

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD	
DATE:	21 November 2022
REPORT AUTHOR:	Anita Swales ACTING HEAD TEACHER Virtual School
SUBJECT:	Head Teacher's Report
PURPOSE:	FOR INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with updated information about the education of cared for children since the last report on 26th September 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Board is requested to receive the report for information

3. COHORT

Currently as of 11th November 2022 we have 498 Cared for Children

Historical cohorts (when report written)

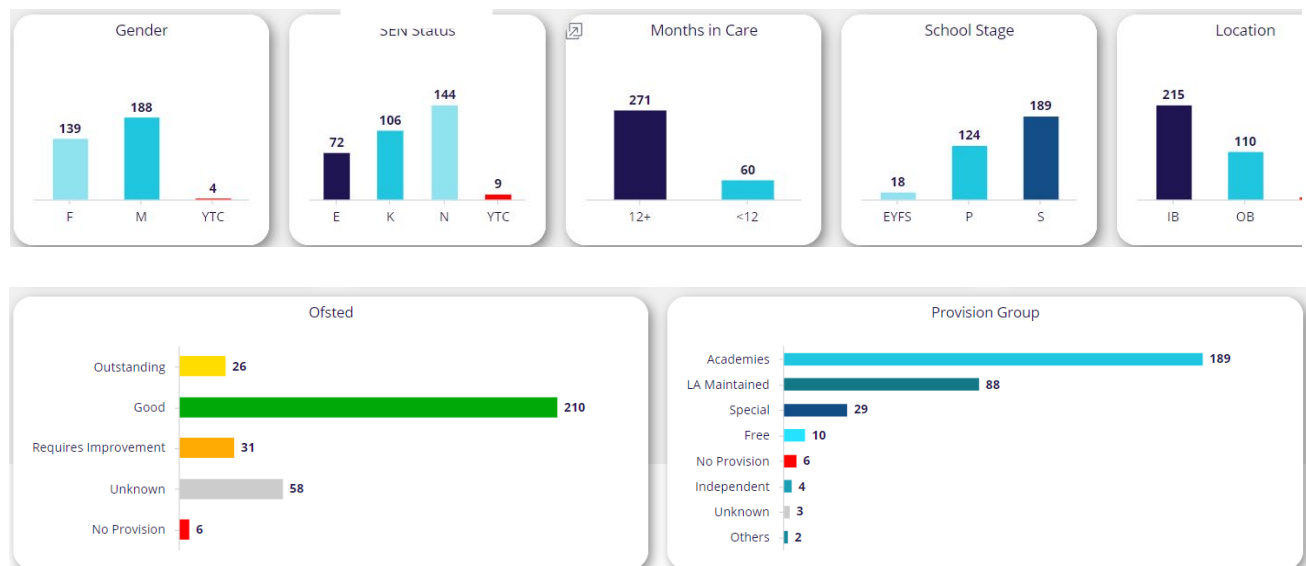
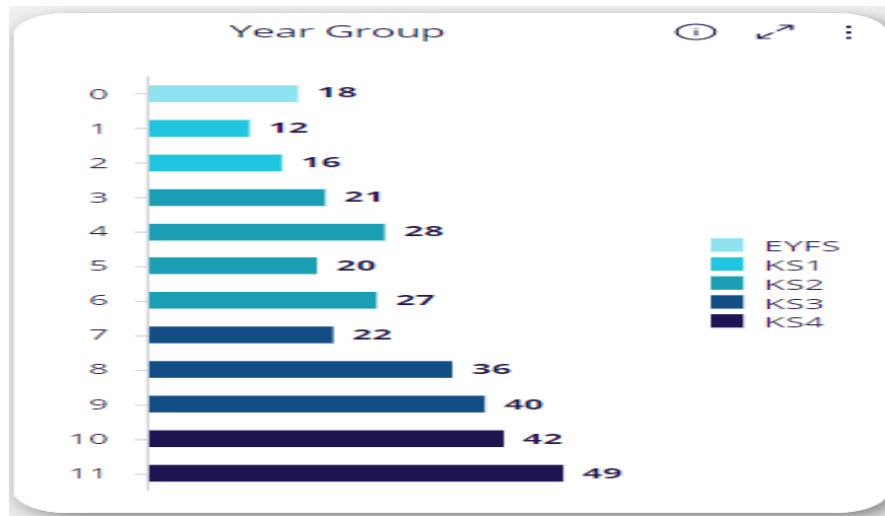
Current November 2022	498
September 2022	515
July 2022	550
February 2022	561
November 2021	564

3.1 COHORT

Of the 498:

- 46 are Pre School (0 – 2 years)
- 18 attend nursery or early years provision (2/3 and 3/4yr)
- 142 are school age Reception to year 6 (Primary)
- 189 are school age Y7 to Y11 (Secondary)
- 103 are Post 16

3.2 Statutory School Age Children (Reception to Year 11)



4 Attendance and Absence monitoring

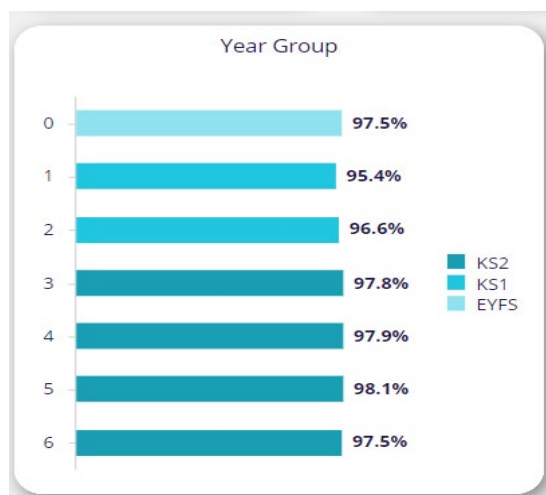
Overall attendance across all keystages is at 93% is above that of the same period last academic year at 91.5%.

Three year trend across all keystages for the academic year has shown an improvement in attendance since the dip in 2019/20 due to school closures during COVID-19 and has now returned or is above that of pre-pandemic levels.

Keystage	2020/21	2021/22	Current 2022/23	Trend
Early Years	94.3%	95%	98.4%	Improving
Primary	93.3%	96.9%	97.8%	Improving

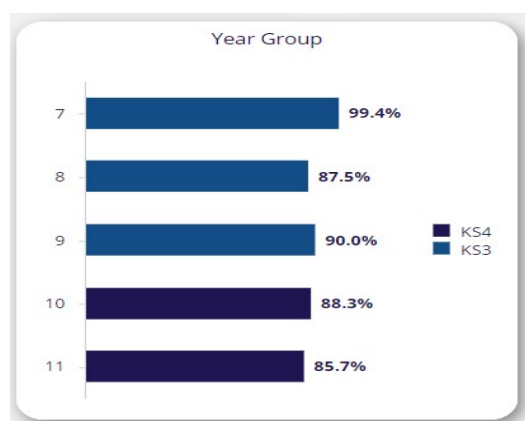
Secondary	84.7%	87.9%	89.6%	Improving
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Primary attendance at 97.8% this term is above that of all primary children in Sunderland (94.2%) and is on an improving three year trend. There are no primary age children without a school place.



% Attendance	No. Of CfC	% of Cohort
100%	79	56%
Above 95%	+35	80%
Above 90%	+17	91%
Below 90%	11	9%
Serious Concerns	0	

Secondary attendance is currently at 89.6% and just below all children in Sunderland (90.7%). At Keystage three (Y7 – 9) is 92.3% and at Key stage 4 (Y10 and 11) this drops to 87%.



% Attendance	No of CfC	% of Cohort
100%	75	40%
95%	+56	70%
Above 90%	+15	78%
Below 90%	33	17%
Serious Concerns	10	5%

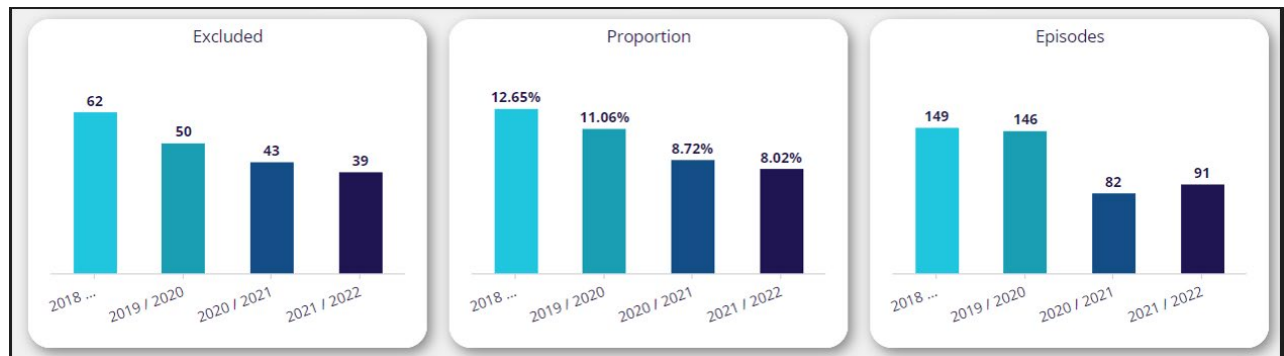
The Virtual School monitors attendance daily through Welfare Call and contacts carers to ensure attendance at school is a key priority should concerns arise. Analysis of the detail behind the data occurs termly and VS staff work closely with schools, carers and social workers to ensure attendance is improved through the ePEP. DfE guidance 2022 states that ***'attendance which drops below 50% without valid reasons should now be seen as a safeguarding concern for any child/young person'***.

Case studies of children with serious attendance concerns can be discussed at the Corporate Parenting Board meeting on 22nd November.

5 Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

As reported at the last meeting, suspensions are showing a declining trend.

The proportion of young people who have experienced one or more periods of fixed term suspension has fallen from 12.6% in 2018/19 to 8.02%. For this academic year to date 10 individual children have been suspended and 16 individual episodes, which equates to 2.7% of our cohort experiencing one or more suspensions, broadly in line with the same period last year.



Caseworkers continue to monitor exclusion data to ensure fixed term 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 of a possible permanent exclusion. 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. This situation has arisen three times since September with all young people moving to more appropriate education to assess and meet needs. As a result of this partnership, it remains that we have had **no Permanent Exclusion** of a Cared for Child/Young Person in Sunderland in five-years.

6 EPEPS

PEP meetings take place termly for statutory age and early years children and 6 monthly for Post 16 young people. EPEP compliance with statutory timeframes **remains consistently over 97%**. All PEPs are quality assured by the VS caseworkers to ensure they are fit for purpose. So far this term there have been **452 PEP meetings** taken place in **185 provisions** across **29 authorities**.

Quality assurance continues to be a key area of focus this year. Each section of the EPEP will be assessed and this is fed back to schools using a RAG rating. The average number of days from PEP meetings being held to completion of the PEP Plan is now 11.8 days, this is a significant improvement on 17 days from last academic year, and closer to the target for completion within 10 days or less.

Objective 8 of the virtual school development plan is to evaluate our Management Information Systems to align them with education and social care systems. To this end we are reviewing new modules from our existing providers Capita and Liquid Logic to see if either is suitable for PEP delivery and the work of the Virtual school. Liquid Logic have brought out a new suite of education modules which complement the existing social care modules. Capita Solutions have also developed their Virtual School modules to incorporate aspects of social care to assist the VS in conducting its functions. Analysis of both systems is ongoing with key personnel within TfC to establish a way forward.

7 VIRTUAL SCHOOL STAFFING

The new structure has been in place since May 1st and affords for greater capacity and reduced caseloads with the average caseload dropping from 80 in 2021/22 to 60 for the coming academic year 2022/23, although some of the staff (highlighted) in the table above have only recently been appointed. This has enabled a stronger focus on attendance and also on working with our carers. Middle leadership is a key area of development for us this year with all staff new to this role.

In October we successfully recruited four additional associate teachers to our Tuition Team, all on PVH contracts to support the VPP referrals and also to contribute to the intervention programme for Cared for and Care Experienced young people. We also appointed a part time teaching assistant to work within the Young Mums provision.

8. VIRTUAL SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARD

The Virtual School continues to have a strong support from the Governing Board with representation from all sectors of education provision. The first governing board of the year was held on 8th November to consider the Virtual School Development Plan for 2022/23.

Governors have assigned themselves to at least one of the 8 Outcomes we have highlighted in the plan and will meet with the Virtual School staff member who leads on the outcome to discuss progress throughout the year.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Virtual School Development 'Plan on a Page' is attached to this report and aligned to the objectives within the TfC Development Plan for 2022-2025.

10. CONTACT

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