

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD	
DATE:	26th September 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 25th May 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Board is requested to receive the report for information

3. COHORT

Currently as of 15th September 2022 we have 515 Cared for Children aged 0 –18. 98 cared for children became cared for in 2022 and 101 ceased being cared for. This data gives an overview of the normal turbulence on the Virtual School roll. For example, 98 new EPEPs within 20 school days are required, new schools/designated teachers and school staff (potentially).to build relationships with.

Historical cohorts (when report written)

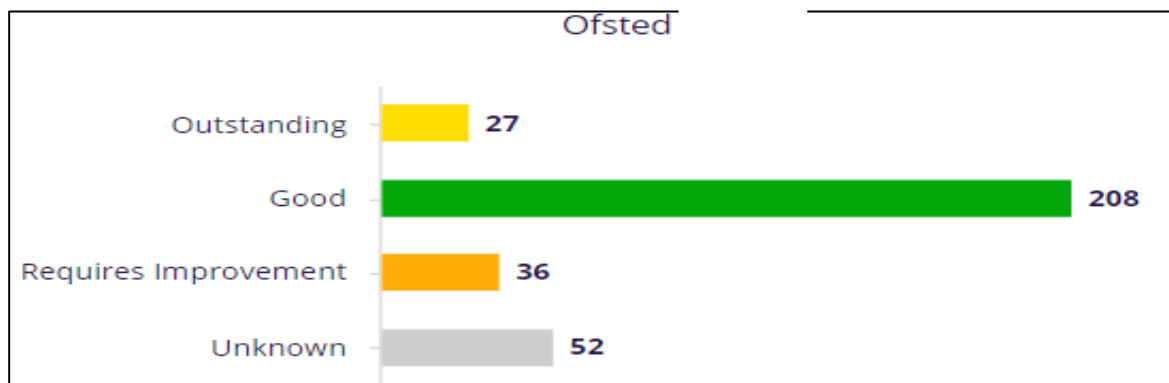
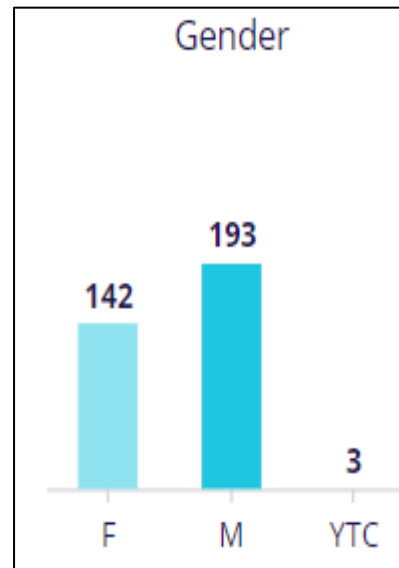
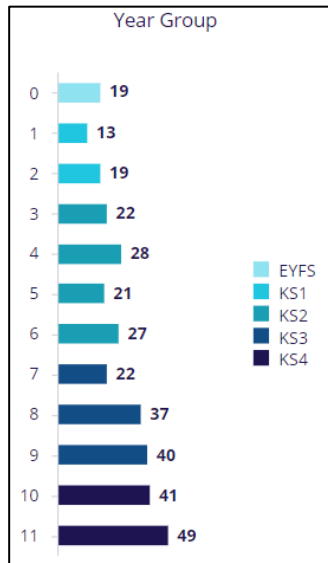
Current 15 th September 2022	515
July 2022	550
February 2022	561
November 2021	564
September 2021	586

3.1 COHORT

Of the 515:

- 71 are Pre School (0 – 4+yrs) of which 23 attend nursery or early years provision (2/3 and 3/4yr), the remainder are aged 0-2 years
- 338 are school age Reception to year 11
- 106 are Post 16

RECEPTION TO YEAR 11

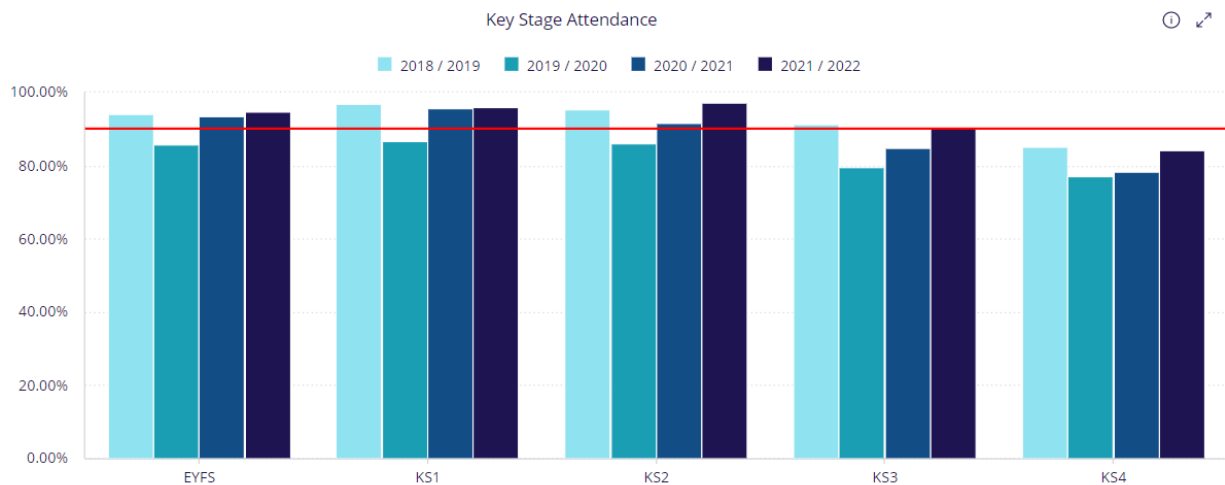


4 Progress and Achievement

There is no progress and achievement data to report as validated data from Summer 2022 is not yet available.

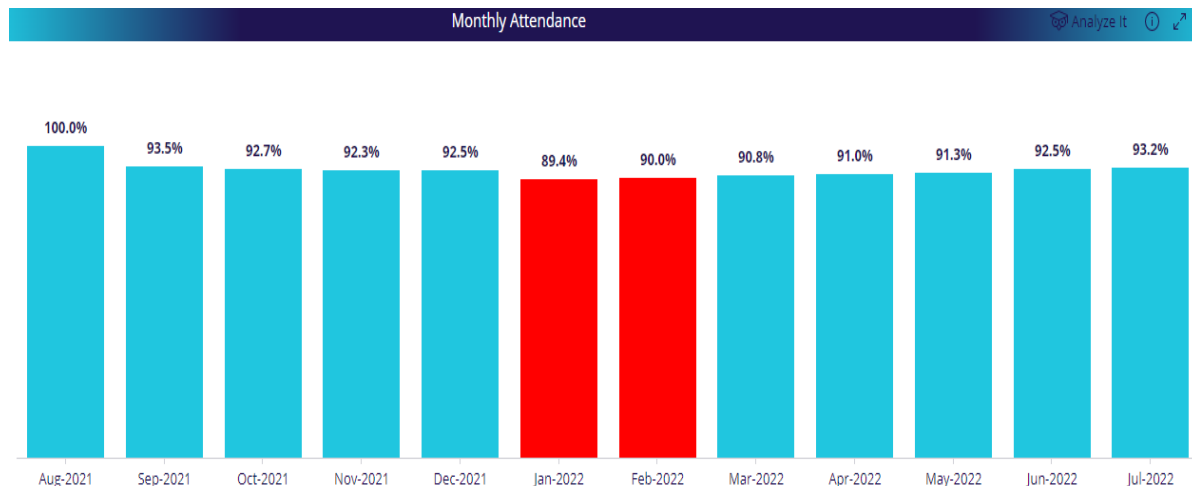
5 Attendance and Absence monitoring

Term on Term analysis comparisons



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 has now returned back to pre-pandemic levels, although a dip was seen in the spring term across all keystages (See graph below) due to high COVID infection rates in Jan and Feb. Attendance in KS4 although improving remains stubbornly low and has been identified as a key area of action for the Virtual School and its partners.

Monthly Attendance

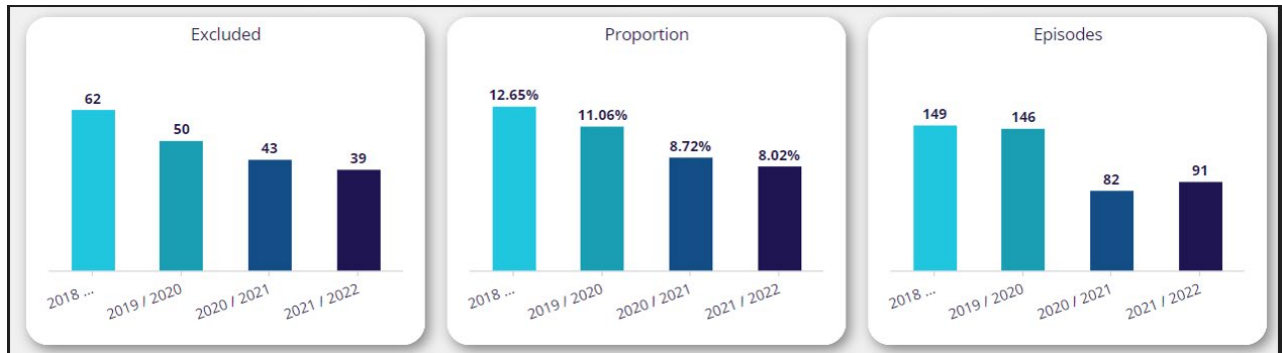


The Virtual School monitors attendance daily through Welfare Call and contacts carers to ensure attendance at school is a key priority should concerns arise. Analysis of the detail behind the data occurs termly and virtual school staff work closely with schools, carers and social workers to ensure attendance 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.

6 Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

Suspensions are showing a declining trend.

The graphs below **demonstrates the improving four-year trend of reduction in fixed term suspensions**. 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% in 2021/22 and remains below that of cared for children nationally.



Of the 39 children who have received suspensions:

- 18 (46%) received more than 1 exclusion
- 20 (51%) are in Key Stage 4
- 11 (28%) have an EHCP of which 7 attend specialist provision
- 12 (38%) receive SEND support
- 13 (33%) currently live and attend schools outside of Sunderland LA

Caseworkers 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.

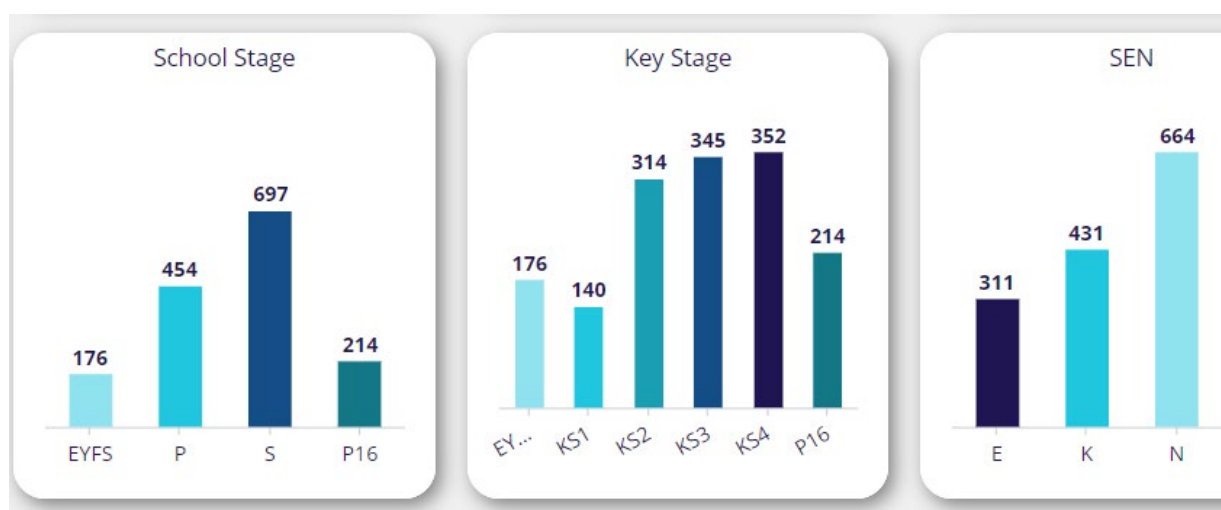
Permanent Exclusion - The Virtual School will intervene at the earliest opportunity when informed of a possible permanent exclusion. Working with school leaders, carers and our partners we avoid this course of action at all costs, ensuring the school can reconsider or that the young person is placed in an alternative and appropriate education setting as quickly as possible to meet their ongoing needs. 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 EPEPS

7.1 COMPLIANCE

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 is **now over 97% (an improvement from 86% in 2020)**. All PEPs are quality assured by the VS caseworkers to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Over the last academic year 1,541 PEP meetings took place for 629 young people in 229 education provisions within 38 different local 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. If there are concerns about the quality of the EPEP, a meeting is held with the school or the Social Worker to consider how it can be improved. 91% of EPEPS were quality assured as Good in the last academic year and 9% as Amber. 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, and the target is completion within 10 days or less for this year.

8. VIRTUAL SCHOOL STRUCTURE

8.1 HEAD TEACHER RETIREMENT AND REPLACEMENT PLANS

Linda Mason retired on 31 August 2022. In discussions between TFC and the Virtual School Governing Board it was decided not to recruit to the post of Head Teacher and to have an Acting Head Teacher, the main reason was to provide some stability for the team following the recent structural changes.

To ensure continued capacity we also advertised a secondment or fixed term post to replace the Senior Lead post.

8.2 THANK YOU FROM LINDA MASON

'I would like to thank the Corporate Parenting Board for their support and challenge since I joined TFC in November 2018. I would like to think I have left the Virtual School in a good position ... to continue being the best advocate for cared for children's education. The Team are very passionate about making a difference. I have every confidence that Anita will continue this excellent work. I look forward to hearing positive things in the future'.

8.3 NEW VIRTUAL STAFFING STRUCTURE

The new structure has been in place since May 1st 2022, although staff (highlighted) have only recently been appointed. The new structure affords for greater capacity and reduced caseloads with the average caseload dropping from 80 in 2021/22 to 60 for the coming academic year.

Staff	Roles
Anita Swales	Acting Headteacher from 1 st September
Claire Goodwill	New member of staff 1 st September
Emma Pattison	Senior Casework Lead SEND Complex Needs
Timothy Worley	Senior Casework Lead Secondary
Vivien Fell	Senior Casework Lead Primary
Kelly Woods	Senior Casework Lead Post 16 (job share)
Helen Taylor	Senior Casework Lead Post 16 (job share)
Emma Mickle	Caseworker Early Years Primary SEND (Fixed term) 16 th May
Jill Heslop	Caseworker Secondary SEND
Kerry Reay	Caseworker Yr11/Post 16 SEND (Fixed Term) from 12 th May
Jean Graham	Caseworker Primary SEND from 11 th July
Maria Hetherington	Caseworker Complex SEND from 1st September 2022
Leanne Greenlaw	Business Support
Adam Reynolds	Business Support Data (Education Data and Information Team)

8.4 GOVERNING BOARD

The Virtual School continues to have a strong support from the Governing Board with representation from all sectors of education provision. Two of our Board members resigned at the end of the academic year:

- Rachel Hargreaves Special School Head who is leaving the area for a new headship in North Yorkshire
- Sue Hamilton Secondary Head as she has a new role at Thornhill Academy

Both colleagues have made a significant contribution to the Governing Board, and we wish them well with their new roles. We are actively seeking replacements.

9. EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Cared for children in education training and employment (EET) shows an improving trend.

		EET	Seeking EET	
2017	ENGLAND	50	40	
	SUNDERLAND	55	40	
2018	ENGLAND	51	39	
	SUNDERLAND	54	46	
2019	ENGLAND	52	39	
	SUNDERLAND	44	50	Lait 2019
Sep-20	year 12	83.70%	16.20%	Local data
	year 13	53%	47%	
	TOTAL	69%	31%	
				SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT against 2019 of 50%
Jun-21	year 12	72.50%	27.50%	
	Year 13	52%	48%	
	TOTAL	65%	35%	SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT against 2019 of 50%
Autumn 2021	year 12	81.40%	18.60%	
	Year 13	70%	30%	
	TOTAL	75%	24%	SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT against 2019 of 50%
Spring 2022	year 12	74.00%	26.00%	
	Year 13	69%	28%	
	TOTAL	72%	28%	SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT against 2019 of 50%

2019, showed a decline in the number of young people who were in Education, Employment or training. Given this priority additional investment has been put in place since and as a result improvement can be seen in the number of CYP identified as EET.

Most recently the Virtual School has secured a Pilot grant from the DfE to provide additional support through transition mentoring, 1:1 tuition for English and maths and attendance incentives to support Y11 students as they transition to Post 16 provisions to improve retention and attendance.

The Virtual School maintains regular contact with the young person, carer and social worker to have a clear picture of the young person's current situation and educational/support needs. Virtual School Caseworkers in year 11, Post 16 Casework Leads and Next Steps Social Workers focus on next steps, aspirations, and ambitions for post 16 to ensure they have had the opportunity to explore fully what is available during year 11. includes support to attend:

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10 CONTACT

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