

## Newcastle Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23

### Introduction

The Virtual School has made considerable progress in 2022/23. After two years of delivery, the electronic PEP is now fully embedded in our practice. It is aiding the team in working towards returning to the 2019 levels of attainment and attendance.

We can identify areas of success and concerns that are related to the restricted education received by young people during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also new challenges are emerging and presenting us with an extended landscape of need, with improved outcomes for some of our children and greater challenges for others. The Virtual School can track these themes with greater efficiency following the completion of a suite of data analysis tools. We are looking forward to extending this work to impact upon the outcomes of all children with a social worker.

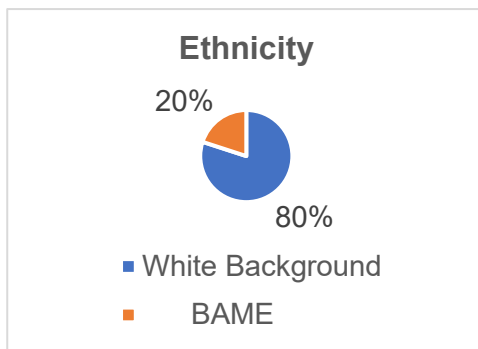
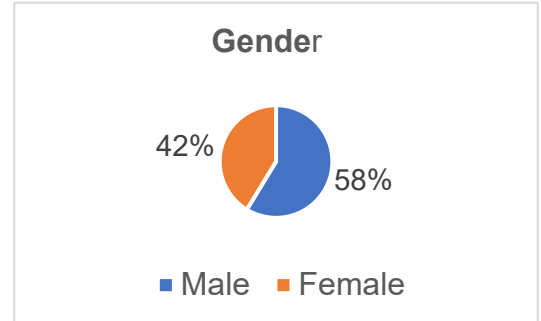
New posts have been created within the Virtual School to increase our capacity to work at a strategic level with **all** children who have a social worker, not only those who are in the care of the local authority. This will improve the resilience of the Virtual School by increasing skills and experience across the whole team.

### Executive Summary

- The size of the Virtual School continues to grow, as does the numbers of children with special educational needs (SEN) and education health care plans (EHCP) who currently make up **10%** of the Virtual School.
- Over the last three years students who have an EHCP for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) have **increased by 3%**.
- School placements have been more stable with a **5% reduction** in children experiencing a mid-year school move.
- Children's attainment is moving towards pre-Covid levels. In key stage 1 and 2 all assessment areas show improvement from 2022.
- Reading in key stage 2 is **4% above** that of pre-Covid levels.
- In key stage 4 children achieving more than 5 GCSEs, including maths and English, has **increased by 7.4%**
- There is an **increase of 4%** in children identifying post-16 destinations.
- **35** more children were educated in Newcastle Schools, closer to their families and peers.
- **67** more children had an attendance of over **98%**
- Overall attendance of the Virtual School **rose by 0.2%** to **89.9%**.
- **28** children were severely absence with attendance less than **50%**
- Enhanced support provided by the Virtual School to individual students increased from **18%** to **25%** of statutory school-aged students.
- The Virtual School made the commitment to attend all care team meetings, reviews, and personal education plans (PEP) for **116** students.

## Profile of the Virtual School

On 23 August 2023 the Virtual School held records for **634** children in care and **461** were of statutory school age. Of these students, **154** were educated outside of Newcastle. **7%** of children in care were placed more than 20 miles from Newcastle which compares favourably with the national average of **16%**.



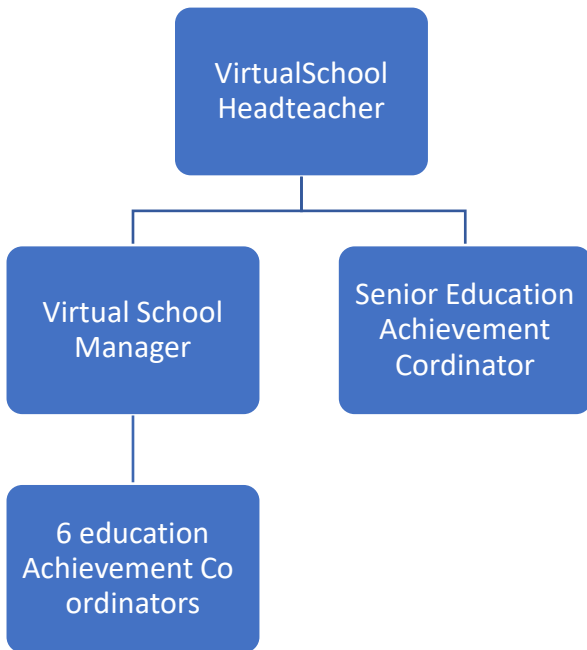
In 2022 Newcastle looked after **116** children per 100,000 compared with **70** per 100,000 nationally. Of these children **5%** had three or more places of residence during the year. This is a drop of **2%** from 2021 and is significantly below the national rate of **10%** (source: LAIT).

Two hundred and forty-six or **39%** of the Virtual School roll have an identified special educational need (SEN). Of these **111** or **17.7%** have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The most common identified need is Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) with **63** plans in place. This is equivalent to **10.0%** of the Virtual School and has increased by **0.9%** since last year.

Trend	20/21	21/22	22/23	3-year trend
Size of Virtual School	600	610	628	+ 28
Statutory School Age	457	469	461	+4
Educated outside LA	178	189	154	-24
Identified SEN	33%	41%	39%	+6%
EHCP	13%	16.8%	17.7%	+4.7%
SEMH EHCP	4.5%	9%	10%	+5.5%

Overall numbers in the Virtual school have reduced while percentages have remained stationary or risen. This is due to an increase of children in education and an increase in the complexity of their needs.

## The Virtual School Team



The team has been extended with the creation of the positions of Virtual School Manager and Senior Education Co-ordinator.

Education Achievement Co-ordinators hold an average caseload of **95** young people. Collectively the team managed **1626** PEP meetings in 2022/23, worked with **152** different educational establishments, and in **23** local authorities.

The Virtual School is also supported by **1.4** business support who complete vital administration tasks including out of area attendance, invoicing and payment of premium plus to schools. A **0.5** service support officer acts as an ePEP champion and assures that the system is kept up to date and that users are trained.

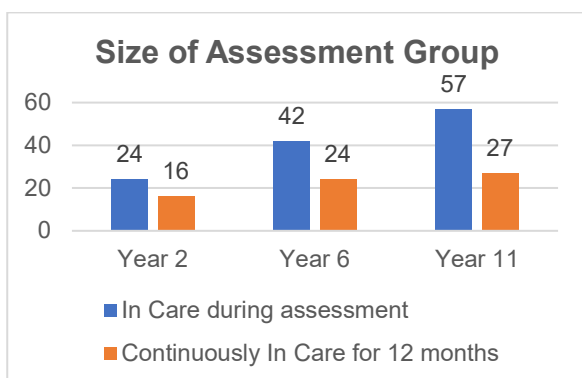
## The experience and progress of children in care and care leavers

In 2022, **6%** of our children experienced a mid-year school move, this is a significant decrease from **11%** in 2021 and is **2%** below the national average. School stability is a significant factor for young people and underpins success in attainment and progress. This is still **38** children whose education has been interrupted; it is **29** less than 2021/22 (source: LAIT).

### Attainment and Progress

It is important to consider cohort size when looking at assessment results and the impact, positive or negative, that one young person can make to the data headlines.

The assessment data below is based on children who have been continuously looked after (CLA) for a period of 12 months.



Year 2	6.3%
Year 6	4.2%
Year 11	3.7%

## Key Stage 1 Expected levels of progress

	Subject	2022	2023	Difference to National
Early Years	Good level of Development	28.6%	41.7% ↑	+1.7%
Year 1	Phonics	50.0%	53.8% ↑	-7.2%
Key Stage 1	Reading	47.6%	37.5% ↓	-7.5%
	Writing	38.1%	18.8% ↓	-17.2%
	Maths	42.9%	56.3% ↑	+10.3%

(NCER)

The strong improvement of **13.4%** in maths is pleasing but must be tempered by poorer result in reading and writing. As a result, Year 3 students will be prioritised with additional Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) if individually required.

## Key Stage 2

Subject	2022	2023	Difference to National
Reading	43.0%	61.8% ↑	+8.8%
Writing (Teacher Assessment)	46.0%	67.6% ↑	+20.6%
Maths	43.0%	58.8% ↑	+8.8

(NCER)

Exactly **50%** of children achieved the expected levels in reading, writing *and* maths. This is a **14%** improvement locally and in national comparison. This demonstrates progress towards returning to the 2019 level of **57%**. Reading is especially strong at **53%** which is **4% better** than in 2019.

## Key Stage 4

### Percentage of Children in Care Achieving Threshold

Subject	Grade	2022 (published)	2023 (provisional)	Impact 20-23
<b>Maths and English</b>	5+	11.1%	18.5% ↑	+7.4%
<b>Maths and English</b>	4+	27.8%	25.9% ↓	-1.9%
<b>English</b>	5+	27.8%	29.6% ↑	+1.8%
<b>English</b>	4+	36.1%	37.0% ↑	+0.9%
<b>Maths</b>	5+	19.4%	25.9% ↑	+6.5%
<b>Maths</b>	4+	30.6%	37.0% ↑	+6.4%

(NCER)

The Virtual School seeks to support its young people through the challenges of exams, recognising that circumstances may make it difficult for complete access to the exam curriculum. We support individuals with the full Progress 8 syllabus, alternative provision and returning to education after a lengthy absence.

### GCSE results lower than 3.

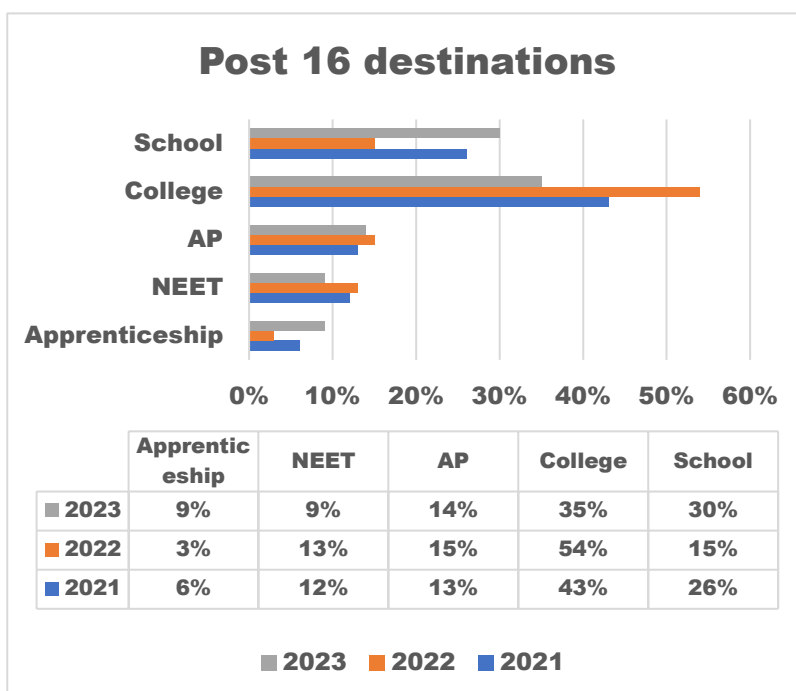
	2021	2022	2023	3 year trend
Cohort Size	51	50	54	
English Language Graded	22	34	34	+23% ↑
English Language 3+	14	17	25	+18% ↑
English Literature Graded	31	15	32	-2% ↓
English Literature 3+	11	20	18	+21% ↑
Maths Graded	20	24	34	+24% ↑
Maths 3+	12	17	23	+21% ↑

Significant progress has been made in the achievements of students who have received grades that are recognised as a pass. These results support students in the choices they can make at post 16 and encourage them to remain in education or training.

**“I cannot overstate the immense value that Virtual School adds to the educational offer that CiC receive. They support the young person, help the school to challenge situations that are not productive and are a source of information to the pastoral staff at school.”**

**Secondary Designated Teacher**

### Post 16 Destinations



We have focused on our Year 11 students to ensure that they continue studies into Year 12. Over three years this trend has **improved by 3%**.

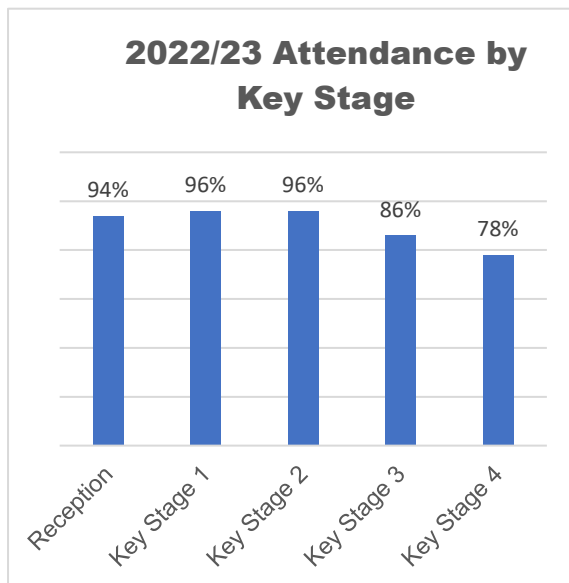
The Virtual School Manager meets half termly with the Careers and Guidance Service focusing upon the 16 plus age group to ensure that children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have every opportunity to engage in educational or training activity.

## Attendance

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Virtual School Attendance %	85.5%	89.7%	<b>89.9%</b>
Students with over 98% attendance	145	129	<b>196</b>

The Virtual School was not able to reach its overall target of **92%** attendance and achieved an overall attendance, (including out of authority schools) of **90%** for the academic year.

Putting this into context, attendance for all Newcastle Schools on 10/07/2022 was **88%** and throughout the year the attendance of Children in Care (CiC) has compared well to that of all children.



This overall figure is made up of a complex range of differing cohorts and we have started this year with our improved data analysis to gain a fuller understanding of the challenges and subsequent targeted interventions.

Suspensions by **49** students accounted for **0.45%** or **400** missing days.

The **10** lowest attending young people accounted for **2%** or **1800** days of lost education.

**107** students were classified as persistently absent (-90%), with **28** of these being severely absent (-50%).

The impact of this absence on the overall attendance is.

	Number of students	Attendance	Days lost	% of VS absence.
Reception	5	84%	152	0.17%
Key Stage 1	5	78%	209	0.2%
Key Stage 2	19	82%	650	0.7%
Key stage 3	36	62%	2600	2.8%
Key Stage 4	42	52%	3830	4.3%
	<b>107</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>7441</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

We have very good figures for children with excellent attendance this is however balanced by children who are regular non-attenders. This complex situation has been recognised and is being addressed at a senior level.

### Exclusions and Suspensions

We work very closely with schools to avoid exclusions and suspensions. The enhanced support we offer is a key element in this area of work.

	Suspensions	Permanent	Withdrawn	Students	Days
2020/21	115	1	4	39	225.5
2021/22	128	1	1	49	311.0
2022/23	150	1	2	49	391.5

The one young person permanently excluded last year is now regularly attending Moorbridge PRU. Two permanent exclusions have been avoided through placements at Rosewood Independent School and River Tyne Academy. Suspensions by **49** students accounted for **0.45%** or **400** missing days.

### Enhanced Support

Enhanced support is focused upon children who are experiencing a higher level of challenge in accessing learning. This includes:

- weekly review by Virtual School Headteacher and Manager
- attendance by Education Achievement Co-ordinator at care team, strategy, SEN and school meetings.
- additional financial support, often for alternative provision or staffing.

Children who receive this support have a below **90%** attendance for the last four weeks, are in danger of suspension or permanent exclusion, have no school place, a partial offer or have an unmet special educational need.

In 2021-22 we provided this level of support to **84** students of which **25** were removed from this level of support in-year as the individual situation was stabilized.

This year we provided support to **116** students of which **59** were removed from enhanced support once the situation had stabilized.

This approach is a key element of our work, remaining one of high priority that is demanding on EAC time. So far this year we have supported **116** students of which **51%** have experienced a positive impact on their educational engagement. We will continue to develop this work alongside longer-term proactive approaches.



## Agencies and professionals working together

The Virtual School works cooperatively with a range of professionals across Newcastle City Council, educational settings, voluntary organisations, and other local authorities.

### Virtual School Representation

The Virtual School is represented on the following bodies by either the Virtual School Headteacher, Virtual School Manger, or Senior Education Achievement Co-ordinator

- Education and Skills Leadership Team
- Childrens Social Care Resource and Care Panel
- Childrens Social Care cases of concern meetings
- Special Education Needs cases of concern meetings
- Locality Inclusion Panels
- Special School Headteacher Network
- Pastoral Deputies Network
- SENCo Network
- Youth Justice Service Key Indicators Group.
- North-East Virtual School Headteacher Network
- Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee
- Children in Care Multi-agency Partnership
- Care Experiences Student Steering Group
- Trauma Informed Steering Group (renamed Future Focus)
- Staying Close Steering Group
- Adopt North-East
- National Association Virtual School Headteachers Annual Conference.

Education Achievement Co-ordinators have been supporting the work of the NCC fostering panel since September 2023.

Inter-agency working is a growing strength of the Virtual School, moving forward the intention is to spread this responsibility across the service with EAC assuming greater responsibility to further improve service resilience.

Longer term data development has been secured with extension of post funding of the System Analysis by the Virtual School. This benefits all areas of education and children's social care. Capita described this work as "Exceptional".

### Personal Education Plans (PEPs) including Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

It is the responsibility of the Virtual School Headteacher to account for the use and impact of PPP spending for children in care. The personal education plan is the key document in this process. As such it contains a specific section on target setting linked to spending (SMART targets).



This section requires completion for each child, even if the amount of PPP funding is below the nominal termly allocation per child.

After submission the Virtual School will quality assure every EPEP before signing it off as completed.

### Quality Assurance of PEPs

Academic Year	Completed	Red No indication of how PPP is allocated against targets	Amber Missing attainment and progress	Green All sections completed
2021/22	99.69%	21%	25%	54%
2022/23	99.81%	14%	25%	61%

(Egov)

Schools Forum agreed with the Pupil Premium Plus Policy for 2023/24. Therefore, as of 1 April 2023 we will be withholding PPP where spend is not accounted for in the PEP.

- This will be withheld the following term rather than clawing back payments to school.
- Children transferring from primary to secondary will not be subject to this policy.

### Pupil Premium Plus

In January 2022 the LA agreed with Schools Forum to retain and distribute Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) as follows for the 2022/23 academic year.

Age group	Amount per year	Arrangements
Early Years	£300 (2022/23)	Paid direct to school where child is educated and not managed by Virtual School
Statutory School Age	£2410 (2022/23)	PPP paid in quarterly instalments to Virtual School by DfE 33% retained for central services. 66% directed to schools in three termly payments
16 +	N/A	N/A
Previously Looked After Child	£2410 (2022/23)	Paid direct to schools and not managed by Virtual School.

The Virtual School operates a Pupil Premium Plus policy that is reviewed annually and ratified by Schools Forum. It is available to view at [Virtual School for Children in Care | Services to Schools](#)

Pupil Premium Plus distributed by academic year 22/23							
Term	Amount paid per eligible child	Ncle LA schools	Academies /Other LA schools	G'head LA schools	N'land LA schools	Total Paid out	Additional Payments made (all included in the total paid column)
Autumn 22	£535 (Years 0 -11)	£37,718.00	£169,526.00	£7,490.00	£7,490.00	£222,224.00	£3,944.00
Spring 23	£535 (Years 0-10) £1,310 (Y11)	£40,773.00	£200,356.50	£8,560.00	£6,955.00	£256,644.50	£12,872.00
Covid Recovery	£500 to every CiC who received spring PPP	£36,000.00	£138,546.95	£8,000.00	£4,500.00	£187,046.95	£0.00
Summer 23	£560 (Years 0-10) Y11's held as double paid in spring	£35,280.00	£176,092.00	£9,520.00	£4,480.00	£225,372.00	£24,332.00
<b>Total for year</b>						<b>£891,287.45</b>	<b>£41,148.00</b>

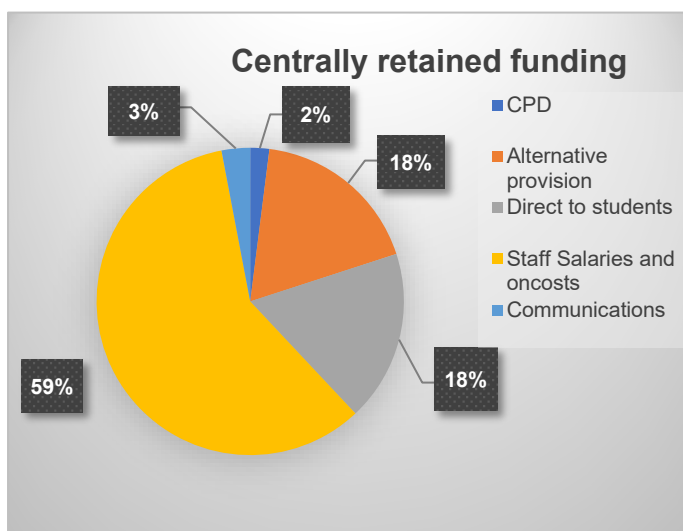
Details of these individual payments and their purpose are recorded in the termly PEP, as described above.

### Centrally Retained Funding

Centrally retained PPP, cannot be used for services that the local authority is statutorily responsible for funding, such as support for foster carers, or transport to school.

However, PPP funding can be used to pay for activities that will:

- Improve the way learning targets are determined in children’s PEPs, so that PEPs are always useful and relevant.
- Encourage CiC to be more involved and interested in their education.



In Newcastle, PPP funding is used to employ Education Achievement Coordinators who ensure that PEPs have clear supportive targets.

This is achieved through close collaboration with the child, carers, schools and Children’s Social Care, providing an advocacy and challenge service to ensure that children meet their academic potential and close any gaps in attainment.

## Education Psychology Service (EPS)

Despite suspending traded services, the EPS has maintained their sessions with the Virtual School as part of their core offer. Coordination of this support sits with the Senior Education Achievement Co-ordinator. The offer consists of **200** sessions of 3 hours in duration. Alongside support to individual students and school staff the Virtual School team has received training sessions from the EPS on solution circles and emotionally based school non-attendance.

## Support for Children who are Previously Looked After (PLAC)

A Senior Education Achievement Coordinator has been appointed to develop additional capacity for this important area of work. This involves managing individual enquiries plus meeting with Adopt Northeast, Regional Care Experienced Steering Group and John Lewis Partnership who are supporting care leavers to join their organisation. The Virtual School is participating with the NHS Universal Family Pathfinder Steering Group. In 2023/24 members of the VS team will support the Independent Fostering Panel as we further enhance the skill and experience of the team and provide the widest service possible.

## Post Looked After Children Report 2022 – 2023

- A steering group was formed across five regional local authorities to help improve knowledge and support to families and care experienced young people within the adopted community.
- Five Virtual Schools – Newcastle, Gateshead, Northumberland, Durham, South Tyneside and North Tyneside are the local authorities that feed into Adopt Northeast. Staff from all local authorities and adopt Northeast meet regularly to share information and good practice.
- Over the past academic year 2022 – 2023 we have met five times inviting partner agencies to talk and share knowledge on areas that have an impact on young people and families.

The increased capacity created by the new role of Senior Education Coordinator is allowing the Virtual School to look at a more strategic approach to this work. We continue to respond to requests for advice and guidance as they arise, but now we can be more proactive in our approach.

## Care Leavers

The three-year trend is showing a reduction in the percentage of students entering higher education there is a **13%** rise in education, employment, and training.

Care Leavers	2020	2021	2022	2023	Trend
Higher education	10%	8%	8%	12%	+2%
Education Employment or Training	45%	50%	58%	59%	+13%
NEET	49%	41%	32%	32%	-17%
Not in touch	9%	8%	9%	9%	0%

(LAIT)

## All Children with a Social Worker

The Virtual School continues to be funded from the Department for Education to work strategically to improve the outcomes for all children with a social worker.

We have extended roles within the Virtual School to develop capacity and knowledge to ensure that we improve interagency co-operation and understanding.

We have invested in developing our tracking and data analysis of this cohort. This capacity is being retained to research the identification of trends and “red flags” in cohorts and individual children.

The following systems are now in place and update daily:

- Virtual School Dashboard
- Individual dashboards for Children in Care, Child Protection and Child in Need
- Record of any child who has had a social worker in the last six years, known as Ever6
- Student with concerns report
- Education Senior Leadership Team Dashboard
- Ward level data
- Individual single student view combining education and children social care data onto a single report

## All Students open to Childrens Social Care (Example)



### Leadership

The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) reports directly to Mark Patton, Assistant Director: Education and Skills and has monthly conversations with Cath McEvoy Carr, Director of Children, Education and Skills.

Since September 2022, the VSH is a member of the Education and Skills Leadership Team which represents a significant increase in the involvement of the Virtual School across all education teams.

The VSH regularly reports to elected members at the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

### Governing Body

The VSH is held to account by a governing body that meets on a termly basis. The membership holds a vast range of knowledge and experience that is essential in the guidance and development of the Virtual School.

Thank you to the following who have given their time this year to serve on the Virtual School’s governing body:

Role	Name	Experience
LA Education	Rebecca Wright	Specialist Senior EP
Children’s Social Care	Jayne Forsdyke	Assistant Director CSC
Primary School	Colin Lofthouse (Chair)	CEO Smart Academies
Secondary School	Mandy Marsh	Designated Teacher
Co-opted	Jane Pickthall	North Tyneside VSH
Co-opted	Jane Edminson	National Lead in Governance
Virtual School	Lynsdey Pilling	Parent Governor

### Progress against 2022/23 Objectives

2022/23 objective	<b>Green</b> Target met. <b>Amber</b> Progress made remains a priority. <b>Red</b> No progress made	Comments
Improve Educational progress of individual students by offering targeted support through the EPEP		Progress made in Key stages 1, 2 and 4. EPEP essential in this process.
Achieve more than 92% attendance for Virtual School		Overall attendance 89.9.% 0.2% rise from 2021/22
Improve young person engagement to reduce exclusion		116 students provided with enhanced support, 59 removed from this support as need declined.
Discuss with Schools Forum the quality assurance and identification of pupil premium plus against SMART targets in the PEP		School Forum agreed to the withholding of PPP when not identified in the PEP
Use EPEP to track and monitor impact of PPP on individual student engagement and outcomes		EPEP fully embedded and achieving a 99.81 completion rate, with 61% of plans rated as green.
Increase access to support and guidance for PLAC		Senior Education Achievement Co-ordinator appointed
Continuing interagency working through the extended role of the VSH		Establishment of standing meetings with CSC and SEN. Development of data tracking and analysis.

### Key Priorities for 2023/24

- Achieve more than 92% attendance for the Virtual School
- Ensure that all ePEP targets have an identified PPP spend

### **Additional Priorities for 2023/24**

- Improve educational progress of individual students by offering targeted support through the EPEP and allocation of PPP
- Improve attainment in English for Year 2 and Year 3 students
- Reduce the number of severely and persistently absent students
- Improve young person engagement to reduce exclusion and suspension
- Share and promote the use of data tracking and individual student dashboards with Children's Social Care
- Increase the number of post-16 students who are in education, employment, or training
- Increase the number of care leavers in education, employment, and training