

SCHOOL MOVES 2013-14

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

Summary of position as at January 2015

1. There are currently 546 children in the care of Sunderland Local Authority. Based on the number of Looked After Children (LAC) pupils on the Virtual School Roll in July 2014, 146 children out of a possible 380 of school age had changed schools other than at the end of a key phase, (i.e. nursery to mainstream; infant to junior; junior to secondary)

The numbers shown below are provisional but the request has highlighted the need to undertake some further analysis of the reasons for these moves, particularly for the 70 children who move between Sunderland schools as a result of the change of placement. It is also proposed to benchmark the position in Sunderland with other councils and also against the number of moves undertaken by the wider school population. It is proposed to undertake this analysis in order to provide a fuller and more detailed report to the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting after Easter. Resource has been allocated to undertake this task.

*70 school moves were within Sunderland, often as a result of change of placement.

36 pupils moved to out of area placements, including 15 moves within the NE, so schools changed

3 moved as a result of adoption placements specifically

7 moved as a result of receiving a Statement of SEN, to a special school

7 were moved to residential special schools out of area to meet their needs

13 were moved to residential provision with on-site education, for their own safety

9 changed schools/ ALP, including 4 to KS4, PRU owing to behaviour difficulties / exclusions

1 child moved as a result of significant self –harm

2. Looking at numbers within primary and secondary phases, there are higher numbers moving schools in Year 1, where the majority of children who are placed for adoption sit. However, the highest number of school moves was within the second year at secondary school (Yr 8), when many children enter the Care System as a result of breakdown in relationships at home.. It is often necessary to give these young people a fresh start by moving the area of placement and of school.

3. Since the Virtual Head's provisional data report to Corporate Parents in October, a number of steps have been taken to reduce the number of school moves where these are not in the best interest of the child or young person. These include:
 - i. A Protocol has been implemented that stipulates that a member of the Virtual School and Independent Reviewing Team should attend a care planning meeting to discuss any placement move that may involve the need for a change of school. This protocol has been shared with all social workers and this has led to the prevention of some moves and delay to others until placements are secure. The protocol has been shared with all schools and the council's Admissions Team. This has resulted in increased communications from schools notifying of requests to move a child's school. Admissions also now email the Virtual Head copies of all transfer requests for LAC and this prompts a conversation with the social worker.
 - ii. Education has a much higher profile in all multi agency strategic meetings and other agencies are now realising the importance of considering education in any planned placement move.
4. As a result of higher numbers in care, the need for more carers and the increase in the complexity of need there will always be a requirement for some children to move school on entering a new placement. Specialist places cannot always be provided locally and there is a significant financial cost in terms of transport if the foster placement is at a distance from the child or young person's current school. However every endeavour has to be made to ensure that any move of school is in the best interests of the child, Through implementation of the protocol, the number of unnecessary school moves are being reduced. It is proposed that the data analysis will evidence this trend over time.