

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

DATE:	6 th March 2023
REPORT AUTHOR:	Anita Swales Acting Headteacher Virtual School
SUBJECT:	Head Teacher's Annual Report 2021 -2022
PURPOSE:	FOR INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with the annual report of the outcomes for cared for children for the academic year 2021/22, including the key characteristics of the cohort and the work of the Virtual School. The report provides an overview utilising, where available, both National and Northeast Regional data sets (NCER and LAIT Jan 2022), alongside locally sourced data.

During the pandemic, assessment and exams were completed utilising school-based teacher assessment, therefore the last validated data set available prior to 2022 is for 2019. However, where more recent data is available this has been included. As data sets for both 2020 and 2021 are not validated for comparative purposes, trend comparisons have not been included for attainment in this report. Instead, 2021/22 data on attainment has been compared to validated data for Regional Northeast and National cared for children

Exclusion and attendance comparative data which enables three-year trends are available through Welfare Call Analytics, a G-Cloud based attendance collection tool commissioned by Together for Children, which collects this data on a daily basis from schools and provisions.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

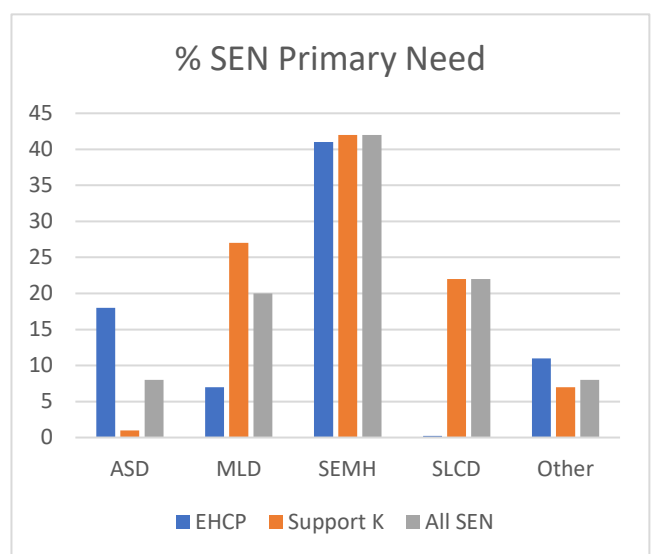
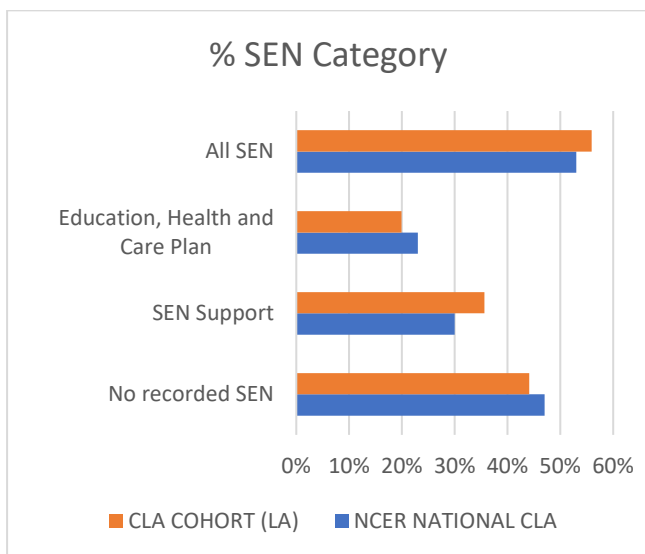
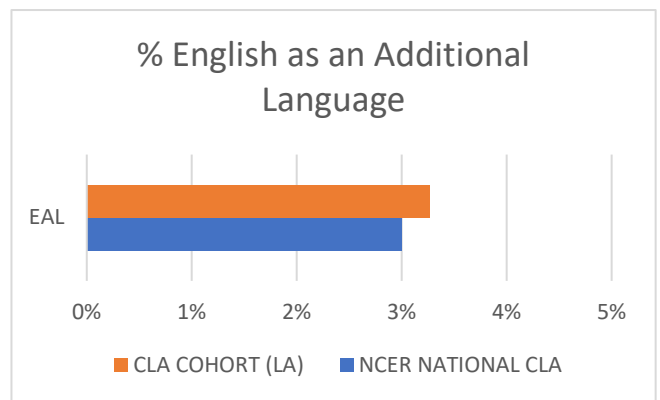
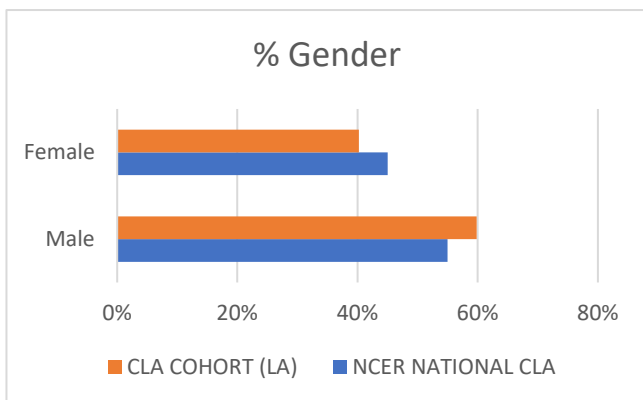
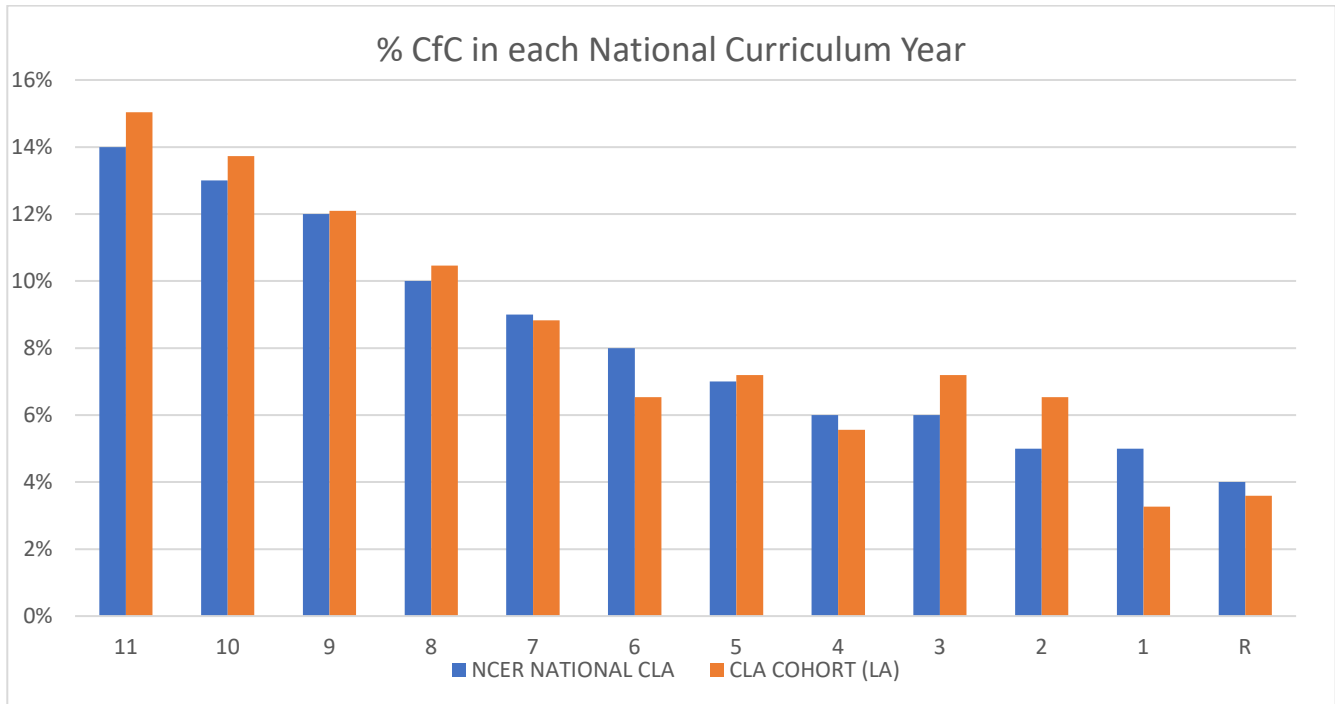
The Board is requested to receive the report for information

3. COHORT

The reportable cohort for statistical purposes is the number of Cared for Children who had been in our care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2022. The table below shows the number of children and young people in each school phase, key stage and national curriculum year group.

Phase	Primary							Secondary				
Keystage	EYFS		Keystage 1			Keystage 2		Keystage 3			Keystage 4	
NC Year	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Number of CfC	9	14	18	22	17	23	19	27	32	37	42	46

3.1 COHORT CHARACTERISTICS



From the above tables the following salient points can be noted:

- 40% of our children were in primary education and 60% in secondary
- Y9, 10 and 11 constitute 40% of all cared for children in statutory education
- Girls at 40.2% of the cohort were 20% fewer than boys at 60%, nationally cared for girls were only 10% fewer than boys
- Sunderland cared for children were broadly in line with the number of young people nationally who had English as an Additional Language

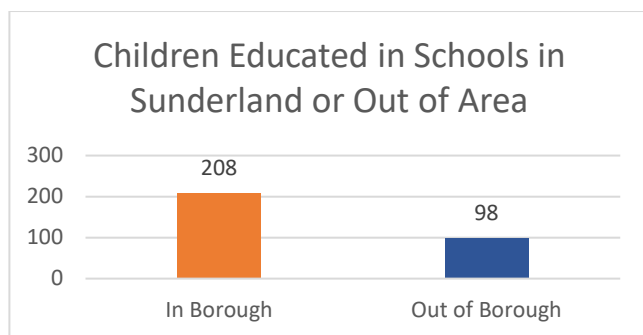
SEND

- There were 171 Cared for Children with Special Educational Needs, 55.5% of the cohort.
- 19.9% of children had an Education Health and Care Plan and a further 35.6% required additional in-school support to meet their needs.
- Of the CfC who had SEND needs, fewer had an Education Health and Care Plan than the national average and more were receiving SEN K in-school support
- By far the most prevalent SEND primary need was Social, Emotional and Mental Health, SEMH was also prevalent as a secondary need in an additional 7% of the cohort
- 18% of our cohort of Cared for Children were educated in specialist educational settings
- 60% of our children with an EHCP were educated in specialist provision whilst 40% were educated in mainstream schools
- 17% of children and young people requiring SEN K support were in specialist or alternative education settings
- Many of our young people within mainstream schools required additional support through the use of school nurture and inclusion provision. In addition, the Virtual School supported 10 schools with additional staffing through Teaching Assistants to provide the extra support a child needed whilst awaiting a place within a specialist setting, or as they went through the process of formal statutory assessment for an EHCP
- There remains a national shortage of specialist school places with more than half of specialist schools being oversubscribed, this is mirrored locally and brings significant challenges to providing for our children and young people's needs.

3.2 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

School Ofsted Ratings

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate or awaiting inspection
2019 – 2020	14%	50%	14%	21%
2020 - 2021	14%	65%	14%	7%
2021 -2022	13%	71%	10%	6%



- 84% of our children were educated in Good or Outstanding schools, an improvement on previous years, and 10% were in schools which required improvement, predominantly secondary schools. When children and young people are educated in schools which Require Improvement, attention is always given to ensure care, guidance and support is at least Good.
- 2.5% of our children were educated in a Sunderland SEMH special school which had an Ofsted Inadequate rating. This does create challenge in finding appropriate specialist provision for pupils in Sunderland who are unable to cope within mainstream schools, are at risk of permanent exclusion and require specialist provision. This combined with an increase of young people coming into our care within Key stage 4, and the Virtual School support for schools to successfully apply for EHCP for those young people with additional needs, has led to an increase in demand for places.
- Of the remaining 3.5% of children, six were in schools which had recently joined another multi academy trust and awaiting their first inspection, two children were educated in Scotland, who do not have Ofsted judgements, one young person out of area was receiving Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) through SEN provision for EHCP and two young people out of area were awaiting placement on a school roll and receiving one-to-one tuition provided by the virtual school.
- 32% of our children were educated in schools outside of Sunderland, the majority of which were in our neighbouring authorities, however, children were educated in 27 different local authority areas across England and Scotland.

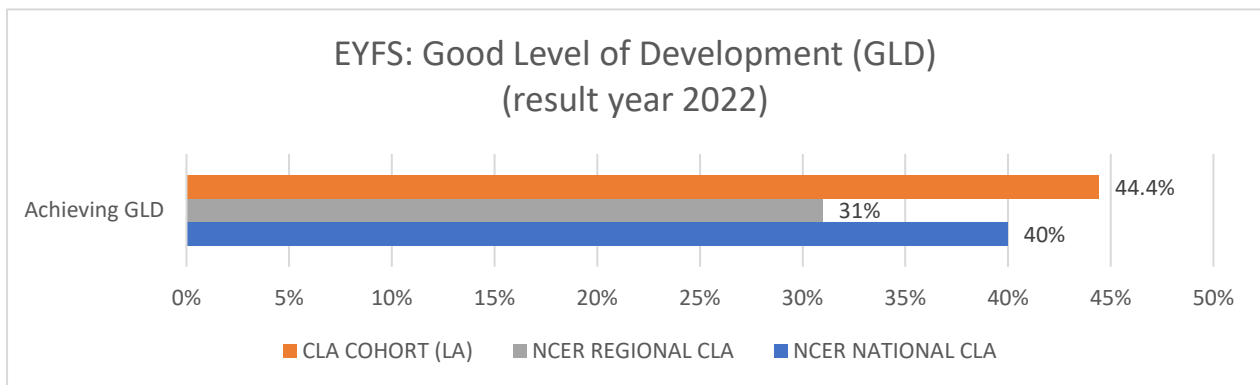
4. ACHIEVEMENT

Reportable data on achievement is for those children and young people who have been in our care for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2022. Due to the Covid pandemic validated Summer 2020 and 2021 data was not available for comparative trends due to teacher assessed grades and for some key stages the achievement data was not collected at all on a national or regional level.

The following data for Summer of 2022 has therefore been compared with all cared for children in England and also cared for children across the Northeast Region for Summer 2022.

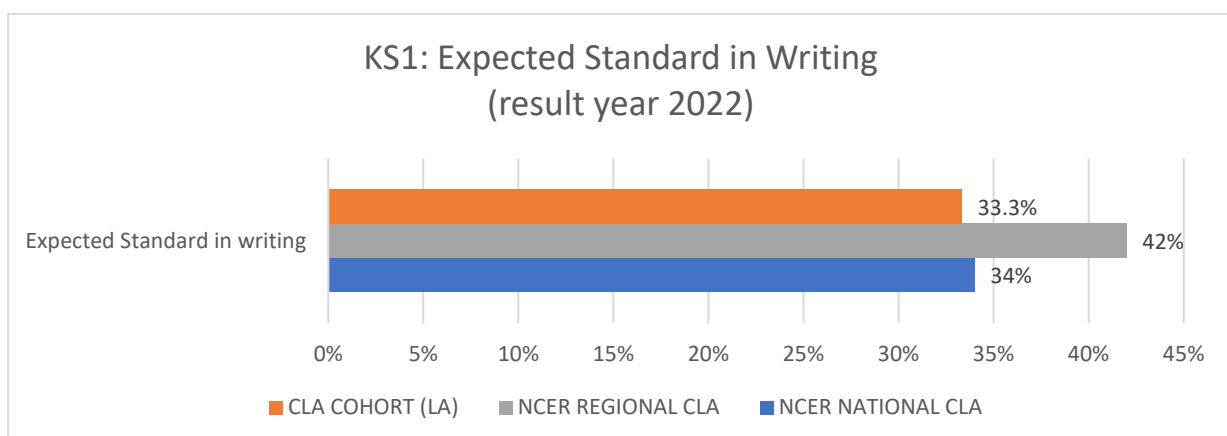
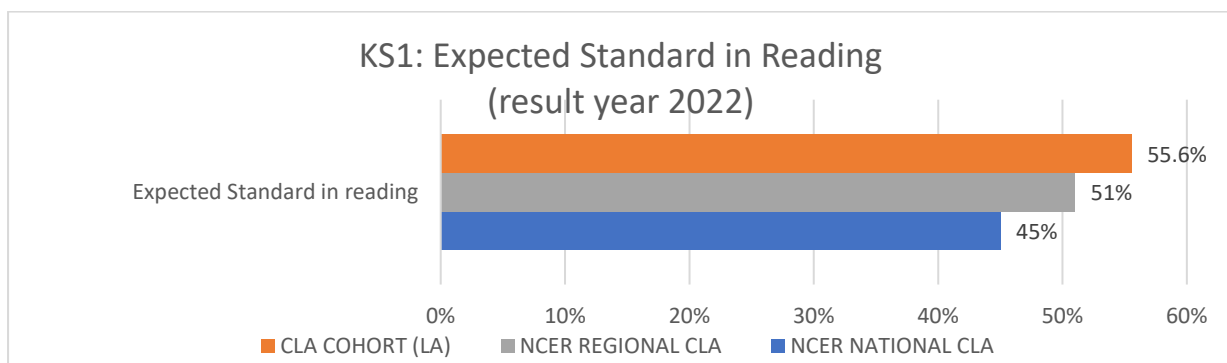
*Sunderland Cared for Children are in Orange, National in Blue and Regional in Grey

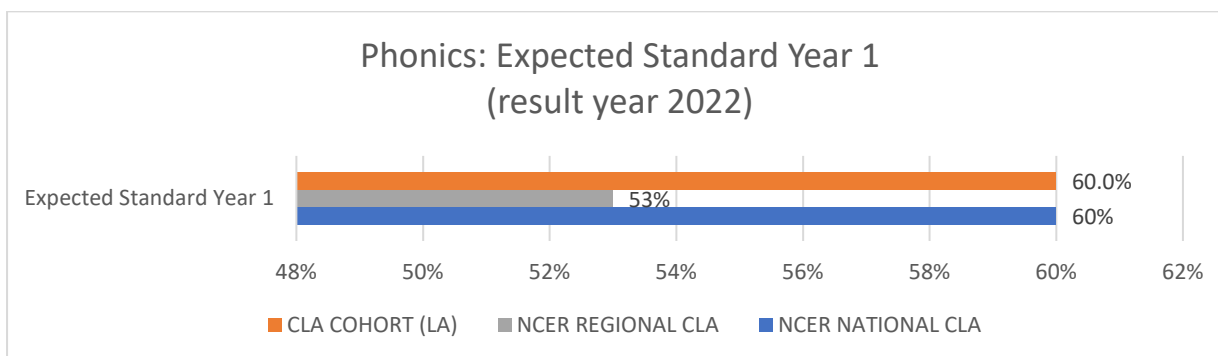
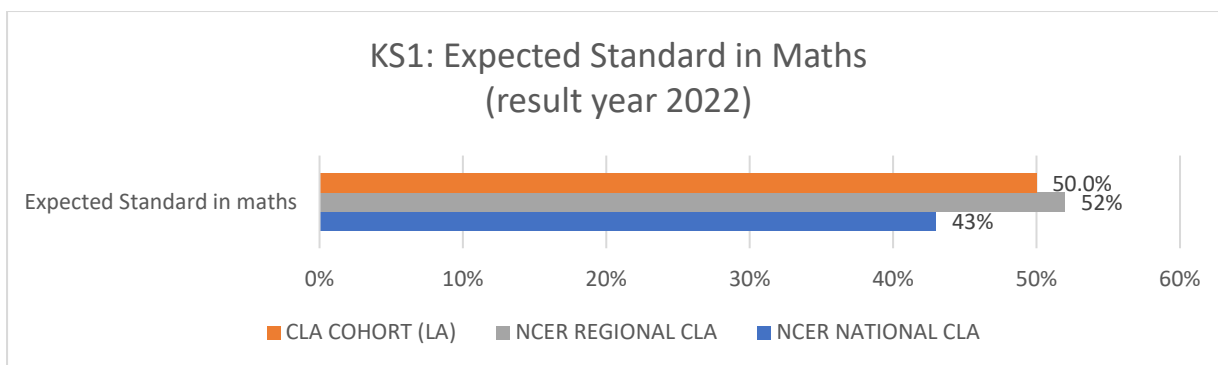
4.1 Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes



- The cohort was assessed using the early years foundation stage profile,
- 44.4% of children in Sunderland achieved a good level of development (GLD)
- This is 4.4% higher than the national (CLA) average of 40% and 13.4% higher than the regional (CLA) average of 31%.
- 60% achieved the expected standard of 32 in phonics which is equal to that of National (CLA) and 7% above that of the regional (CLA) cohort at 53%.

4.2 Key Stage 1 Outcomes

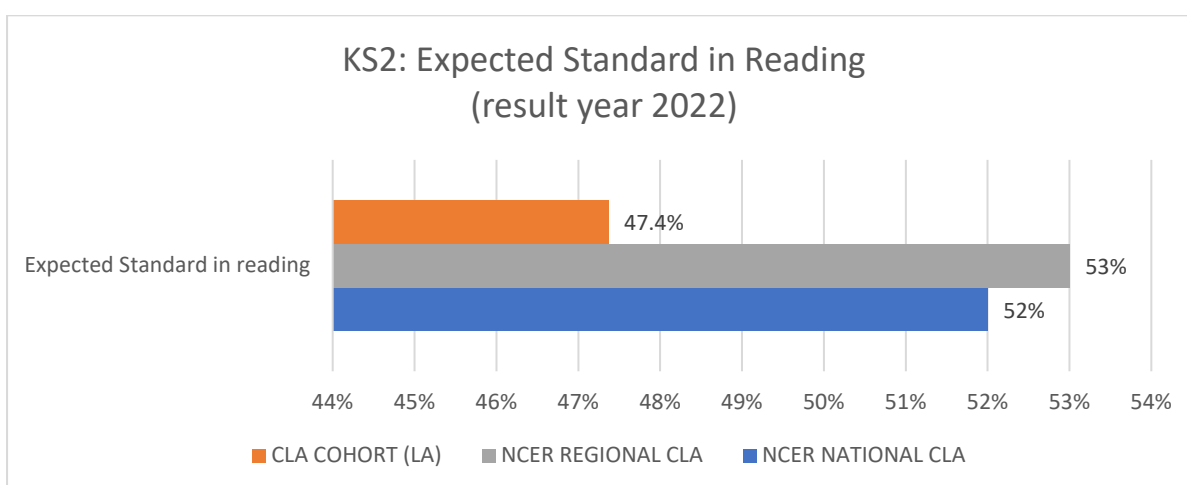


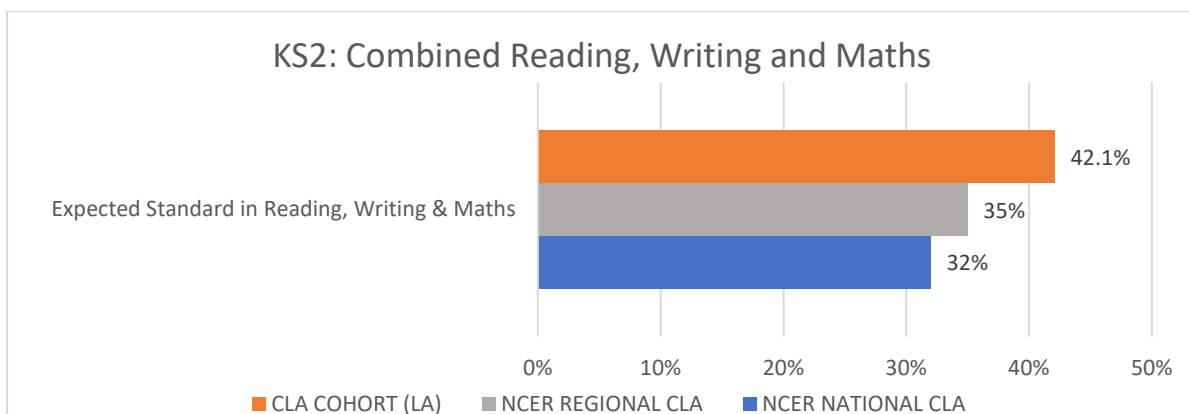
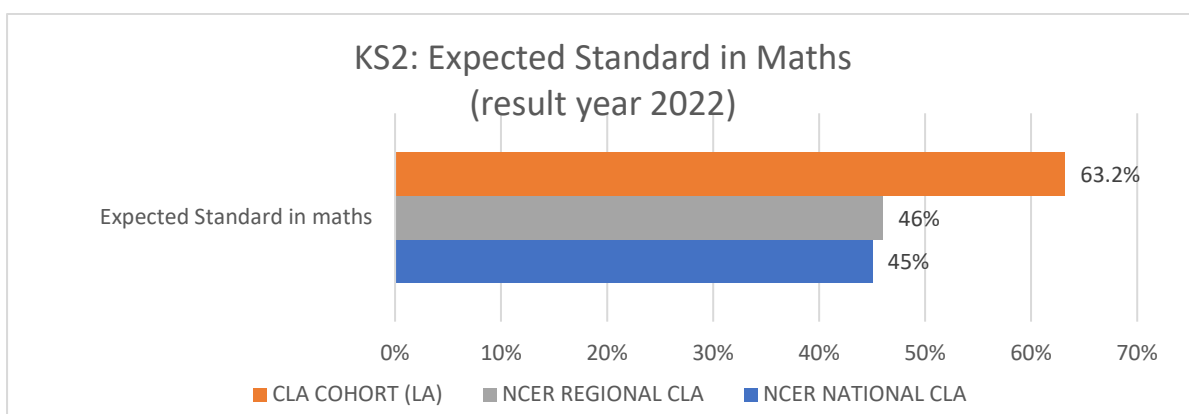
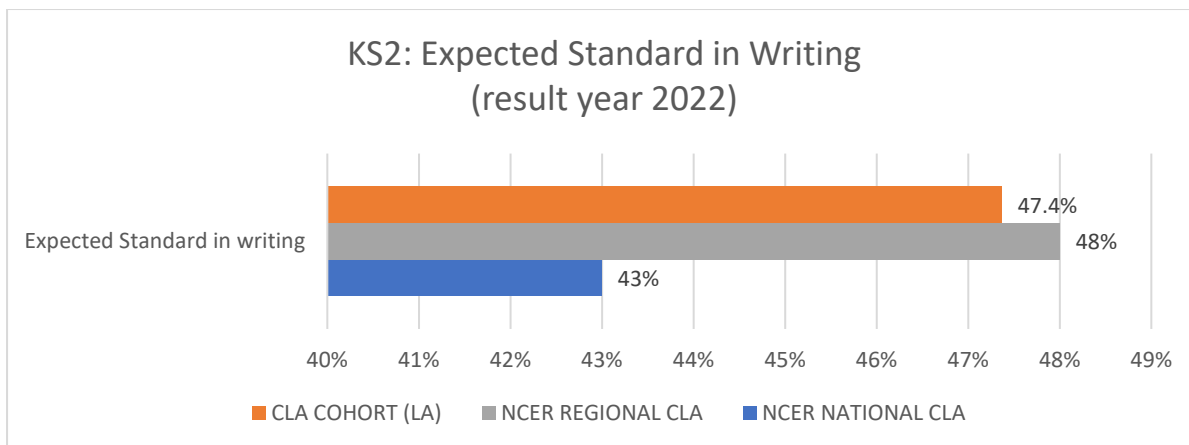


There were 18 pupils in the reportable cohort at the end of Key Stage 1:

- 55.6% achieved the expected standard in reading and 5.6% achieved a greater depth in Reading.
- This compares favourably with the regional average of 51% and is 10.3% above the national average of 43%.
- A third of pupils achieved the expected standard in writing, broadly in line with national average for Cared for children, however, this is lower than the regional average at 42%
- 50% of our children achieved the expected standard in Maths with 5.6% achieving a greater depth. This is 7% higher than the national average of 43% although slightly lower than regional at 52%.
- 60% achieved the expected standard of 32 in phonics at the end of Year 1 which is equal to that of National (CLA) and 7% above that of the regional (CLA) cohort at 53%.

4.3 Key Stage 2 Outcomes





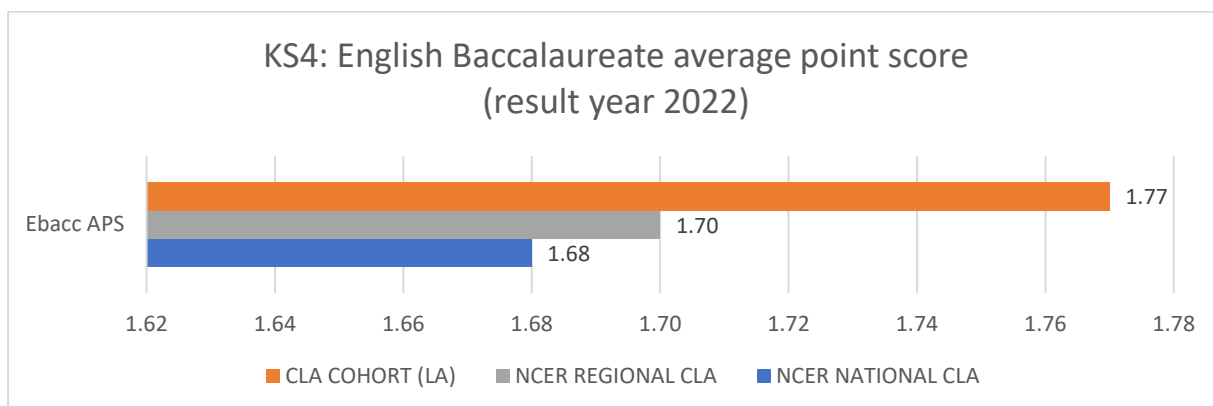
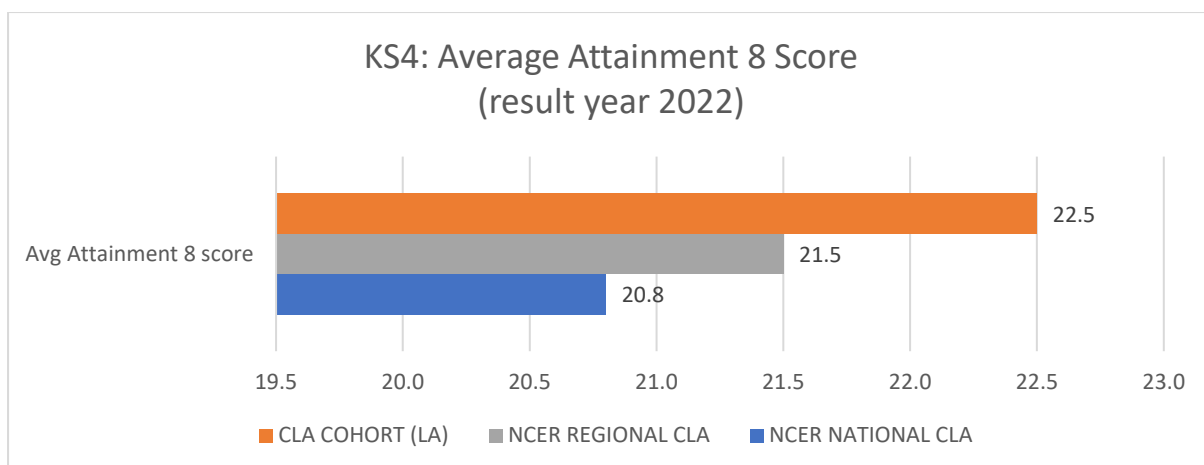
There were 19 pupils in the reportable cohort at the end of Key Stage 2:

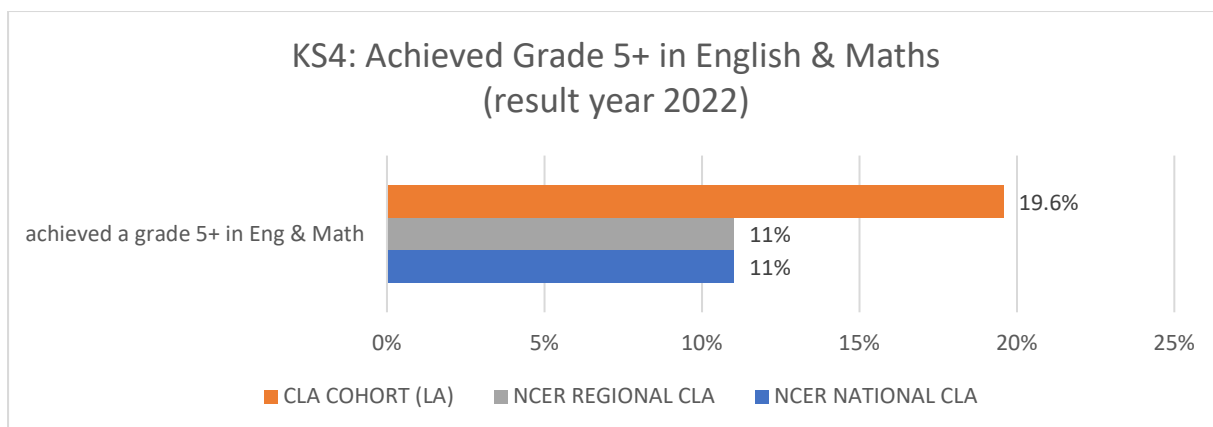
- In Writing, 47.4% achieved the expected standard broadly in line with regional and 4.4% higher than national average.
- In Maths, 63.2% of our children achieved the expected standard 18.5% higher than National at 45% and 17% higher than regional at 46%. 15.8% reached a higher standard,
- 47.4% achieved the expected standard in Reading, 4.6% lower than national and 5.6% lower than the regional average.
- The Combined measure for KS2 of Reading, Writing and Maths was 42.1%, this is 10% higher than the national average of 32% and 7% higher than the regional average of 35%
- An intervention programme has been developed for 2022/23 for early intervention and provide one to one tutoring through the National tutoring programme for children who

require additional support, and who are not already receiving that support within school, to close the gap from lost learning due to the pandemic. This will initially focus on Year 6 but will move to other year groups as in the Spring term.

- Where reading is of concern the newly formed primary team, through their attendance at PEP s, will be able to provide greater support and challenging for targets to be specific within PEPs
- Two reading programmes are being explored to encourage reading for our children, Letterbox Book Club and StoryTime Magazine, both specialising in encouraging reading with cared for children aged 4-9 years.

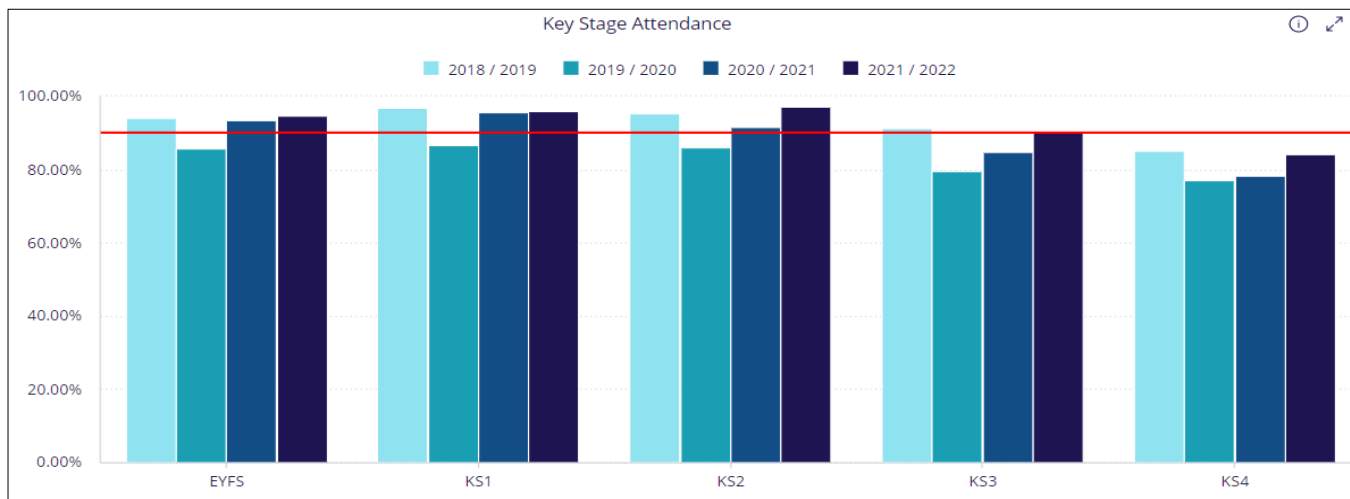
4.4 Key Stage 4 Outcomes



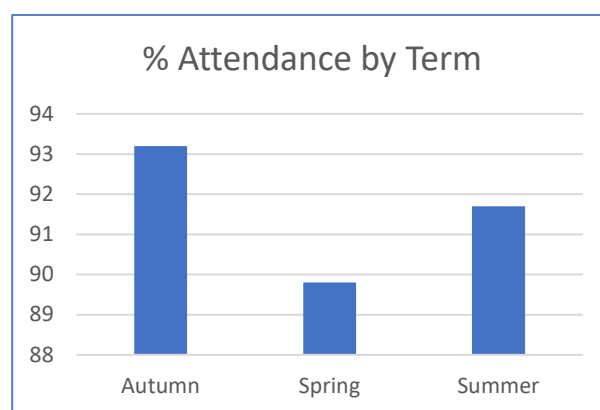
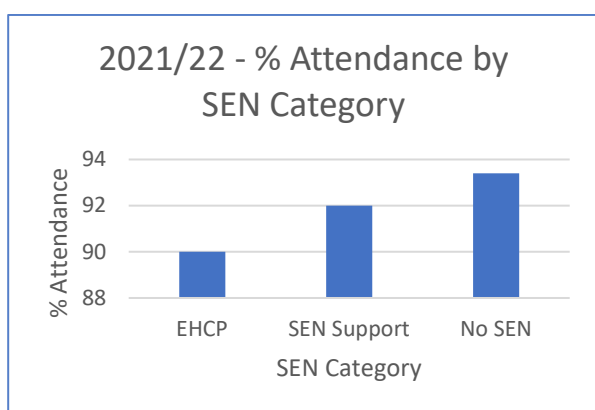


- There were 46 pupils in the reportable cohort at the end of Key Stage 4:
- The cohort in Sunderland has an Attainment 8 score of 22.5, which is 1.7 points higher than the national cohort at 20.8, and 1 point above regional average of 21.5
- The English Baccalaureate average point score is 1.77, which is marginally higher than the national and regional point scores, EBacc is a suite of subjects which includes English, maths, science, a humanities subject, and a modern foreign language
- 19.6% of our cared for children achieved a grade 5 or more in English and maths which is 8.5% higher than National and regional at 11%
- 26.1% of our young people achieved a grade 4 or more in English and Maths, prior to the pandemic this figure in 2019 was 17%
- A comprehensive identification and intervention programme has been introduced for September 2022 to provide individual 1:1 tuition through the National Tutoring Programme for any Year 11 pupil who is underachieving in English and/or maths. This will be extended to Year 10 by Spring term of 2023 and to Year 9 in the summer term of 2023. Meanwhile, the increased capacity of caseworkers affords greater support and challenge across all key stages through attendance at all PEP meetings.

5. ATTENDANCE



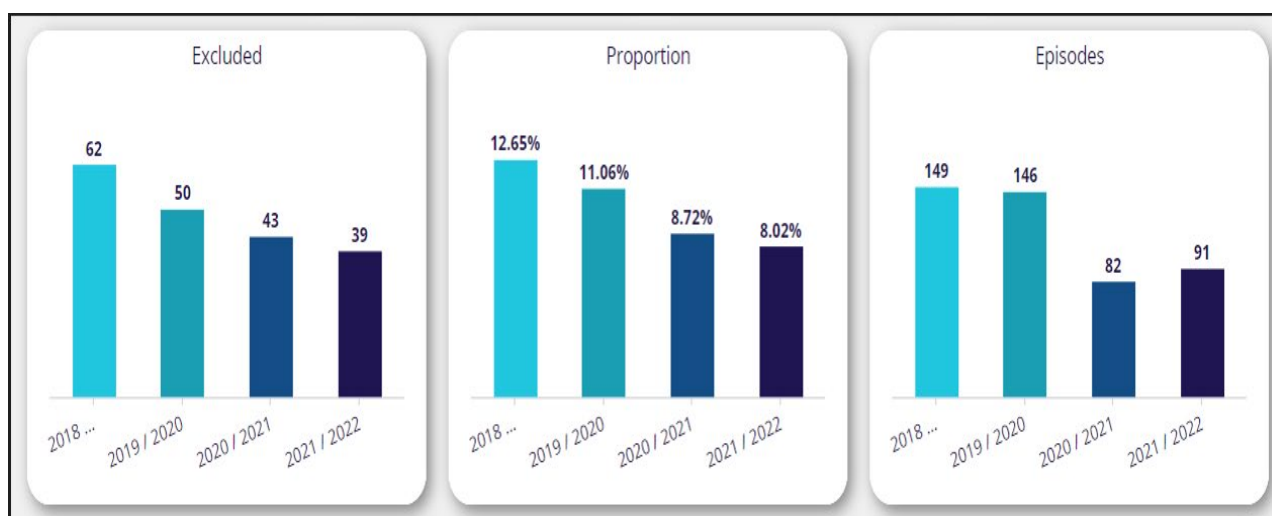
*Data Source: Locally Sourced Welfare Call



- Three year trend across all keystages has shown an improvement in attendance year on year since the dip in 2019/20 due to school closures during COVID-19.
- Attendance in all keystages returned back to pre-pandemic levels, although a dip was seen in the spring term across all keystages due to high COVID infection rates in Jan and Feb.
- Recording of absence and attendance during the pandemic and lockdown periods in 2019/20 included remote learning (authorised absence) and blended learning (in school part time, remote learning part time), comparative trends need to be taken in this context.
- Attendance for Cared for Children in Primary settings is 96% and secondary age children is 88%
- Attendance in KS4 although improving remained stubbornly low at 86% and continues to be a key area of action for the Virtual School and its partners in 2022/23.
- Attendance for those children and young people with special educational needs is below that of children with no identified SEN need
- Boys achieved a higher level of attendance than girls
- Children educated in out of borough schools had 1.7% lower attendance than those educated in Sunderland schools
- The Virtual School monitors attendance daily through Welfare Call and contacts carers to ensure attendance at school is a key priority should concerns arise.
- Analysis of the detail behind the data occurs half termly and virtual school staff work closely with schools, carers and social workers to ensure attendance is improved through the PEP.

6. SUSPENSIONS

% of children who have been cared for continuously for at least 12 months with at least one fixed term suspension



*Data Source: Locally Sourced Welfare Call

From the above table the following salient points can be noted:

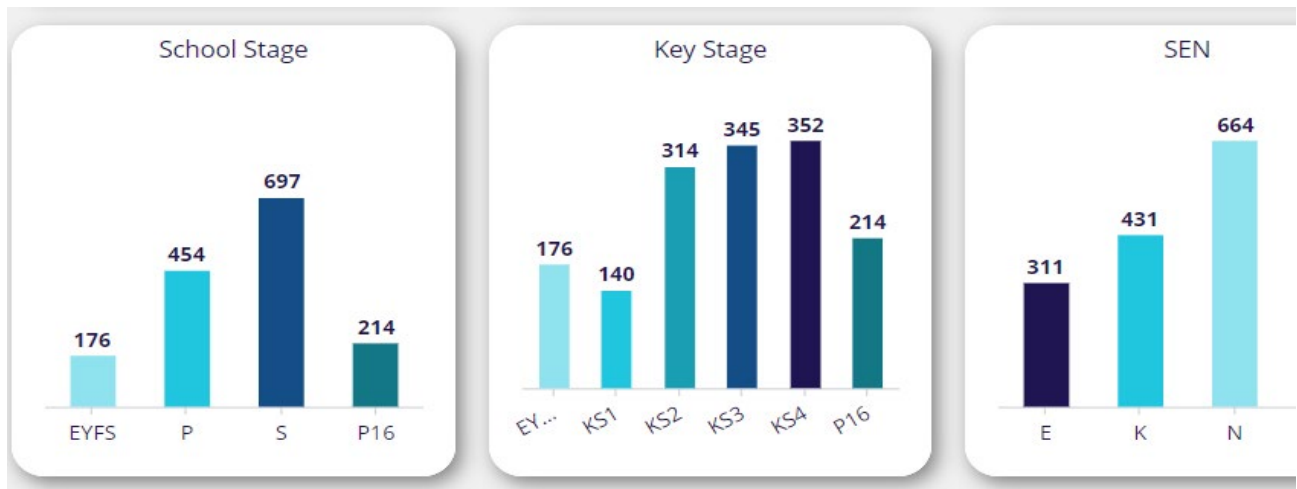
- The proportion of young people who had experienced one or more periods of suspension reduced from 12.6% in 2018/19 to 8.02% in 2021/22.
- The number of young people receiving suspensions dropped from 62 to 39
- The total number of suspension episodes in 2021/22 was 91 days, this was a significant fall from 149 in 2018/19 and 146 in 2019/20, however, is slightly above the 82 days in 2020/21
- Of the 39 children who received suspensions:
 - 18 (46%) received more than 1 suspension
 - 20 (51%) were in Key Stage 4
 - 11 (28%) had an EHCP of which 7 attend specialist provision
 - 12 (38%) received SEND in-school support
 - 13 (33%) attend schools outside of Sunderland LA

Caseworkers continue to monitor data to ensure suspensions occur as infrequently as possible. The Virtual School caseworkers liaise closely with schools, carers and social workers when suspensions occur to understand the antecedents and to ensure appropriate support and plans are put in place to prevent further suspensions. This includes the use of the SEND ranges to ensure needs are identified and resources are put in place, but also referrals to other agencies are aligned such as CYPS, CAMHS for example. Alongside our partners we explore strategies which can be employed as an alternative to suspension wherever possible.

Permanent Exclusion - The Virtual School will intervene at the earliest opportunity when informed by a school that they intend to permanently exclude a child or young person. Working with school leaders, carers and our partners we avoid this course of action at all costs, ensuring the school can reconsider, or that the young person is placed in an alternative and appropriate education setting as quickly as possible to meet their ongoing needs. As a result of this partnership, we have had **no Permanent Exclusion** of a Cared for Child/Young Person in Sunderland in five-years.

7. PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS

Personal Education Planning meetings (PEPs) take place termly for statutory age and early years children and 6 monthly for Post 16 young people. PEP compliance with statutory timeframes remains **over 97% (an improvement from 86% in 2020)**.

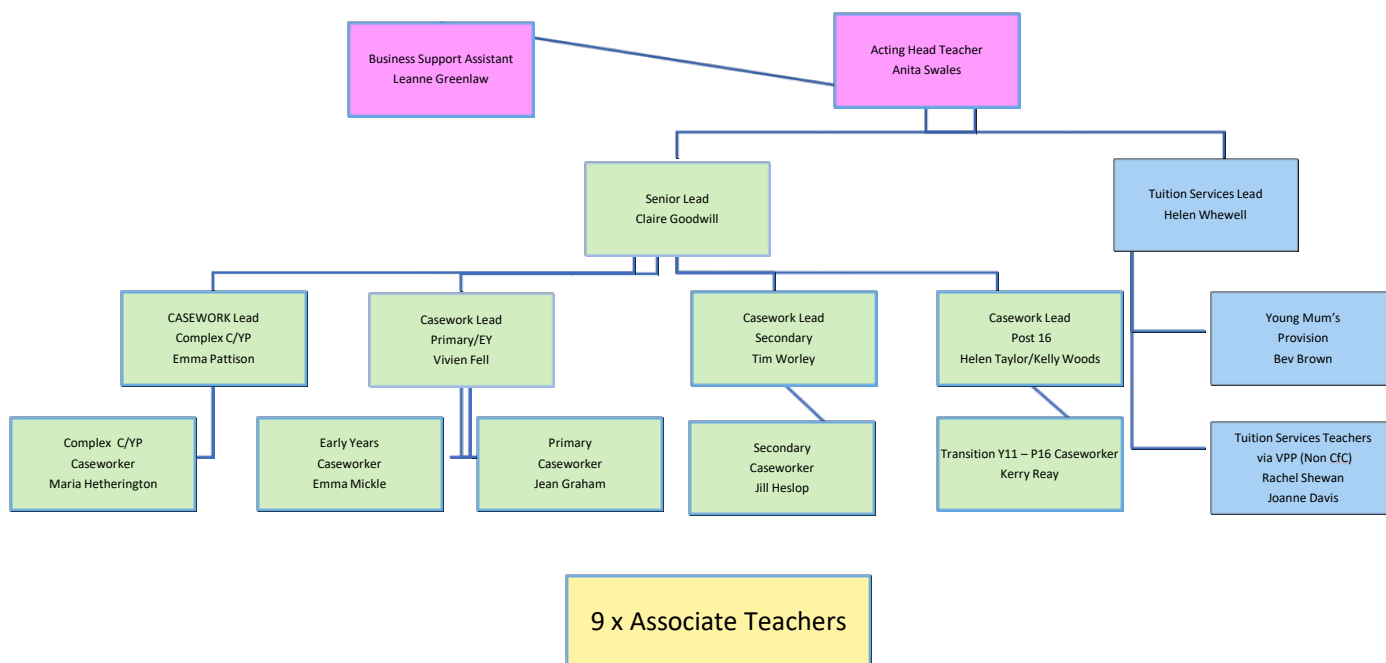


- Over the academic year 2021/22, a total of 1,541 PEP meetings took place for 629 young people in 229 education provisions within 38 different local authorities.
- **46 statutory aged children changed provision in 2021/22, a reduction from 58 children in 2020/21.** Avoidable changes to education provision are robustly challenged by the Virtual School as often school is the only stability many of our children have in their lives, with trusted adults who know them well.
- **92.7% of PEPS were quality assured as Good** (effective plans to ensure continued progress is achieved) with 7.3% rated as Amber, **this is an improvement from 2020/21 academic year** when only 87% of PEPS were rated Good.
- All PEPS are quality assured by the VS caseworkers to ensure they are fit for purpose. Quality assurance continues to be a key area of focus this year. Each section of the PEP is assessed, and this is fed back to schools using a RAG rating. If there are concerns about the quality of the PEP, a discussion is held with the school or the Social Worker to consider how it can be improved.
- The average number of days from PEP meetings being held to completion of the PEP document is now 11.8 days, which is a **significant improvement on the previous year**, however, the target for completion which is within 10 days of the PEP meeting date has yet to be reached. Early completion of a document ensures the targets contained can be shared in a timely manner with all professionals so that identified support can be given to enable maximum impact to achieve successful outcomes.
- Due to the increased capacity of caseworkers within the Virtual School, for the coming academic year they will be able to attend all PEPS to ensure support and challenge is given to maximise outcomes for our children.

8 . STRUCTURE AND WORK OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Virtual School was restructured during 2021/22 with the formation of four distinct teams to focus specifically on key stage issues and was strengthened with the appointment of five new caseworkers supported by new middle leaders with responsibility for a key stage or cohort of young people.

NEW VIRTUAL SCHOOL STRUCTURE- MAY 2022



The new structure has been in place since 1st May 2022 and affords for greater capacity and reduced caseloads for virtual school staff, with the average caseload dropping from 80 plus in 2021/22 to less than 60 for the coming academic year 2022/23.

The recruitment process attracted candidates with a wide range and level of experience, all newly appointed staff joined us directly from roles in primary, secondary and special schools, as well as an early years setting and Post 16 college provision. All new staff have received a full induction, including a range of mandatory and additional training.

Caseworkers ensure all children and young people under their care:

- are in the most appropriate education setting to meet their individual needs
- maximise school attendance, working closely with carers, social care and school colleagues
- identify any additional educational needs in a timely manner
- ensure additional support is provided through the function of the Personal Education Plan
- avoid exclusions and provide for additional support to achieve inclusion
- maximise achievement through robust targets set through the PEP and provide for interventions when barriers are faced

Caseworkers also:

- provide support for schools to understand the needs of our children
- assist schools in securing external professional support for those with additional needs
- attend all PEP meetings, alongside Cared for Reviews and Care Team Meetings, where appropriate, for children on their caseload
- liaise with carers on a regular basis to provide early identification of educational concern they may experience

Caseworkers provide information, advice and guidance to colleagues in education and social care, as well as foster carers and residential staff, on a wide range of educational issues, this includes:

- School admissions (including appeals)
- Attendance
- Attainment
- Emotional Health and Well-being
- Exclusions
- Alternative Education Provision
- SEN/D
- Referrals to LA support services
- Transition

In line with the extended duties of the virtual school brought in by the Government this advice, information and guidance is not only in relation to our cared for children but extended to previously cared for children; those who have been in the care of the local authority for at least 24 hours prior to an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangements order being awarded by court. In addition, the virtual school duties were further extended in 2021 to 'promote educational outcomes for children with a social worker'.

During the academic year, virtual school staff delivered a range of training/awareness raising sessions on the education issues above to stakeholders, including:

- Designated teachers
- School Governors
- Social Care Colleagues
- Foster Carers
- Adoptive Parents
- Connected Carers

The Virtual School also hosted a regional conference in May 2022 on 'The Effects of Attachment and Trauma on Children's Learning'. This conference was sponsored by Sunderland University and facilitated by Lisa Cherry, from the REES Centre, Oxford University, an international expert on the subject. It was well attended by education and social care colleagues from across the region, alongside care experienced young people and carers.

9. PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

PP+ grant is additional funding for Cared for Children to support their educational outcomes and to close any gaps due to adverse childhood experiences and educational neglect. For the academic year 2021-22 an allocation of £2,410 was received per child based on the CLA Data Return (SSDA903) March 2021. Of this per capita funding, £1,900 was allocated directly to the

schools our children and young people attend within Sunderland and in other local authority areas.

Schools use this funding to provide additional resources to support the child's needs as identified and monitored through their PEP. Schools have used their PP+ allocation in several ways, including:

- 1:1 and small group tuition
- Alternative education provision outside of the school environment
- Extra staff to support individuals and groups of children, i.e. play therapist or CfC Mentor
- Alternative Emotional Literacy Programmes/Nurture Groups
- Whole school and Designated Teacher training
- Provision of additional homework clubs and revision clubs
- IT equipment and resources
- Music lessons
- Contributions toward extended educational trips
- Transition activities
- Extra-curricular activities

The Virtual School retained £510 per CfC to facilitate the work of the Virtual school in supporting those young people who struggled to attend and/or access mainstream or specialist provision. In recognition that some children may have a greater level and more complex needs than others, arrangements are in place to enable schools to apply through their nominated caseworker for additional funding where needed.

During 2021/22, schools have been supported with additional Teaching Assistant support, the cost of alternative education provision for those young people who are at risk of exclusion, as well as the provision of school fees or top up fees for specialist provision when a young person does not have an EHCP, and therefore does not qualify for High Needs Funding. Cared for Children are also supported through one-to-one tuition, whilst awaiting admission to schools following a return to Sunderland or a move to another LA area.

Alongside the National tutoring Grant, Pupil Premium funding provided over 5000 hours of additional one to one tuition in 2020/21 to support catch up with education lost through the pandemic.

Early Years Pupil Premium grants were introduced in the 2015 and are paid to the settings where our early years children attend, including school nurseries and other childcare provisions. The VS introduced an Early Years PEP to support children in these settings in January 2021.

In 2021/22, the Virtual school received no pupil premium funding for Post 16 young people, however we have supported several young people with resources, including laptops for college work, as well as additional costs incurred through attending alternative provisions.

10. POST 16 SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (EET/NEET)

Ongoing NEET support from the Virtual School:

- Post 16 Caseworkers offer NEET mentoring and support tailored to meet the needs of each cared for young person who is not in education, employment or training. This involves home visits to offer information, advice and guidance, multi-agency working to support young people in exploring options, accompanying young people on visits to local providers, interview preparation and in some case creating bespoke programmes to meet the needs of the individual that cannot be met by mainstream provision.
- The expansion of the team and increased hours in September 2022 will allowed team members to offer more intensive support to our NEET young people.
- Regular NEET PEPS are undertaken to review barriers to engagement and agree actions to provide support and facilitate engagement.
- Multiagency and focused based approach to prevent NEET and re-engagement of those young people who are long term NEET, working in close partnership with training providers, colleges, housing providers and carers.
- The team have set up a NEET support panel for Autumn 2022 which will meet on a monthly basis and will be attended by Virtual School, Tfc Careers Team and Next Steps Activity Co-ordinator. The purpose of this is to explore creative solutions for our post 16 hard to reach young people who are NEET and to improve retention in EET using a multi-disciplinary approach.

NEET Preventative work from Virtual School:

- Regular PEPs to review what is going well relating to their education, as well as any needs/concerns, agreeing targets and support to promote retention and prevent disengagement.
- Year 11 Risk of NEET Indicator created for implementation Autumn 2022 for the Year 11 cohort based on school PEP information. Students will be RAG rated and targeted transition work undertaken in the Spring and Summer term on NEET prevention.
- A dedicated member of the Virtual School team has been employed in the new structure to support transition from year 11 to year 12 providing mentoring for transition plans and to provide NEET prevention support and strategies.
- For our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), we have a core offer which includes the provision of laptops to access online language tuition and college work, educational assessments of language acquisition and prior learning, targeted support using

the Flash Academy framework and arranging additional face to face EAL tuition in preparation for full time learning.

Pupil Premium Plus (Post 16 Pilot):

- Sunderland Virtual School have been selected to participate in a one-year pilot to start in September 2022 of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding for post 16 cared for young people with a focus on improving retention and raising attainment in Maths and English.
- The cohort will be 16/17 years olds in Further Education with some flexibility to support young people in other circumstances, including those who are seeking education, training and employment, the pilot has been awarded to focus on the following three priority areas:
 1. Raise the profile of Cared for and Care Experienced Young People in FE through multi agency working practice to improve retention and participation of our young people on appropriate post 16 pathways
 2. Improve the attendance and outcomes for Level 2 English and Maths courses
 3. Better support the delivery of Personal Education Plans at both an individual and whole cohort level.

Innovation and Sharing Good Practice

- Virtual School are working collaboratively with partners to develop additional Post 16 UASC provision to meet the increasing need in the city. The Virtual School is also part of a North of England regional UASC focus group working on regional solutions to support USAC cohorts through NEET preventative strategies.
- Virtual school are meet with other professionals and young people to explore and develop creative bespoke solutions for young people with complex needs, such as personal development, preparing for adulthood and independence and how this can reduce NEET eg 1-1 tuition, ASDAN, positive activities
- Post 16 Caseworkers attend the Northeast Raising Aspiration Partnership, Care Experienced Student Steering Group
- Post 16 Caseworkers have setting up a Regional Post 16 Virtual School Steering Group

11. GOVERNANCE

STRUCTURE OF GOVERNING BOARD 2021/22

The full governing board held three termly meetings during the academic year and a challenge committee met on two occasions to provide additional scrutiny to the work of the Virtual School.

The board had representation from Headteachers /Principals from all sectors of education as well as a care experienced young person, a foster carer, an LA Counsellor, and representatives from TfC strategic leads in social care and education. This broad representation allowed for a range of support and challenge to the headteacher and virtual school staff not only during termly meetings but throughout the year.

Co-opted	Special Schools Representative	Rachel Hargreaves Headteacher	4 Years
Co-opted	Nursery Schools Representative	Catherine Barnett Headteacher Challenge Committee	4 years
Co-opted	Primary Schools Representative	Anna Young Head Teacher Wessington Primary School Vice Chair and Chair of Challenge Committee	4 Years
Co-opted	Secondary Schools Representative	Sue Hamilton Washington Academy Challenge Committee	4 Years
Staff	Head Teacher	Linda Mason	N/A
Staff	Senior Lead	Anita Swales	N/A
Co-opted	Sunderland University/HE Representative	Wendy Price Head of Widening Access and Participation CHAIR - Feb 2022	4 Years
Co-opted	LA Councillor	Vacant	4 Years
Co-opted	Sunderland College/FE Representative	Mike Hall	4 Years
Co-opted	Social Care - Head of Service Cared For Children and Provider Services	Tracy Jelfs	4 Years
Carer	Carer	Julie Wyatt	4 Years
Young Person	Care Experienced Young Person	Chantelle	N/A
Associate Member – with voting rights	Strategic Service Lead Education	Kimberley Richardson	4 Years