



Virtual School Kent

Overview Report 2016/2017

Contents

1.	Executive Summary	Page 3
2.	Demographics	Page 5
3.	Attainment – Analysis of reporting years 2016 (Validated)	Page 6
4.	Attendance and Exclusion	Page 10
5.	Attainment Summer 2017 (Un-validated)	Page 12
6.	Participation & Engagement	Page 15
7.	Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)	Page 19
8.	Priorities for 2017-2018	Page 22

Related Plans and Strategies

Promoting the Education of Looked After Children-*Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities* (DfE July 2014)

Pupil Premium and the role of the Virtual School Head (DfE March 2014)

KCC Every Day Matters – Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2015 – 2018

Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-2016

Executive Summary

The vision for the Virtual School (VS) is that all our Children in Care (CIC) achieve expected or better than expected levels of progress and that the difference between their achievement and non-CIC is diminished. This will be achieved through working at a strategic and operational level within the local authority and with the many partners of schools, health, voluntary sector, members, carers and young people.

The work of the Virtual School falls into three categories:

- Operational support for children and young people through effective locality team support
- Training for multi-agency professionals, elected members and carers
- Tracking, monitoring and evaluating outcomes and practice, identifying and securing service improvements.

The Virtual School has grown to include CIC beyond the statutory schooling age of 5-16 and we aspire to be a 0-25 years' service. We are already including Early Years and 16-18 year olds and have extended the Care Council to 21 year olds.

Regarding attainment, last year's validated results were extremely positive. The Key Stage 2 Year 6 cohort size of Children in Care 12 months or greater in 2016 was 79. Data indicated excellent outcomes in that they attained broadly in line with National Averages in all indicators and performed overall better than the South East Average. This was despite 50 (63%) of this cohort having Special Educational Needs and 17 having a statement/Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). It is also encouraging that the summer 2017 results show record performances although only internally validated at this point.

The Key Stage 4 Year 11 cohort size of Kent's Children in Care 12 months or greater in 2016 was 140. Kent attained broadly in line with National Average in the new Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures but outperformed both National and South East averages for the final indicator A*-C in English and Mathematics by 2.5% and 3.6% respectively. This is despite 62 (44%) of this cohort having Special Educational Needs and 39 (28%) of them having a statement /EHCP. This is broadly in line with line national average for Key Stage 4 LAC where 27% over this time period had EHCP's or statements in place.

The 16+ data indicated a total cohort of 944 of which 602 (64%) were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) at the start of the academic year. Of this 944, 158 (16%) were classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and by the end of the academic year there were no Not Knowns and only 25 identified as Missing. We continue to drive NEET figures even lower and are able to develop strategies to cope with seasonal peaks.

Persistent Absence has seen a 2% point reduction and is now in line with National Average and 1% below that of the South East Average. We have also evidenced a significant reduction of 35% in our young people placed on a reduced time table (RTT) and positive activity regarding Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE_x) with a 6.5% reduction over the past 3 years. In addition there have been no Permanent Exclusions (PE_x) for the past 2 years.

The Virtual School has significantly developed participation and engagement this academic year. A Young Adults Council (YAC) has been developed, Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) continues to strengthen and a junior council ("Super Council") has been introduced. The number of activity days that we host is increased from 19 in 2015-16 to 24 days in 2016-2017. The feedback from our young people on the activity days remains extremely positive.

Other significant developments include embedding the process of the Challenge Cards; a system where our young people can challenge their Corporate Parents and responsible officers and these are discussed at the Children in Care management meeting and at Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP). The responses are formalised and fed back to our young people via the Young Adults Council. Ensuring our young people play a part in recruitment and training has been a priority with the development of the Recruitment Crew and a series of training events. Ten young people have been involved so far this year in 35 interview panels and 10 'Skills to Foster' panels. The VS has also trained and accredited 16 Young people via the Lazer award 'Service User Recruitment'.

There have been a multitude of success stories this year, evidenced at our Annual Awards Ceremony held at the Kent County Cricket Ground in Canterbury. The Virtual School received well over 300 nominations in 2016-2017 making it our most successful year ever.

Research from the Sutton Trust* and the Rees Centre** indicates there are key 'risk factors' which have an impact on our children's attainment and progress in school. We have used Pupil Premium Plus funding to focus on aspects that have the biggest impact on these areas i.e. narrowing the attainment gap, reducing risk of exclusion, supporting emotional well-being/mental health, increasing attendance, improving social relationships and transition. As a result, the amount spent on each child varies, led by need; during 2016-2017 Pupil Premium Plus funding was spent with good impact and no money returned to national government.

This academic year was punctuated with the Ofsted Single Inspection which was an extremely positive experience for our service. We are extremely proud that the team's dedication, commitment and expertise is recognised in this report. In summary, the Virtual School was identified as:

- Improving educational outcomes at end of the key stages and supporting good progress following placement stability; also diminishing the difference between CIC and non-CIC learners and using Pupil Premium + and PEPs well to achieve this.
- Ensuring that managers and staff enable active participation of Young people in service improvements, such as the new pathway plan and the recruitment of staff.
- Supporting the large majority of Children in Care to attend schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.
- Supporting the attendance of all children looked after up to the age of 16 to be 90% and to have no permanent exclusions as well as decreasing numbers of those experiencing fixed-term exclusions over the previous year to January 2017.
- Developing three Children in Care Councils for different age groups and using these to support the child's voice being heard by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Undoubtedly 2016-2017 has been a positive year for our Children In Care and we want to continue this journey of improvement in outcomes for them. The ambitions and aspirations of the Virtual School are closely linked within our Service Improvement Plan 2016-18 in that :

- The Virtual School will continually monitor its structure ensuring high quality support and value for money within the national context of austerity.
- The Virtual School will sustain its relentless drive on raising the progress and achievement of our Young people and fully utilise educational planning to achieve this.
- The Virtual School will continue its drive to reduce the number of Young people not engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- The Virtual School is looking to increase its digital footprint with involving our Young people in the development of Kent Cares Town and other digital media projects.

* <https://www.suttontrust.com/about-us/education-endowment-foundation/>

** <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children>

Demographics

At the end of June 2017, academic year 2016-2017, the Virtual School had responsibility for 2261 Children in Care and Care Leavers. There are 122 children at Early Years Foundation Stage (Pre-school to Reception), 1163 in Years 1-11 and 976 in Years 12 and 13 (16-18 year olds). The demographic profile of our looked after children (LAC) remains broadly unchanged; 64% of compulsory school age Children in Care are of secondary school age, the majority being 14 years old and over. The profile of our Year 12 and 13s has altered; the 16+ data indicates a total cohort of 944 at the start of the academic year, of which 602 (64%) are UASC.

Ethnically the profiles of our Children in Care are predominantly White British (73%) in relation to the compulsory school age cohort. The other significant cohorts are African at 4.4%, any other White background 4.06% and a cohort classified as other ethnic group at 8.2%.

Geographical dispersal of our Children in Care of compulsory school age remains disproportionately in East Kent with 41.50%, South Kent 21.22%, West Kent 10.23%, North Kent 12.43% and 13% placed out of county of which 4.82% in Medway.

We currently have 284 Children in Care of statutory school age who have a statutory statement of special educational needs or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

77.1% of our Children In Care of compulsory school age are in schools rated by Ofsted as Good or outstanding (15.07%-Outstanding). 13.97% are in schools rated as Requires Improvement (RI) and 2% in schools rated Inadequate. The young people in the last two

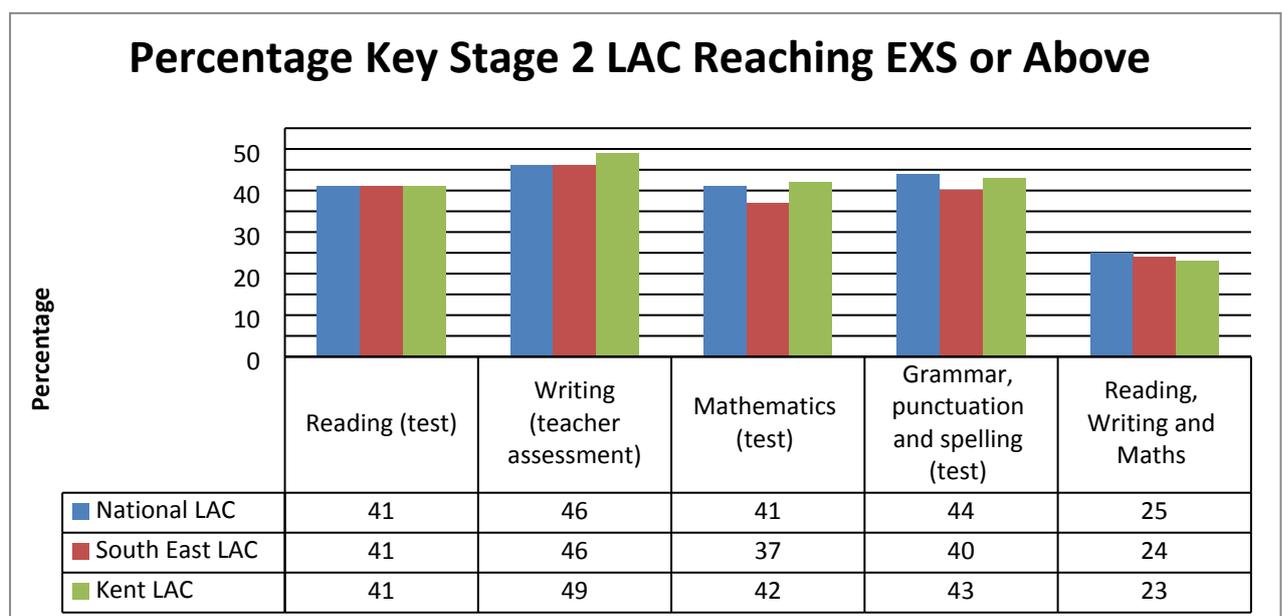
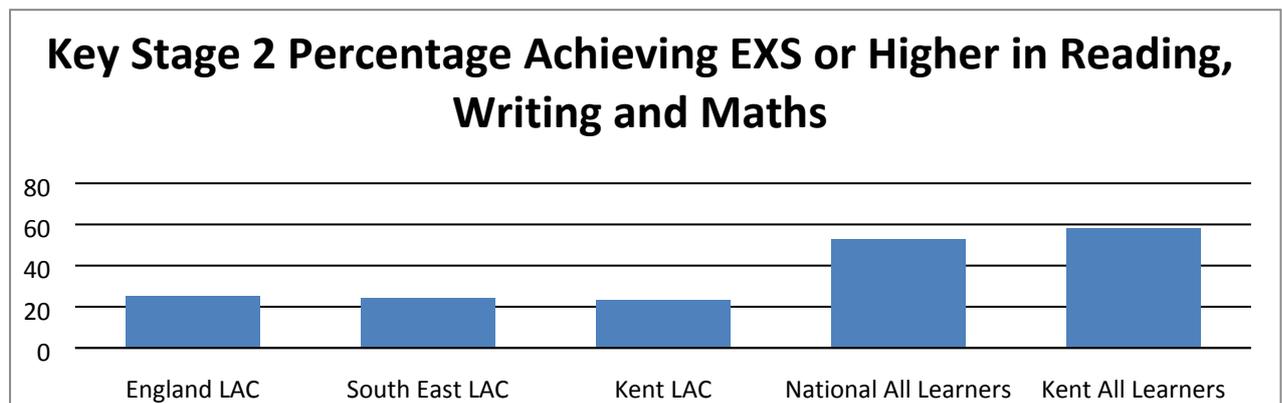
categories are closely monitored and are receiving a good education. There are a further 2% who are currently not on a school role for a multitude of reasons such as currently being assessed at a reception centre, missing, awaiting specialist SEN provision and complex needs.

Attainment

Latest Validated Outcomes (March 2017)

The latest validated outcomes for attainment of Children in Care were released by the DFE as part of the statistical first release on 31 March 2016. This data covers outcomes from the 15/16 academic year and relates to children who have been in care for 12 months or more. The teacher-assessment results for KS2 achieving EXS (Working at the Expected Standard) are shown below:

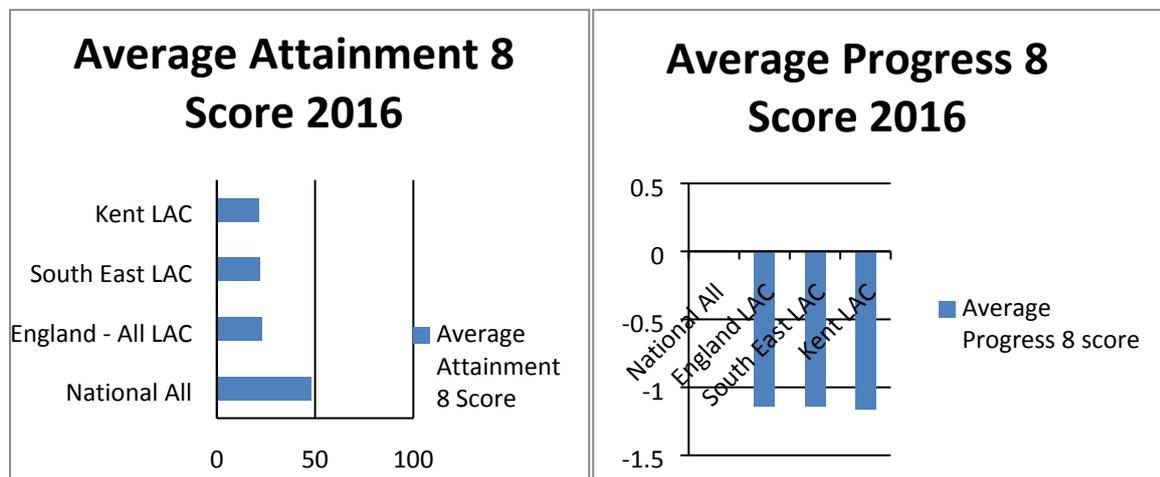
Key Stage 2 Outcomes



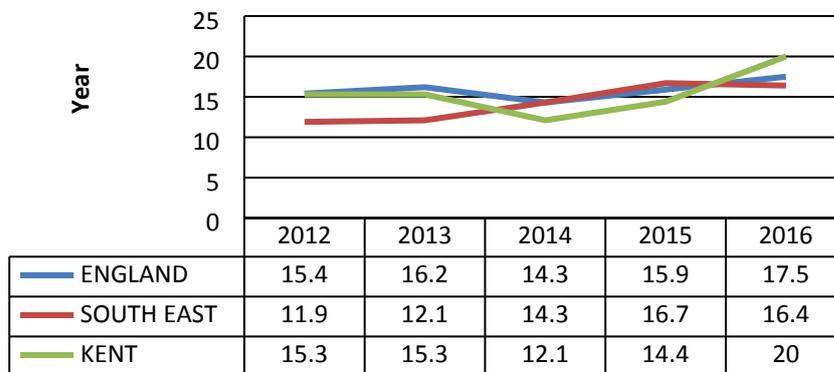
- The Key Stage 2 cohort size of Children in Care 12 months or greater in 2016 was 79. This cohort represents 6.34% of Kent's Children in Care population who have been in care 12 months or greater.
- Kent attained broadly in line with National Averages in all indicators and performed overall better than the South East Average. This is an excellent outcome considering that 50 of this cohort (63%) had Special Educational Needs. 17 had a statement or EHCP in place, 21.25% of the cohort. The SEN cohort is slightly above the national average where 57% of LAC continuously looked after for 12 months had special educational needs. Although in line with the national average for Key Stage 2 LAC where 21% had EHCP's or statements in place. This cohort was 65% male which was slightly below the Kent LAC all LAC figures which stood at 69% male.
- The average Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score of this cohort was 14.6 which is borderline and suggests some emotional difficulties. This is however in line with Kent and South East figures over the same period which stood at 14.6 but above the national figures for LAC which were 13.9 over this same period.
- This cohort had an average number of placement moves within 12 months of 2.7. Comparable national figures are not available; however the current average number placement moves for all Kent CIC is 1.51 in a year which gives a broad indication that this was above average. This is concerning as placement changes during key educational years must be avoided if at all possible. The Virtual School is actively working with the Fostering service to address this issue and is supporting the Sense of Belonging programme which helps to improve placement stability.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes

Attainment and Progress 8



Percentage Achieved A*-C in Eng & Maths



- The Key Stage 4 Year 11 cohort size of Kent's Children in Care 12 months or greater in 2016 was 140. This cohort represents 11% of the total Children in Care population who have been in care 12 months or longer.
- Kent attained broadly in line with National in the new Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures but outperformed both National and South East averages for the final indicator A*-C in English and Mathematics by 2.5% and 3.6% respectively.
- 62 of this cohort (44%) had Special Educational Needs. 39 had a statement or EHCP in place, which is 28% of the cohort. This is broadly in line with line national average for Key Stage 4 LAC where 27% over this time period had EHCPs or statements in place.
- The cohort is male dominated with 59% male which was slightly above the national average LAC for Key Stage 4 which stood at 54% male.
- This cohort had an average number of placement moves within 12 months of 3. Comparable national figures are not available: however the current average number placement moves for all Kent CIC is 1.51 which gives a broad indication that this was above average. This is concerning as placement changes during key educational years must be avoided if at all possible. The Virtual School is actively working with the Fostering service to address this issue and is supporting the Sense of Belonging programme. Also of note is the worrying trend of our young people coming later into care. This cohort had an average period of care duration of 99 weeks in care. Comparable national data does not exist; however our current LAC who have been in care over a year have an average period of care duration of 206 weeks, which gives a broad indication that this cohort had a period of care duration below the average in Kent. This highlights that a significant proportion of our young people in this indicator entered care in Year 9 and Year 10, leaving the Virtual School less time to accelerate learning to get them back on track.

Key Stage 5 – NEET to EET

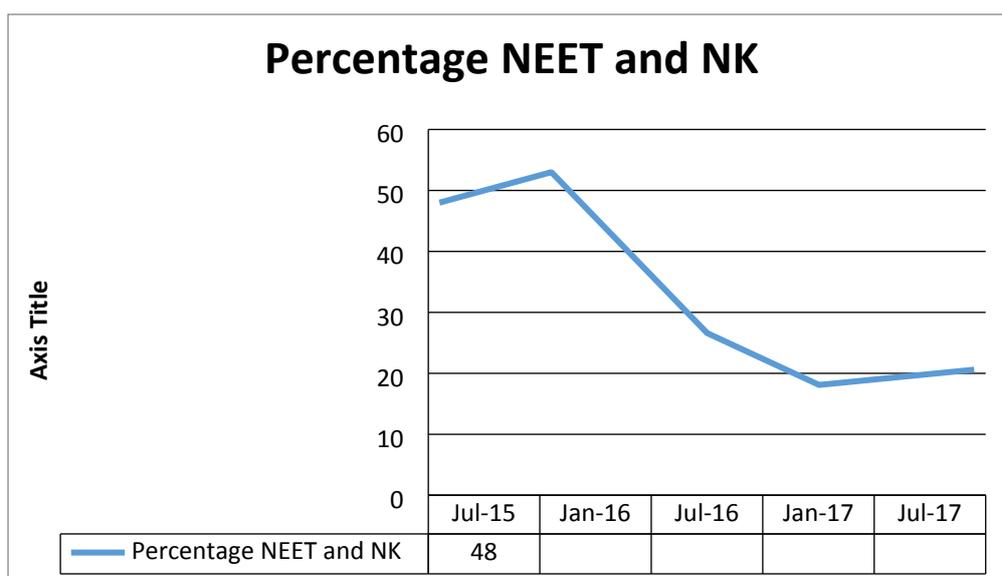
During the period between September 2015 and December 2015 there was a focus on data cleansing. The issues of data within the IYSS educational data system was been compounded by the significant increases in new UASC arrivals. By December 2015, the true level of the NEET was known and being managed within the VSK.

The development of the Corporate Parenting Transitions Policy “Education, Training and Employment – Key Stage 4 and Beyond” has unquestionably supported the delivery in improved NEET to EET outcomes. The policy coordinates the roles, responsibilities of all departments into a clear procedural framework. The policy was developed by the Virtual School 16+ team in conjunction with multi agency partners, especially Skills and Employability. The policy has also been supported at the NEET interdependency meetings where its impact has been evident with live data for the 16 to 18 year old cohort and the 18+ cohort shared and wider services having increasing awareness of the need to prioritise of Children in Care and Care Leavers.

In December 2015, the cohort of Year 12 and 13 students that VSK had responsibility for supporting was 989. Of this cohort 653 were UASC (66%), 263 were classified as NEET (26.6%) and Not Knowns (NK) were 261(26.4%) giving a total NEET/NK of 53%.

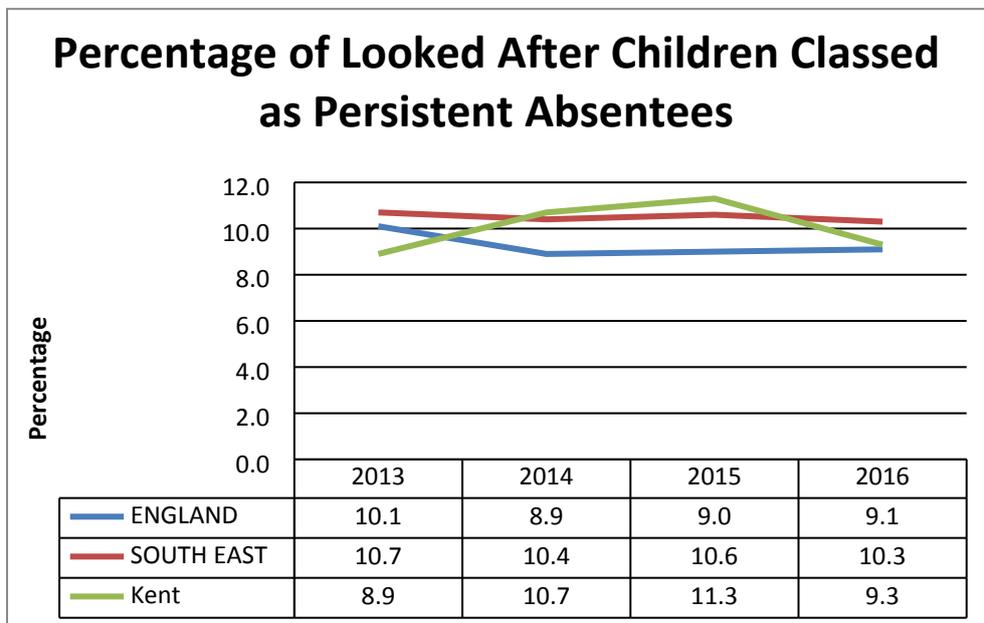
The current data shows that the total cohort of our Year 12 and 13’s has altered in 2016-17 ; the 16+ data indicates a total cohort of 944 at the start of the academic year 2016-17, of which 602 (64%) are UASC. Of this 944, 158 (16.7%) were classified as NEET and by the end of the academic year Not Knowns (NK) were 0 with only 25 (2.6%) identified as Missing. The total NEET/NK figure reduced from 53% in the previous year down to 19.06% and then a further reduction to 18.12% was achieved through the academic year 2016-17. We continue to drive NEET figures even lower and are able to develop strategies to cope with seasonal peaks.

Now that NEET numbers are low, we are able to identify seasonal peaks, for example July’s figure always rises between ending a study programme and starting another in September. This explains the slight rise in NEET figures between December 2016 and July 2017. Our robust tracking and monitoring of our YP now enables us to compare seasonal data as well as week by week and it can be seen that the NEET percentage between July 2016 and July 2017 has seen a reduction of 6% points and a 27.4% point reduction over the past two years.



Attendance and Exclusion Trend Breakdown

Persistent Absence for Kent LAC has shown a 2 percentage point decline over the period 15/16 with Kent outperforming the South East in persistent absentee rates and narrowing the gap to just +0.2% over the rates of Persistent Absence in LAC in England. Therefore Children in Care are classified as broadly in line with National Average for Children in Care.

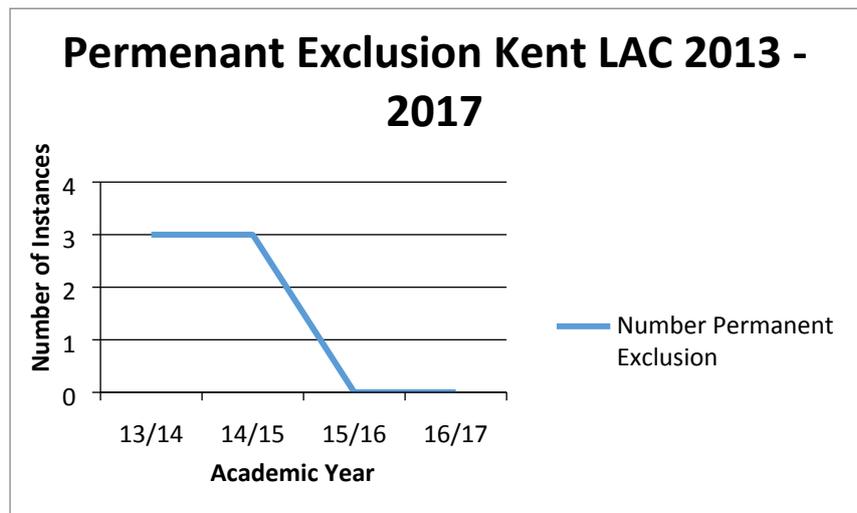


2017 Prediction – Attendance

Attendance has been carefully monitored across the 16/17 academic year with multiple factors highlighted through the use of Venn Diagrams. As at the end of May 2017 no permanent exclusions for Kent LAC had been recorded. By this same time period there were 996 LAC who had been in care for a year or longer, of those 10% had a Fixed Term Exclusion (FTexc) over the 16/17 period. 111 were currently being monitored as having Persistent Absence (11%) and this figure is expected to decline as the number of sessions it is possible to attend across the academic year increases.

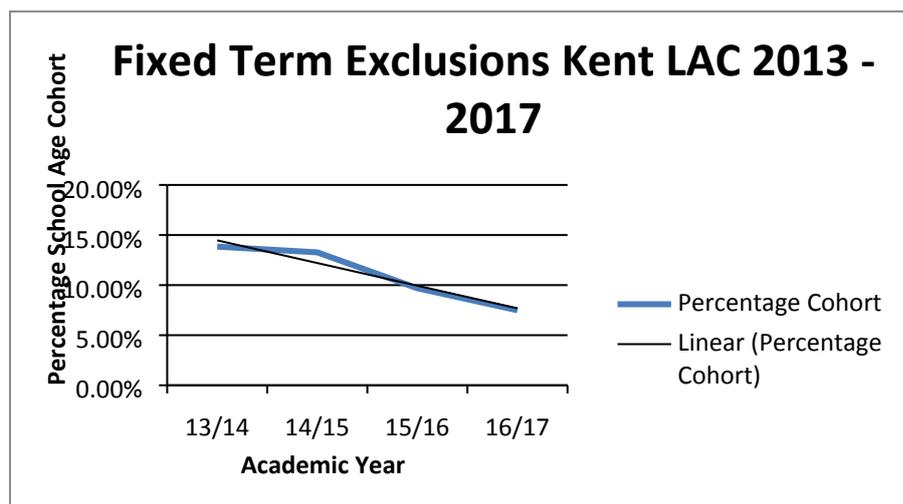
LAC on reduced time tables (RTT) have been carefully monitored across the academic year, Venn diagrams have been used to highlight the multiple factors which impact upon this cohort's attendance. The number of LAC on RTT has shown a reduction across the year from a high in March of 32 to 21 in May a reduction of 35%.

Exclusion



Ac. Year	'09/10	'10/11	'11/12	'12/13	'13/14	'14/15	'15/16	'16/17
% Permanent Exclusion	1%	0.90%	0.54%	0.39%	0.39%	0.36%	0.00%	0.00%

Children in Care can evidence a significant reduction in permanent exclusion over the past 8 years with a 54% reduction between 2010 and 2015. This has now been surpassed by now going two full academic years without a permanent exclusion. Fixed term exclusions across the entire cohort over the 15/16 period have shown a steady decrease over time with the percentage of LAC with a FTExc dropping 6.5% points over the last three years.



Attainment Summer 2017 (Un-validated)

Due to the timing of this report only un-validated outcomes are available (validation occurs in March 2018).

Key Stage 2 Summer 2017 (unvalidated)

End of KS2 RESULTS for KENT CIC	% achieved Expected Level in Reading	% achieved Expected Level in Writing	% achieved Expected Level in GPS*	% achieved Expected Level in Maths	% achieved Expected Level in Combined
%	45.30%	52.00%	49.30%	45.30%	37.30%

*Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test

Direction of Travel from Summer 2016 to Summer 2017:

Curriculum Area	% change
Reading	+11
Writing	+6
GPS	+15
Maths	+8
Combined	+62.2

Diminishing the Difference/Narrowing the Gap

Indicator	County All Learners	Gap between Kent CIC & County all Learners	National All Learners	Gap between Kent CIC & National All Learners
Reading	74%	28.70%	71	25.70%
Writing	80%	28.00%	76	24.00%
Maths	76%	30.70%	75	29.70%
Combined	64%	26.70%	61	23.70%

Indicator	National Average for CIC	Kent CIC performance comparison to National Average for CIC	SE average for CIC	Kent CIC performance comparison to SE average for CIC
Reading	41%	+4%	41	+4
Writing	46%	+6%	46	+6
Maths	41%	+4%	37	+8.3
GPS	44%	+5.3%	40	+9.3
Combined	25%	+12%	24	+13.3

Headlines

- Children in Care have outperformed the National Average for Children in Care and the South East average for Children in Care in every single indicator at end of KS2.
- Outstanding Progress in reducing the gap between Children in Care and National All Learners in the significant Combined Measure to just 23.7% which is a 62.2 percentage improvement for Children in Care on last year.
- The gap between Children in Care and All Learners across Kent is now under 29% in all Literacy elements and under 31% in Maths.
- Reduction of the gap between Children in Care and All Learners Nationally in Writing – this is now only at 24%. Historically this has been a weaker subject area for Children in Care and indicates that targeted work has reaped results.
- The same performance measures have been in place for 2 years and this has enabled VSK to embed well targeted interventions and support Children in Care to achieve very good progress on the indicators achieved and diminish the gap even further.

Key Stage 4 Summer 2017(Unvalidated)

Indicator	Achieved 4 or above in an English GCSE	Achieved 4 or above in Maths GCSE	Achieved 4 or above in English & Maths at GCSE	Achieved 5 A*-C including English & Maths GCSE
% of Kent CIC achieving indicator	20.3%	16%	11%	8.13%

Indicator	Achieved 4 or above in English GCSE	Achieved 4 or above in Maths GCSE	Achieved 4 or above in English & Maths at GCSE	Achieved 5 A*-C inc English & Maths GCSE
National All Learners	70% (Lang) 72.5% (Lit)	71%	71%	Not a performance indicator
County All Learners	Not yet published	Not yet published	64.8% (gained a "good grade")	Not a performance indicator

Headlines

- First year of new performance measures so no year on year comparison available for all indicators.
- The move to linear GCSEs (ie no coursework element) is recognised as being likely to have had relatively more impact on vulnerable students such as Children in Care. A negative impact was predicted and support was targeted to minimise the effect on outcomes.
- There was a reformed curriculum in the three Core subject areas of English Language, English Literature and Maths. Grade boundaries were also acknowledged by schools as difficult to predict across the country, which led to increased uncertainty.
- IGCSE English has not been able to count towards the English GCSE attainment measure for the first time this year and a significant percentage of Children in Care were entered for this historically. The shorter course offered the opportunity for young people to study the course and take the exam in a shorter time than the standard GCSE English courses.
- Increased risk is predicted around Children in Care performance measures at KS4 for next year when a level 5 is needed to achieve a C equivalent rather than a 4.
- The other performance indicators for scores in Attainment 8, Progress 8 and Ebacc will be able to be collected from school's data in the Statistical First Release.
- However, notable individual successes were achieved despite considerable barriers –for example one UASC achieved 5 A*-C including English and Maths despite being in the country for only approximately 2 years. One special school student (with social, economic and mental health issues, ASD and Learning difficulties) achieved 4 GCSE passes.

Post 16 NEET to EET

Year	Total yp	NEET %	% change
2015-16	894	38.2	-
2016-17	949	17	-56
2017-18	593	13.8	-19

Headlines

- Year on year improving trend in reducing young people who are NEET
- A significant percentage change of 64% in reducing young people who are NEET from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

Participation & Engagement Academic Year 2016/17

The Participation & Engagement team sit within VSK and comprises a Participation Co-ordinator, Care Leaver Apprentices whose apprenticeships and work streams are supported by VSK's School Bursar and Project Officer, and a care-experienced Participation Support Assistant.

Since the team's conception in 2012, VSK has supported twelve Care Leavers in undertaking Level 2 Apprenticeships in Business & Administration and also studied Functional Skills Level 1 or 2, five of whom received financial support from the Assisted Apprenticeship Scheme and seven of whom were funded from VSK's core budget. During their time with VSK all of the apprentices are required to work towards their NVQ qualification in Business and Administration at level 2 or 3. Each week one day is set aside to allow the apprentices to study and complete coursework in a supportive environment. This programme allows VSK to ensure that the apprentices leaving have a good qualification and a better chance at finding employment in the future. Also, as care leavers themselves, they often have gaps in their education and the qualification enables them to gain the necessary qualifications in Maths, English and ICT that they may not have achieved when they were at school or college.

VSK have responsibility for developing and supporting Children in Care Councils. The councils comprise of 3 groups of children and Young people:

- **YAC** (Young Adult Council) for Young people aged 16-21
- **OCYPC** (Our Children & Young people's Council) for those aged 11-16
- **Super Council** a new group established in 2016 for younger children aged 7-11

These councils provide an essential forum for Children in Care to speak up and affect change in the care system. The younger councils meet on a regular basis in the school holidays and YAC meets in the evening on a monthly basis.



Membership of YAC is growing, and the young people combine social activities, life skills sessions (e.g. cooking on a budget and basic first aid) with more formal meetings. They have contributed so far this year to the Care Leaver 18+ Service new Pathway Plans, the new Transitions to Independence Workbooks, the Missing Children Focus Group and have been involved in planning fund raising activities for local and national charities.

The OCYPC is well established and meets regularly. It has a strong core membership and includes several asylum-seeking young people. It has a constitution written by the council members, with the addition to the constitution being a Pledge agreed by Corporate Parenting to support the Councils. It recognises that there is work to be done to ensure the views of our Out of County Children are also represented.

The Super Council for younger members was set up as a ‘feeder’ group for the OCYPC. Meetings are activity based, with the emphasis on fun. Children have however expressed their views on feelings on matters such as – what they think a good social worker and foster carer should look and behave like.

During the Whitsun half term, the Super Council and OCYPC attended a joint activity day to support the planned transition of some of the older Super Council members to step up to OCYPC.

The apprentices within VSK (who are Care Leavers) facilitate these groups with the assistance of the Participation Team and others within the service. Meetings have been attended by the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Children, Young people & Education, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting, Head of the Care Leaver 18+ Service and other lead officers.

No of Young people who have attended the Children in Care Councils since September 2016	
Super Council (7 to 11 years)	17
OCYPC (11 to 16 years)	19
YAC (16 to 21 years)	22

Participation Activity Days September 2016 – June 2017

VSK run Participation Activity days during every school holiday. Between September 2016 and June 2017 12 events were held, attended by 273 children and Young people. VSK also ran 12 additional Participation Activity Days during the summer break 2017, therefore at 24 Activity days 16/17 has been our most successful. These days give Young people an opportunity to meet other Children in Care and establish friendships. Activity days are developed in response to feedback from Young people via evaluation forms completed after every event and so far have included activities from art to gliding and theatre performance to horse riding.

The Participation Team has also supported events organised by the District Social Care Teams including the South Kent Children in Care Christmas Party.

Challenge Cards

Through consultation with Corporate Parenting Panel and Children in Care the Participation Team has developed the concept of ‘challenge cards.’ These cards allow Children in Care and care leavers to challenge their Corporate Parents around issues facing them in care.

Kent Cares Town Website

The 'Kent Cares Town' website is a resource for Children in Care to access a wealth of information around being in care. A large part of the content for this site has been written and designed by the participation apprentices. The website continues to be a work in progress and will be having a refresh of contents in the coming months. The link is www.kentcares town.lea.kent.sch.uk

Newsletters

VSK apprentices create a junior and a senior newsletter 3 times a year which is distributed to Children in Care and colleagues and more recently has developed a newsletter for Young people aged 16 and over. They are an opportunity to promote some of the positive work that Young people are involved in around the county. These can be viewed at: <http://kentcares town.lea.kent.sch.uk/our-news> . In Spring 2017 the first newsletter pack was sent out to Children in Care looked after out of county and included a newsletter, information about Challenge Cards, Corporate Parents and the Participation Team. A bookmark competition was also held for these young people.

Recruit Crew

The VSK Participation & Engagement Team supports Children in Care and care leavers involvement in recruitment panels or inclusion on a professionals' panel. These are a common occurrence within SCS for the Director/Assistant Director posts, Senior Officers, IROs and newly qualified social worker posts. 10 Young people were involved supporting 35 interview panels and 10 Skills to Foster panels. The Service User Recruitment 1 day Training Programme that is accredited through Laser has now trained 16 Young people to date. Also, increased involvement of our Young people in recruiting to and training students at Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent has ensured that young people are involved right from the beginning of a social workers journey.

Kent Pledge Cards

Although the Kent Pledge is an important document a lot of Young people found it difficult to understand. Based on this feedback, the Participation Team has been instrumental in working with the Communications Team to design a Young Person friendly version. This version takes the essence of the Kent Pledge and delivers it on a pack of eight cards which have been designed with Children and Young people in mind. Two sets of cards have been created to reflect the differing levels of understanding of Children and Young people. These cards are included in the 'coming in to care pack'.

Coming into Care Pack

The VSK Participation & Engagement team has led on the creation of a 'coming into care pack' so that essential information can be given by social workers both to children coming in to care and in some cases to those who are already in care. Consultations have also taken place with Young people throughout the process.

The information is also hosted on the Kent Cares Town website:
<http://kentcares town.lea.kent.sch.uk/information-about-being-in-care>

Locality/District Commitments

The participation team engages with districts social work teams, the IRO Service and partners across Kent to promote participation and engagement.

Hearing the voice of Children in Care and Care Leavers

Surveys - The participation team work hard to ensure children and young people have their voices heard by ensuring they have the opportunity to complete surveys relating to being in care or just being a Young Person.

Focus Groups – The participation team facilitate focus groups to ensure that Members, KCC and partner agencies are hearing the views and opinions of Children in Care and Care Leavers. The Young Adult Council has recently supported the Missing Children Focus Group work stream, resulting in some very tangible changes to our processes and procedures as a direct result of their input.

Supporting Care Planning – DVD produced in conjunction with the IRO Service to promote Young people's participation in their reviews.

Awards Ceremony

Each year the Virtual School Kent holds awards ceremony to celebrate achievements throughout the year. The participation team support this event by arranging some of the entertainment and activities for the Children and Young people as well as encouraging them to give their feedback and ideas. The participation apprentices also give a presentation at this event which helps to keep their colleagues informed about what participation and engagement has been taking place throughout the year. They also feed into the 16+ Awards Ceremony by using the event to promote awareness around the Young Adult Council (YAC).

Buddying Support

VSK Apprentices provide 'buddying' support when asked to do by social workers. This has included working with a young lady in care experiencing anxiety issues. Sessions initially delivered in the home, then supporting her to attend both the Super Council and activity days. She is now a regular attendee and her Foster Carer reports significant improvements in her confidence and self-esteem.

Training

In conjunction with the fostering service and a Practice Development Officer, VSK Participation & Engagement care leaver apprentices are involved in the design and delivery of workshops focusing on improving Participation & Engagement. These are presented at an audience of social workers, IROs and foster carers. A total of six workshops were delivered between September 2016 and June 2017. Care leavers are also involved in the 'skills to foster' training that is organised and facilitated by the fostering services. They are actively involved and their views of prospective carers are taken into consideration by the assessing fostering social worker.

Influencing the Commissioning of services

Formal and informal forums for Children in Care and Care Leavers to meet and inform service design and delivery which are going from strength to strength with increased membership and more consistent attendance. The groups have been consulted on a variety of topics including the 0-25 Accommodation Strategy and the review of Pathway Plans. Challenge Cards have been established which allow these forums to 'Challenge' the corporate parent on issues and areas of policy or social work practice they feel needs changing. Also, a senior apprentice has been nominated as a 'Commissioning Champion', supporting the Sense of Belonging commissioning as well as supporting our Super Council and OCYPC members to feed into the Independent Fostering Provider commissioning process, producing a Top 10 Qualities of a Foster Carer document as part of the tendering and evaluation processes.

Improving Communication

A web based App, MOMO (Mind of My Own), is being rolled out by SCS and DCS after a successful pilot. The App provides a mechanism for Children and Young people to tell their social workers and IRO's what they think about the services they receive and about their care plan. The VSK apprentices were part of the consultation process and will assist in the roll out of the project. KCC has also agreed to roll out MOMO Express, an App enabling younger Children and Young people with learning disabilities to participate in the same way as the MOMO App.

Representation at Regional and National Initiatives

The VSK Participation & Engagement Team represent KCC at a variety of regional and national initiative such as the NCB: Taking it to the Next Level workshop, Who Cares Trust groups, APPG meetings, and the Launch of the Children's Commissioner's annual report. A regional Children in Care Council (CICC) meeting took place in August 2017 and representatives from VSK CICCs were active participants.

Children in Care Pupil Premium Grant (PP+)

Pupil Premium Plus 2016/17:

The Virtual School Kent continues to retain responsibility for the Pupil Premium+ Grant for Children in Care. The grant is used to improve outcomes and 'narrow the achievement gap' identified for individual children and young people using the targets set within their electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) in consultation with VSK and the Designated Teacher, as well a number of collaborative initiatives put in place by VSK.

The payment of this funding to schools in the 2016/17 financial year was initially £900 per child in care paid in three £300 instalments in June, November and February. This payment was made in response to a full consultation with Head Teachers and ensures that the funding follows the child if they change schools. Additional funding was provided according entirely to the needs of the child and as in previous years no maximum amount restriction was placed. The funding is ring-fenced for making improvements for the educational attainment of all Children in Care.

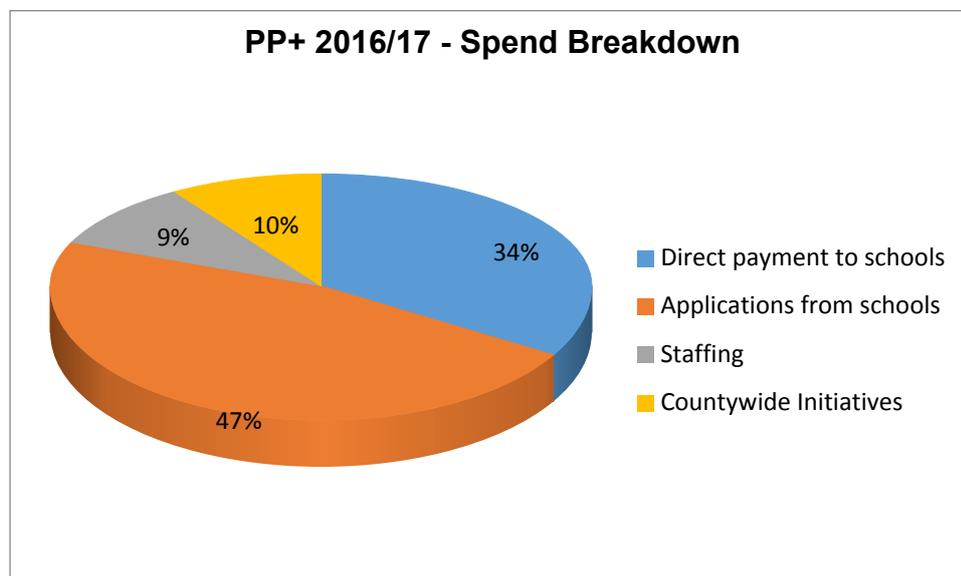
The final position for the 2016/17 budget allocation was £3,081,700; an increase of £376,200 from 2015/16. The budget allocation was calculated via the March 2016 LAC Data Return (SSDA903) as set out in paragraph 10 of the conditions of grant and is based on £1,900 per child. Notification of £376,200 of this provision came very late in the year; therefore £299,900 remains in a reserve provision and is available for the Virtual School Kent's use in 2017/18 in terms 5 and 6.

£2,781,800 was spent in 2016/17 with a total amount of £3,381,600 available to spend in 2017/18.

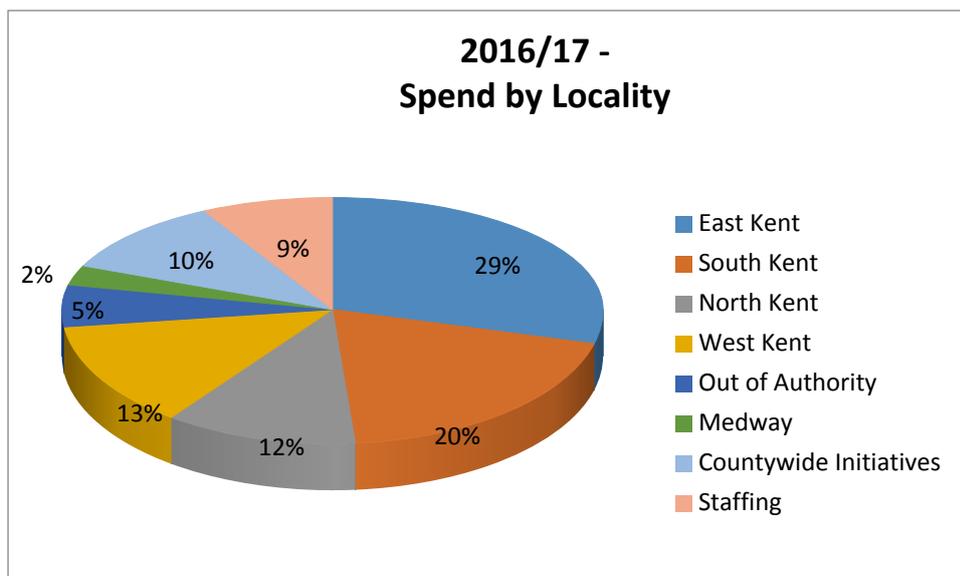
Data within this section relates to the financial period April 2016 – March 2017.

The application process continued to be successfully managed online via the Target Section of ePEP with the number of online approved applications from schools standing at 1728 in 2016/17. Of these applications, 211 were applications in respect of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. In addition to online applications, a number of interventions and support programmes for citizen and unaccompanied asylum seeking children were put into place directly by VSK as countywide or locality based initiatives, equating to £291,160 (10% of the total amount spent.) These initiatives were directly commissioned by VSK and included literacy development programmes, maths support, educational psychology services, and speech and language support.

A total of £934,167 (34% of the budget) was paid directly to schools in respect of £900 per child in care on roll, a further £1,302,659 (47% of the budget) was paid out in funding applications that had been reviewed, approved and evaluated by VSK. £253,814 (9.1%) was spent directly on staffing.



Pupil Premium+ expenditure is broken down into spend per locality with the largest amount spend in East Kent where the highest numbers of Children in Care continue to attend school and where a number of complex Children in Care reside due to the location of specialist care settings.



1396 Children in Care have received some form of PP+ funding, making the average payment to each child £1,992.70. However payment amounts vary from large to small, for example a payment with respect to one individual totalled a spend of £18,533 over the one year period - this was for a bespoke package around education provision for an extremely complex case.

PP+ 16/17 Outturn – Number of Pupils

Kent Nursery	7
Kent - Primary	395
Kent - Secondary	673
Kent - Independent	36
Kent - Free School	6
Kent - Special School	173
Alternative Curriculum/Other Provisions	20
Other Local Authority School	93
	1396

The grant has been used, as in previous years for a wide range of interventions and activities including supporting a fostering placement stability programme, nurture groups, ipad lending libraries, life coaching, mindfulness projects, speech and language therapy, educational psychology support, therapy/counselling, paired reading projects and horse riding activities to encourage confidence.

The outcomes of these projects have been evaluated and impact measures are very positive. For example 91% of children accessing a therapy intervention made measurable positive progress on the Leuven or Clinical Risk scales. Additionally, the Educational Psychology Service ran a BEAT project (Beating Exam Anxiety Together) and had good results where the average score of the group reduced on the Penn State Worry Scale by an average of 9 points from 62 to 53, indicating a good reduction in anxiety around exams.

Additional tuition is known to be an effective use of PP+; in particular for those in year 10 and 11 who are working towards their GCSE examinations. VSK directly engaged tuition providers at a cost of £123,057. In addition to this schools also commissioned additional tutoring through their own staff and agencies from the direct funding payment of £900 they received.

Throughout the year, 12 members of staff were employed directly by VSK in various posts to provide additional direct working and support at a cost of £253,814.

Early Years PP:

£300 for Children in Care in early years settings is paid to the early years provider in three instalments of £100. An example of this funding making a difference in a nursery setting is to deliver the Early Years Talk Boost programme to develop our young children in care's speech and language. This programme helps develop early language skills that may need enhancing with the use of story sacks, small groups work and can help the nursery to identify Speech and Language (SAL) issues early.

£10,900 was paid to Early Years settings in 2016/17 in respect of 72 children.

Priorities for 2017-18

- Continuing drive on improving academic outcomes. Particular focus on KS4 where the biggest gap exists.
- Developing systems alongside the assessment changes that came in 2017 around Achievement and Progress 8.
- Relentless drive on securing opportunities to transition our young people from NEET to EET.
- Particular focus on our young people with SEND ensuring progression is maximised.
- Focus on developing the quality of PEPs (utilising the Pupil Premium Plus conditions of grant as a lever) and practice development meetings to drive up standards and quality.
- Development of an academic assessment tool to enable accurate profiling of need when a young person enters care.
- Looking to develop Kent's own Participation & Engagement Quality Mark to replace the Lilac Award.
- Translating the positive work of Participation & Engagement into measurable impact outcomes i.e. "You said We did", changes in Policy and changes in service delivery.

These developments will include:

- Developing local Children in Care groups - these groups are constantly developing and changing depending on the needs and views of our young people. We are aware that we need to ensure that we are being inclusive of all young people and aim to create more local groups that feed in to a central group during the coming year.
- Further development of the junior element of the Children in Care Council with the aim of younger children becoming involved in the Participation & Engagement process. This will provide a forum for younger children to have their own say on

issues around the care system, but in a less structured and formal environment.

- Looking at ways to ensure that the views and opinions of Children in Care who live in other local authorities are heard. We are keen to improve our links with other local authority Participation Teams and have a 'sharing of ideas and ways of working day' with Surrey County Council. We are also working in partnership with our digital services team to look at ways of communication via social media.

Recommendations:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to:

- **CONSIDER and COMMENT ON** the impact of the Virtual School in relation to its performance and endorse its priorities for 2017-18