'

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Designated Care Experienced Adviser re Trauma and Attachment Training

'I just wanted to send a quick email to say thank you for offering us the Trauma and Attachment Training that staff have been completing over the last 3 days. I saw that you attended these sessions also, but just wanted to share that this training appears to have been really well received so far. I have overheard a couple of conversations between staff around the building about how much they have enjoyed the training and that they have got a lot out of it – we are really hopeful that we will see some of the learning start to be embedded into the classrooms and the general college ethos.'

24.   **Professional Development of VS Staff**

As a Virtual School we take professional development very seriously as it enables us to reflect on our practice and improve our service. Our team have continued to access a range of online courses during the academic year. For new members to the team, they have completed all necessary training and induction modules as required by the council. All staff receive monthly supervision meetings and 6 monthly performance reviews in line with Thurrock policy.

25.   **Author of this report**

Keeley Pullen BA [Hons] PGCE, NPQH, Dip [Ed]

Headteacher of the Virtual School for Thurrock Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Submission date to Corporate Parenting Committee March 2024

Submission date to the Virtual School Governing Body March 2024