

Virtual School

Virtual School Headteacher Report Academic Year 2022/2023



Leicester
City Council



Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of our Looked After Children during the academic year 2022/23. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes for our Looked After Children.

Context

The Virtual School contribute to increasing the educational performance of our looked after children in order to:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for children in care across all key stages;
- Improve school attendance and reduce suspensions and exclusion;
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans and;
- provide and support a range of opportunities to widen horizons and raise achievement.

Additionally, The Virtual School now maintains oversight of education issues for children and young people who live in Leicester and are previously looked after (PLAC) and for children and young people with a Social Worker or have ever had a Social Worker.

Our aspiration is that all our looked after children and young people;

- attend a good or outstanding school and learn
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive
- have accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support when it is needed to help them to make good progress in their learning and development, wherever they live
- where they do not attend school, they have access to 25 hours per week of good quality, registered provision appropriate to their level of ability and aspirations. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress
- where they are missing from education, work with other professionals to take action to improve their attendance
- have social workers, residential staff, carers and schools who support them to enjoy what they do and to access a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities
- have access to a range of cultural opportunities
- have stability in care and education placements
- receive recognition for their achievements and have their successes celebrated
- engage with the Aim Higher Reach Further programme to encourage all to achieve their potential and for our most able to present them with opportunities to progress into higher education or other appropriate pathway
- for those who are leaving care, provide appropriate support and guidance to ensure they can progress to further education, higher education, training or employment as appropriate to their aspirations.

Summary of Key Priorities for 2022/2023

- To narrow the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers
- Improve proportion of looked after children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Improve proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 and KS2
- Continue to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE or equivalent qualification at the end of Key Stage 4, with a focus on English and Maths
- Improve outcomes at Key Stage 4
- Improve outcomes and reduce drop-out for young people pursuing Level 3 courses in schools or Sixth Form Colleges
- Improve attendance
- Aim Higher Reach Further Programme to enthuse learners and accelerate their progress and raise aspirations
- Improve quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs and PEP meetings), including student voice
- Maintain high level of PEP compliance
- Support foster carers and Designated Teachers to better support our looked after children with their learning

Notable Achievements in 2022/2023

- There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2022/23
- In the Early Years phase, 54.5% of our children have achieved a good level of development (GLD) compared to 41% of CLA nationally but still behind all children in Leicester (63.6%)
- There have been significant improvements in Year 1 Phonics check outcomes with our CLA (69.2%) making greater improvements than CLA nationally (59%) and outcomes almost back to pre-pandemic levels
- Key Stage 2 writing outcomes have improved significantly this year
- Leicester's young people have been subject to fewer fixed term suspensions than CLA nationally, with an exclusion rate of 8.16% compared to 13% for CLA nationally

Pupil Characteristics

Numbers of school age children and young people looked after has increased slightly this year and is now a little higher than the previous two years.

	Early Years	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Post 16	TOTAL
20/21	122	24	19	22	27	32	45	31	38	43	45	47	57	78	630
21/22	126	16	24	17	25	25	35	46	34	40	48	45	53	85	619
22/23	136	16	16	26	21	25	26	36	47	35	46	53	60	95	638

This shows us the spread of how many children and young people in each school year were looked after at some point during the school year. For some young people this is long term but there are others whose care journey is short. The most significant increases in number are at Early Years and in our 14 to 16 years olds, with this following through from last year into Post 16 numbers. It is clear that the numbers are higher in the secondary education phase and these are the young people whose care journeys are generally longer and more complex.

This information about the numbers of children and young people entering and leaving care during 2022/23 shows clearly that children up to the age of 5 are the group where care journeys are shorter.

Age	Into Care	Left Care
0	39	3
1	14	21
2	4	14
3	4	8
4	4	6

School Year	Into Care	Left Care
R	6	4
Year 1	5	6
Year 2	7	5
Year 3	6	2
Year 4	4	2
Year 5	4	4
Year 6	3	2
Year 7	4	3
Year 8	6	2
Year 9	9	3
Year 10	12	5
Year 11	16	8

The table below shows a small decrease in the number of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans this year and an apparent increase in the proportion of CLA with no identified learning needs. However, I believe that schools are still in the process of catching up with the identification of additional learning needs post pandemic and that this is taking longer than previously as it is impacted by reduced services and increased call on availability.

SEN CODE	Jun-17	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Jul-22	Jul-23
N (no SEN)	45%	48%	51%	48%	46%	41%	57%
K (SEN Support)	38.50%	36%	34.53%	35%	31%	34%	22%
E (EHCP)	17%	17%	14.00%	17%	23%	25%	21%

*Information correct at 12 September 2023

Number of children with SEN in each year group

SEN Status	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL number	Total % of LCC	Total % CLA
CLA in Year Group	16	16	26	21	25	26	36	47	35	46	53	60	507		
ALL LCC in Year Group	4347	4581	4779	4834	4877	4945	5068	4635	4604	4524	4500	4406	56100		1%
<u>E All LCC</u>	76	126	174	171	179	188	240	197	211	177	201	178	2315	4%%	
<u>K All LCC</u>	425	476	588	628	686	709	669	617	571	583	536	430	6531	12%%	
E (CLA)	1	2	10	1	5	3	14	18	8	11	17	24	114		22.00%
K (CLA)	3	4	8	4	12	12	10	15	16	16	11	13	124		24.00%
TOTAL SEN (CLA)	4	6	18	5	17	15	24	33	24	27	28	37	238		47.00%

*Correct at 1 August 2023

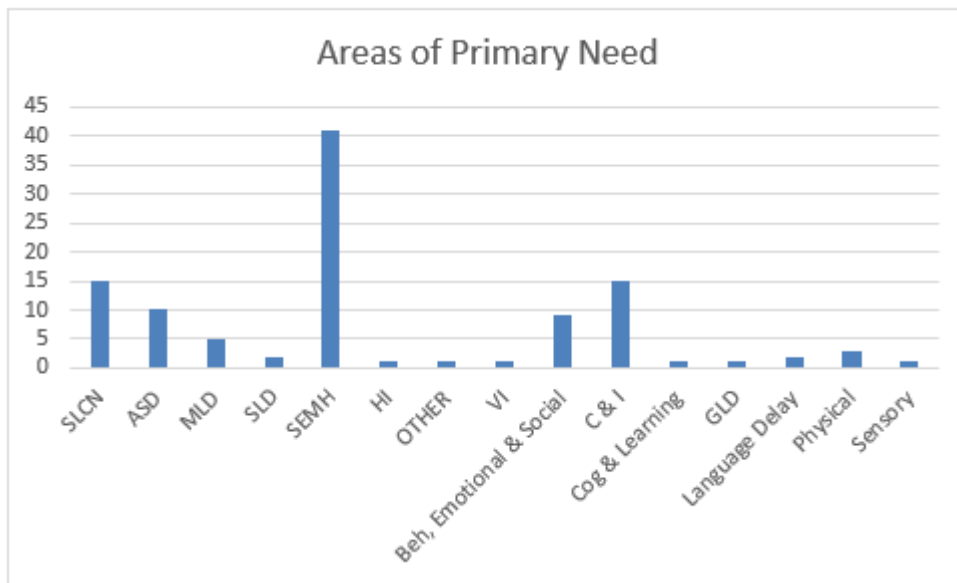
This data indicates that CLA represent 1% of the whole Leicester cohort. 47% of our CLA have some level of special need. This is a very high proportion compared with figures for all Leicester children with an EHCP (4%) and all Leicester children with a known learning need (12%), although in general, the prevalence of SEN in CLA is higher than for the total population.

This year there has been a small decrease in the number of our young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. I believe this is attributable to processes that stalled during the pandemic and have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

It remains clear that there is a higher concentration of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans in secondary education at present. 49% of these young people are placed in Special School settings where their needs can best be met.

51 of the young people with EHCPs are educated in City settings.

Young people categorised as 'K' receive additional support with their learning, but this is managed within the normal bounds of a mainstream school and may include some 1 to 1 support or a learning intervention to address a short term or specific issue.



It is clear that by far the greatest primary need for those CLA with EHCPs is in the area of social, emotional and mental health needs. This differs from the national trend, where from data published in 2019 the most common area of primary need was Autistic Spectrum Disorder, which is double the rate of the second place need of Speech, Language and Communication Needs with SEMH coming in third. Given the early life experiences of our CLA and the trauma they have experienced, this is not a surprise to us but does highlight why there may be a national shortage of specialist places for young people with SEMH needs.

Gender	Jun-17	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Jul-22	Jul-23
Male	56%	56%	53%	54%	54%	55%	55%
Female	44%	44%	47%	46%	46%	45%	45%

This table shows us that although there has been a very small change in the last 3 years, the gender balance of our CLA cohort remains more than 50% male.

Ethnicity	Jul-20	Jul-21	Leicester All pupils July 2021	Leicester	
				Jul-22	Jul-23
ABAN - Bangladeshi	0.25%	0.20%	0.00%	0.80%	1.72%
AAF - Asian African	0.00%	0.30%	0.60%	0.40%	0.00%
AIND - Indian	4.42%	4.60%	32.10%	3.61%	5.16%
AOT – any other Asian background	3.19%	3.50%	5.60%	4.01%	2.95%
APKN - Pakistani	2.70%	1.70%	4.20%	2.00%	0.98%
Bangladeshi	0.00%	0.00%	2.60%	0.00%	0.00%
BAOF - other Black African	0.49%	1.50%	1.40%	0.80%	1.47%
BLB – Black/Black British Caribbean	1.23%	1.10%	0.80%	1.00%	1.23%
BLF – Black/Black British African	0.74%	0.90%	4.40%	2.20%	1.97%
BLG – Black/Black British Other	0.74%	0.90%	0.00%	0.60%	0.74%
BSOM - Somali	0.25%	0.70%	3.00%	0.20%	0.25%
CHE - Chinese	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%
MWBA – Mixed White/Black African	0.00%	0.50%	1.20%	1.00%	1.23%
MBO	0.25%	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	
MOTH - any other mixed background	3.44%	4.00%	2.10%	3.61%	6.14%
MWAS - White/Asian	5.65%	4.60%	1.90%	4.61%	4.18%
MWBC - White/Black Caribbean	4.91%	5.50%	2.10%	4.81%	4.91%
OEO – Other Ethnic Origin	1.23%	1.10%	2.60%	1.20%	2.46%
NOT – Information not obtained	4.42%	5.50%	0.80%	1.20%	1.23%
REF – Refused	0.00%	0.30%	0.50%	0.80%	0.74%
WEN - White English	0.25%	0.36%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
WBRI - White British	58.23%	57.70%	23.70%	60.04%	57.99%
WEUR - White European	2.95%	3.50%	6.00%	3.41%	0.00%
WIRI - White Irish	0.49%	0.20%	0.10%	0.80%	0.00%
WOB - White other British	0.00%	0.30%	0.10%	0.20%	0.25%
WOW – White other	0.25%	0.30%	1.70%	0.80%	3.19%
WROM	0.98%	0.70%	0.10%	0.80%	0.98%

Whilst there have been small fluctuations in some groups, numbers of CLA may be too small to make this significant. It is clear, however, that the CLA population remains not reflective of the population for all of Leicester.

Achievements and Outcomes

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

In 2023, assessment of children and young people's learning has continued with young people sitting tests and exams that are externally marked and verified. Like those who have preceded them, the young people in the key year groups have all felt the impact of the pandemic on their lost learning but have prepared as best they could to return to the examination rooms. Some children in the Primary phase have had their learning impacted when schools with RAAC were closed and learning moved either to a new site or online (or a combination of the two).

School Readiness

The Virtual School Officer with responsibility for the Early Years children attends PEPS for children from aged 2 upwards, where the child is registered in an Early Years setting or from birth if the child has significant learning needs requiring the support of a range of professionals. The assessment of the needs of this cohort in Early Years settings has improved the transition to Reception with schools better prepared to meet the needs of those learners requiring additional support.

School readiness is discussed in PEP meetings each term, generating the following information;

School Readiness 2023		
Key Areas	Mini Goals	
Settle happily when parents/carers are not there	I can play with my friends at pre-school	87%
	I can find another grown up if I am sad	87%
Separation and Independence: feel secure, say how they feel and ask an adult for help	I can say how I feel	80%
	I can ask for help with something if I need it	80%
Play with others and begin to share	I can take turns in a small group	87%
	I can name two of my friends	87%
Enjoy exploring new things and make choices	I can help load the trolley in the supermarket	87%
	I can choose my own clothes to wear	73%
Listen, talk and understand	I can follow three instructions at once	73%
	I can use sentences of 4-5 words	73%
Enjoy rhymes, songs, stories and books	I can sing my favourite nursery rhymes and do the actions	87%
	I can tell my own story using pictures in a book	80%
Walk, run, climb and balance	I can hop	73%
	I can jump forwards with two feet together	87%

Eat, chew, try different foods and drink from a cup	I can try a new food	87%
	I can help to set the table	87%
Use the toilet, wash their hands and clean their teeth	I can brush my teeth all by myself	93%
	I can wipe my own bottom	80%
Begin to dress themselves	I can do up a button on my clothes	66%
	I can move a zip up and down	87%

The impact of this work will be monitored as these children start their school careers through the numbers achieving their Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year. However, it is already clear that these children are experiencing fewer issues in the Reception year than may have been experienced by their peers in previous years when this work was not undertaken.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Our aspiration for our Early Years children is for them to achieve GLD – a good level of development.

EYFSP BENCHMARK	Good Level of Development
NCER National (CLA)	41.00%
DfE Region - East Midlands (CLA)	40.00%
LA Leicester - All Schools	63.60%
Leicester Virtual School	54.50%

Whilst these children in Reception classes are still behind their non-looked after peers, they have achieved significantly better than CLA across the East Midlands area and nationally.

Phonics Benchmark

PHONICS BENCHMARK 2023	Disapplied	Working towards the standard	Working at the standard
NCER National (CLA)	6.00%	34.00%	59.00%
DfE Region - East Midlands (CLA)	7.00%	37.00%	56.00%
LA Leicester - All Schools	4.90%	18.40%	75.00%
Leicester Virtual School	0.00%	30.80%	69.20%

As with EYFS children, this cohort are still behind their non-looked after peers, but they have achieved significantly better than CLA across the East Midlands area and nationally for the proportion working at the expected standard.

Key Stage 2

	Ave standardised score reading, writing & maths	achieving expected standard in reading	achieving expected standard in maths
NCER National (CLA)	101.70	52.00%	48.00%
DfE Region- East Midlands (CLA)	99.80	45.00%	43.00%
LA Leicester - all schools	104.10	67.70%	73.20%
Leicester Virtual School	98.50	43.80%	46.90%

In 2023 Key Stage 2 outcomes, we know that:-

- A higher proportion of our CLA achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (31.3%) than CLA in the East Midlands (28%) but are still behind CLA nationally (35%) and all children in Leicester (56.9%)
- A higher proportion of our CLA achieved the expected standard in maths (46.9%) than CLA in the East Midlands (43%) but are still behind CLA nationally (48%) and all children in Leicester (73.2%)
- A higher proportion of our CLA achieved the expected standard in reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling (43.8%) than CLA in the East Midlands (42%) but are still behind CLA nationally (49%) and all children in Leicester (71.2%)

This tells us that our primary aged children are making pleasing progress when compared with other CLA, but there is still work to do to close the gap between them and their non looked after peers.

Key Stage 4

Improving KS4 Outcomes

Key Stage 4 qualifications changed in 2017 with GCSE English and Maths scored numerically from 1 (low) to 9 (high). Course content was also expanded and increased. Whilst there is no direct correlation with previous grades, a 4 is considered a 'low C grade' and a 5 a 'good C grade'. All GCSEs are marked on the 9 – 1 scale and revised courses have been reported as more challenging for all learners, placing increased pressure on schools and learners.

2023 has been another difficult year for our Key Stage 4 young people. The closure of schools in March 2020 mid way through their Year 8 learning followed by repeated episodes of school closure, bubble closure and illness have all impacted on the quality of teaching and learning and particularly on the confidence and mental health and well-being of these young people and have had a long term impact on their learning trajectory. We are very proud of these learners, their achievements and their resilience in challenging circumstances which are testament to their commitment and endeavour.

GCSE Results Analysis 2023

	2023	2022	2021	2020
	%	%	%	%
students achieved a grade 4 or higher in English	26%	30%	44%	36%
students achieved a grade 1 or higher in English	53%	51%	67%	55%
students achieved a grade 4 or higher in Maths	18%	16%	23%	23%
students achieved a grade 1 or higher in Maths	52%	41%	64%	47%
students achieved a grade 4 or higher in English and Maths	15%	16%	21%	23%
students achieved a grade 4 or higher in a Science	16%	24%	26%	26%
students achieved a grade 1 or higher in a Science	42%	46%	62%	51%
students achieved a grade 4 or higher in English, Maths and a Science	13%	16%	13%	21%
students achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or higher	16%	22%	21%	23%
students achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 1 or higher	42%	46%	56%	47%
students achieved 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or above, including English and Maths	11%	16%	15%	19%

A significant feature of this Year 11 cohort is the proportion of them with Education, Health and Care Plans at 40%.

23 students (37%) did not follow a GCSE programme. Of these:

- 6 attend a Special School and did not sit GCSEs or equivalent
- 2 young people were on roll at mainstream schools but only attended vocational settings and took no GCSE equivalent qualifications

- 3 young people were newly arrived in the UK and took no exams as they had no school place
- 3 young people awaiting place in a Special School and took no qualifications
- 9 young people were on roll at a Special School and took a small number of non-GCSE qualifications appropriate to their ability or skill level

This year there has been a small decrease in the number of the young people who had been in the care of the local authority for more than 12 months at 31/03/2023 who achieved outcomes. The proportion achieving 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths, has fallen for all young people in care, but the number achieving a Grade 4 or higher in Maths has increased a little. There has been a small increase in the proportion of students gaining GCSE qualifications in English and Maths and it is our ambition that no one will end Year 11 without an appropriate qualification in these areas.

Learners from different minority groups did perform at different levels this year, but the numbers in those groups are too small to draw any firm conclusions about this.

40% of this cohort have an Education Health and Care Plan. A further 22% of this cohort are recognised as having additional needs, but the young person's needs could be met within their mainstream school. 38% of this cohort have no identified additional learning need.

Of the young people who achieved Grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, 45% have additional learning needs; 78% are identified as white British.

Of the 10 young people who achieved 5 passes at grade 4 or above, 40% have some additional learning needs. 80% identify as White British, 20% of this group identify as mixed heritage.

Of the 10 young people who achieved 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, 90% had attendance of 90% or higher, 50% had attendance of 95% or higher. Of the young people who achieved a Grade 4 or above in both English and Maths, 90% had attendance of 90% or higher, 60% had attendance of 95% or higher. Of those 44 young people who did not attain 5 GCSE passes at Grade 4 or above, 52% had attendance of 90% or higher.

Destinations for Post 16 young people

Improve outcomes for L3 & Reduce drop-out

Post 16 Destinations 2023	2019 No.	2019%	2020 No.	2020%	2021 No.	2021%	2022 No.	2022%	2023 No.	2023%
Cohort size	46		60		58		30		59	
Level 3 course	10	21.73%	8	13.33%	8	13.79%			8	14%
Level 2 course	10	21.73%	17	28.33%	9	15.51%			10	17%
Level 1 course	9	19.56%	11	18.33%	14	24.13%			5	8%
Entry Level									10	17%
Remain at Special School	4	8.69%	6	10%	14	24.13%			5	8%
Secure/Health setting	0		4	6.66%	0				0	
Apprenticeship	1	2.17%	3	5%	1	1.72%			0	
Job	1	2.17%	0		0				0	
Traineeship	1	2.17%	0		5	8.62%			1	2%
NEET	10	21.73%	11	18.33%	7	12.06%			20	34%

Information provided by Connexions, October 2023.

Work Readiness

All schools have a statutory duty to provide information, advice and guidance to their students from year 7 upwards. In year 10 and 11 this should increase significantly to start to prepare their students for making well informed decisions for post-16 transition and the world of work. The framework to support schools to deliver this is based on the eight Gatesby Benchmarks. In using these benchmarks schools should address the needs of each pupil and link the curriculum learning to careers, provide encounters with employers and offer experiences of workplaces.

For those who are looked after by LCC, additional information, advice and personal guidance is provided from year 10 upwards. This recognises not all will have had the right level of support from the school at which they were on role, especially if there have been changes/unsettled placements. By the summer of term of year 11, the aim is for all to have an offer of learning for post-16. The vast majority of the CLA young people in this cohort will have an offer to stay in full-time education, mostly in a college or a school setting but the offer may be with a training provider, and for a small number it may be a specialist placement for their SEND needs. Even if they are staying in a school 6th form or going onto a full-time college course, the activities that are done with our young people should start to increase their work readiness, for example, decision-making, independence and the understanding of a broader range of options.

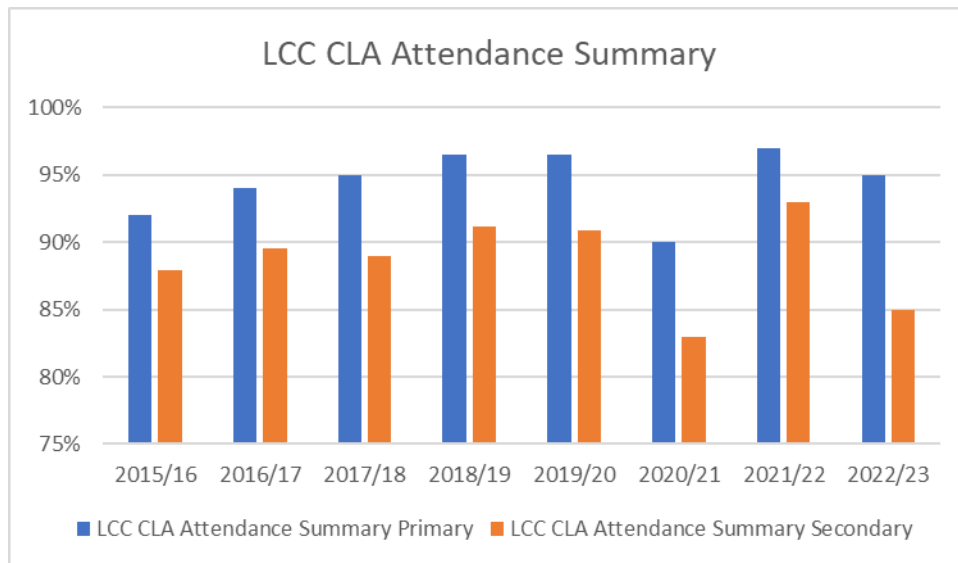
The support with IAG and preparation for work continues with our post-16 CLA cohort and intensifies for those who are NEET. PEPS will continue with this cohort and are offered even if the young person is dis-engaged so that the individual will know that when they are ready it will be not too late to form a career plan. As part of the planning for post-18 work and learning there is more work done around interviews, applications and the local labour market.

As well as the additional IAG referred to above, our care leavers and CLA from year 10 were offered a chance to meet with an employer this year. This employer was either linked to an area of work they wanted to get into, or an area they wanted to find out more about. The aim of the contact was to help individuals improve their understanding of different job roles, gain knowledge of how to apply for jobs, gain a contact with an employer, improve their confidence and refine their thoughts about their future careers. Ultimately this should help to prevent some of our young people becoming NEET or act as a step towards re-engagement.

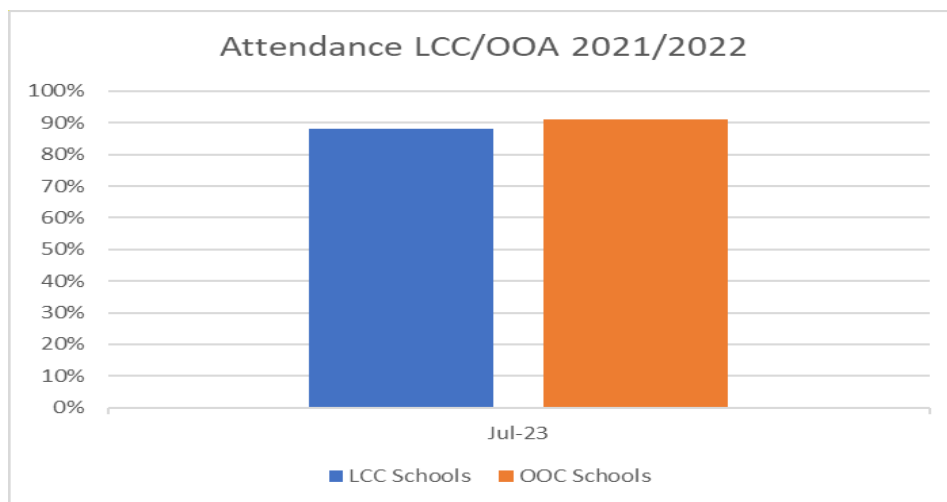
'Get Inspired' is a project managed by LCC, with funding from ESF. It is just underway and will provide intensive support into work or learning for those who are age 16-24 and NEET especially if from a priority group. One of the groups we are prioritising are those who are looked after or have left care. It will allow additional resource to bridge the gap around work readiness and allow activities to be done with providers and employers to help increase the chances of a sustained transition.

Attendance and Exclusions

Improve Attendance



2022/23 has been a year where the attendance of our CLA continued to recover from the pandemic. Attendance remains higher in the primary phase than secondary. Attendance in the secondary phase is negatively impacted by young people who for a range of reasons are unable to attend school. Some have SEMH issues preventing their attendance whilst others are waiting for the allocation of places in specialist settings where there is a national shortage.



There is a small difference between attendance rates in and out of area this year with both City and out of area schools averaging over 91% over the last 3 years.

Higher overall absence leads to lower attainment at KS2 and KS4

The Department for Education (DfE) published [research](#) in 2016 which found that:

- The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4
- Pupils with **no absence** are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*- C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils that missed 15-20% of KS4 lessons

Attendance Headlines for 2022/23

24 (6%) young people achieved 100% attendance

100 (24%) were persistently absent – meaning their overall attendance fell below 90%

Average attendance for the whole cohort was 87% for the school year. This remains lower than pre-pandemic levels when average attendance was around 94%.

Attendance 2022-23

There are many reasons why our young people may miss school. We always aim for and encourage 100% attendance and in 2022/23, 24 young people achieved this.

In 2022/23, absence of Leicester's CLA was 7.8% compared to 9% for CLA nationally.

Persistent absence was 18% for our CLA compared to 22% of CLA nationally.

Authorised absence was 4.6% for our CLA compared to 6% for CLA nationally.

Exclusions 2022/2023

Reduce Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2022/23

The Virtual School Team was able to support pupils at risk of suspension. Team members attended PEPs, worked with pupils, their carers and schools to seek solutions which avoided suspension. These included increased support in school, managed moves and time spent in alternative provision settings to address the reasons the suspension may have occurred.

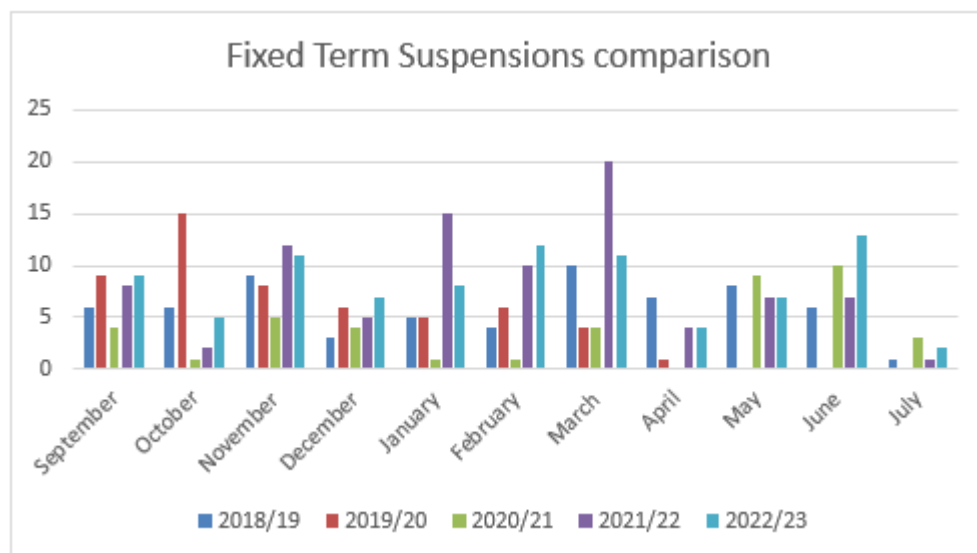
The VST Learning Mentors provided support to pupils at risk of suspension. They successfully worked alongside school mentors, residential staff, carers and other support staff to establish pastoral support systems and personalised programmes to enable everyone to remain on track. In some cases, Pupil Premium Plus funding was used to appoint 1:1 support staff to enable a young person to remain in school, settle and make progress. In schools where numbers of CLA are high, the Virtual School has funded or part-funded a mentor to work specifically with our children to ensure they have appropriate support to keep them in school and learning.

37 pupils received a fixed term suspension during 2022/2023. Of these 37 young people, 23 of them were suspended for a fixed term on more than one occasion. 1 young person received eight fixed term suspensions and 2 young people were each subject to seven separate fixed term

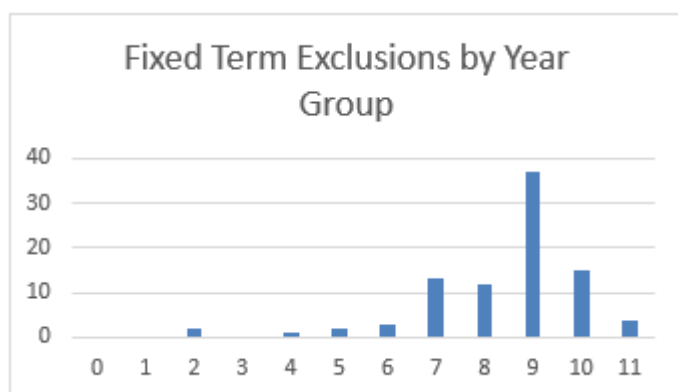
suspensions. All of these young people have since moved on to new settings better able to meet need.

The total number of days lost to fixed term suspension was 180. This figure represents a decrease from the previous year but does mirror suspensions for all pupils in Leicester. However it is of particular concern that 42% of these suspensions were all for young people in Year 9 who have accrued 44% of the total days lost to suspension this year.

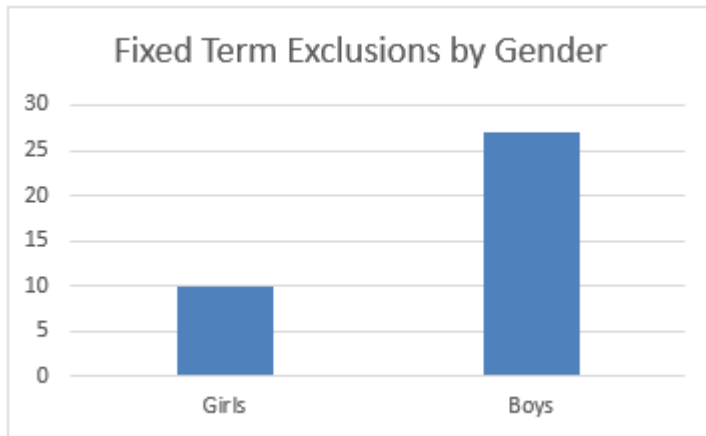
Year	Number of pupils excluded	Total number of pupils in cohort	%
2016/17	46	410	11.00%
2017/18	34	446	7.60%
2018/19	44	448	9.80%
2019/20	33	464	7.00%
2020/21	31	418	7.41%
2021/22	50	418	12%
2022/23	37	407	9%



This graph shows that although fixed term suspensions have reduced this year with a spike in June 2023 when two young people accrued multiple suspensions close together.



This graph shows that there are key year groups where suspensions are higher – Year 9 in particular, is the area with the highest number of fixed term suspensions by some way. This mirrors the picture for all young people in Leicester as it is thought that this year group has experienced the least transition into secondary education and are consequently presenting as challenging.



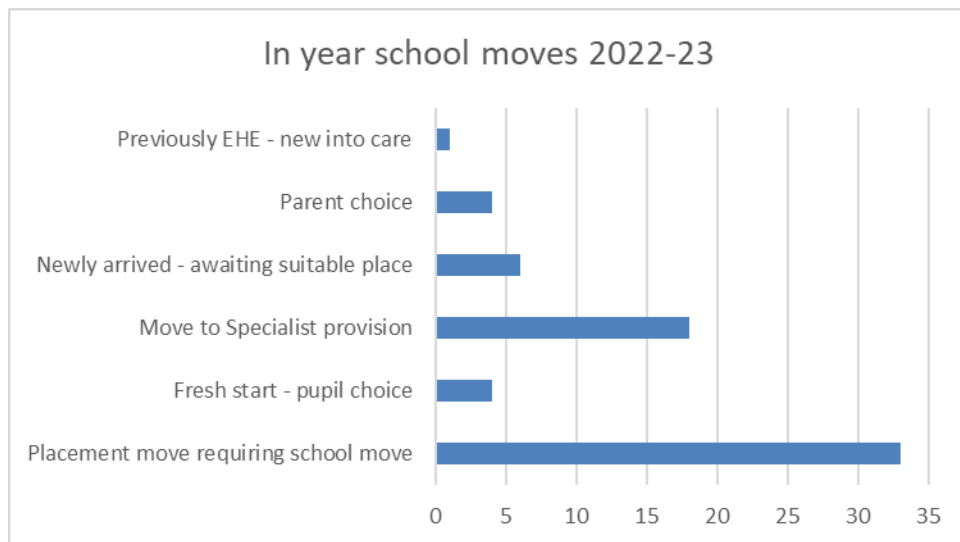
This shows quite clearly that boys are much more likely to be suspended than girls. The balance between the two in the overall CLA population is almost even.

The Target 25 group monitors the provision and plans for CLA who do not have a full time offer of 25 hours of education as well as attendance and suspensions. Target 25 is a multi-disciplinary group with knowledge and understanding of the learners and the challenges they may need to overcome. The Authority’s commissioning officer also attends. Together the group provides a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable looked after children.

There is a further half termly meeting chaired by Deputy Mayor Cllr Russell and attended by Senior Officers of the Local Authority, Service Managers from Education Welfare, Social Care and Special Educational Needs; this group monitor not only the young people at risk of not having a full time education, but also actions and plans around young people who may have been suspended from school or whose attendance falls below 95%, taking a solution focussed approach to resolving the barriers for each learner.

In Year School Moves

Moving to a new school during a school year should be avoided whenever possible. However, sometimes factors beyond our control mean that children or young people move to new placements or move to alternative settings that are better able to meet their needs following statutory assessment.



There were 71 school moves in total, meaning that 17% of our young people were subject to a school move during the school year.

46% of all the moves were due to a change in placement.

25% of the moves were young people moving to a school better able to meet their needs.

Excluding those children and young people who moved on to adoptive placements, of those young people who moved schools during the school year, 7 young people moved school more than once.

- 2 young people were not attending school when they came into our care but after starting at school, a placement change to another area meant another school change
- 2 young people moved from a mainstream school to a pupil referral unit and then onto another school thought to be better able to meet their needs
- 2 young people had 2 placement moves meaning they attended 3 different secondary schools during the year
- 1 young person experienced multiple placement moves due to unsafe behaviours and was finally in receipt of bespoke provision

59% of the moves were for young people at Secondary School. However, it is a concern that the proportion of the CLA cohort in the early years of primary and again in Years 9 and 10 subject to a move of school is rather high.

Year Group	No of children moved	% of year group
R	6	38%
1	4	25%
2	5	19%
3	4	19%
4	3	12%
5	4	15%
6	3	8%
7	3	6%
8	6	17%
9	12	26%
10	12	23%
11	9	15%

Children and Young People Previously Looked After

The Children Previously Looked After Officer was appointed in October 2020. The CPLA Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance with regard to CPLA young people in Leicester City.

After addressing the limited understanding of CPLA in terms of pupil identification via schools Census, and funding, schools are now showing a much clearer understanding of the process and how to use the funding.

Alongside this much work has been completed with the LCC CFST staff, to ensure that carers of adopted, SGO or CAO (Child Arrangement Order) children are fully aware of their rights. Joint meetings are now commonplace and all final PEPs are attended by the CPLA Officer to ensure carers have the most up to date information about how they are able to access educational support should they need it.

In the wider context, Leicester City CPLA officer was a driving force in the creation of the East Midlands post adoption passport that can be used by adoptive parents to update new schools with relevant information about their children and how best to support them.

Work to encourage our schools to become more attachment aware and trauma informed has started and training in this area by our own SEMH Team has been offered to City schools with 6 schools signed up for a full day's training in the Autumn Term 2023.

CIN/CP Cohort

In the most recent data available, I am pleased to report how well our CIN/CP cohort are doing compared with CIN/CP young people nationally.

Persistent absence is reported as 42% for our Leicester cohort compared with 45% nationally.

Severe persistent absence is reported as 9% for our Leicester cohort compared with 10% nationally.

Authorised absence is reported as 7% for our Leicester cohort compared with 9% nationally.

59% of our cohort achieved the national average in phonics compared with 52% nationally.

46% of our cohort achieved the expected standard in reading in KS1 compared with 41% nationally.

8% of our cohort achieved greater depth in mathematics in KS1 compared with 5% nationally.

The suspension rate for this cohort is 26% compared to 30% nationally.

All of this paints a positive picture of our progress and whilst we would still want these figures to be closer to the all of Leicester figures, the fact that we have more positive outcomes than national is to be celebrated.

Enrichment Activities

The Virtual School Enrichment Programme exists to provide additional educational, cultural and social opportunities, outside of school, for our young people who are looked after. The broad aims are to create opportunities that give these young people qualifications, aspirations, cultural capital, confidence, self-esteem and life skills that will help them overcome their experiences and live full and successful lives.

The Year 6 Transition Programme was run this year by the Virtual School in cooperation with a small local company using the gardens at Belgrave Hall in Leicester. Weekly meetings after SATS helped them think about and prepare for the move to secondary.

One of the stated aims of this project was to reduce the number of and incidences of fixed term suspension for young people in Year 7. The number of young people continues at a reduced level but the trend has risen this year due in no small part to one young person who experienced 5 separate suspensions during the year and was responsible for 31% of the Y7 days lost to suspension.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No of Y7 young people excluded	9	5	2	2	2	5
No of days lost to Y7 exclusions	52	24	7	2	17	29.5
No of Y7 exclusions	15	11	3	2	3	13

The Tall Ships Sailing Residential ran in July 2023, a unique and unforgettable experience for 6 of our young people, where we spent five days with the Tall Ships Youth Trust sailing around Portsmouth, living aboard a sailing boat, learning to sail, navigate, work as a team, cook, clean and gain a qualification with the RYA. Friendships were formed, fears over-come, skills were learned, many laughs were had, and confidence and resilience grew. Without exception, they worked hard, respected each other and the crew and showed extraordinary bravery and tenacity over the week.

A five day series of workshops with a local, care-experienced Performance Poet, Ty'Rone Haughton, with his company Literati, led a group through imagining, writing and performing their own Spoken Word pieces to a small audience of carers and professionals. We were blown away by their bravery and talent, in their confident performance and in the open and honest sharing of their stories. They made a connection with a local art venue, made friends with other young people and learnt the unique skill of writing and performing which will give them a therapeutic tool for the rest of their lives. In addition, they learnt how to present to an audience, manage their anxieties and hone their writing skills, all of which will be invaluable to them.

Other examples of enrichment during the year included:-

- the development of the Taiko Tots programme
- Early Years Forest School sessions at Highfields Adventure Playground
- Curve performance of The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- Trip to see GCSE English text 'An Inspector Calls'

Work of the Virtual School

Personal Education Plans

Maintain PEP Compliance / Develop Systems to Secure Information Sharing

Virtual School Officers, under the guidance and direction of the Deputy Virtual Head and Virtual Head, aim to attend Personal Education Plan meetings (PEPs) for as many young people as possible. Each young person should have a PEP meeting each school term. As it is impossible for Officers to attend all, priority is given to meetings about young people who are new into care, those whose circumstances are judged to be complex as well as children and young people in key transition years – Year 2, Year 6, Year 9 and Year 11. During the pandemic all PEP meetings moved online and as the blended model of working has continued again this year, officers have been able to attend more PEP meetings as they are no longer travelling between schools. Some PEP meetings are happening face to face in schools and are attended by someone from the Virtual School Team where there is good reason to do so.

Since January 2017, we have been using eGov's, ePep, a secure online platform for our Personal Education Plans. Meetings are chaired by school, who set smart learning targets for the young people with the aim of accelerating progress. All PEPs are quality assured by either the Virtual Head or Virtual School Deputy Head. Whilst we always aim for all our children to have a current PEP, our rate of compliance remains high at an average of 97% during the school year 2022/23.

Letterbox Club

This was provided for 146 CLA during 2022/23.

During 2022/2023 the Virtual School enrolled all its looked after children in Years 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 in the Letterbox Club, a national scheme run by Book Trust, a national charity. The club is managed in partnership with the University of Leicester and was first conceived and set up by Leicester City Council's Virtual School Team.

The project explores ways of improving the educational outlook for children in care by providing them with educational materials and reading material. Each child receives a parcel once a month for six months, with an additional parcel at Christmas. Each parcel is addressed to the child at their home and includes a letter personalised with the child's name, two reading books and stationery items such as pencils, an exercise book or drawing book, a bookmark and a maths game. Sometimes the child receives a CD to accompany one of the books. The books chosen include a mixture of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, with good levels of illustration and aimed at the "interest age" of each cohort of children. The mathematics games focus on number and arithmetic and are provided at a suitable level for the age of the children.

Emotional Wellbeing in Education Project

During 2022-2023 the *EWE* Project worked with:

- 63 schools and settings;
- 26 primary schools,
- 24 secondary schools,
- 8 special schools and
- 5 alternative settings such as Children's Homes.
- In total the project supported 73 looked after children and young people

This academic year saw the EWE team offering face to face therapeutic sessions and staff consultations. All of our EWE 1:1 individual and group interventions were delivered in schools :-

- ❖ The **Waves** intervention provides CiC with opportunities to understand and manage their feelings that follow their multiple experiences of transition, loss and change.
- ❖ The **SPACE** programme focusses on increasing young people's positive thoughts, emotions, and wellbeing.
- ❖ The EWE **Theraplay** model is an attachment-based intervention which supports relationships in school supporting the child to be regulated and ready to learn.
- ❖ The **CREATE** programme supports CiC to communicate and express themselves through art and creative activities.

We continue to provide staff support through training and consultation. 85% of the work was delivered in mainstream schools. The EWE project has noticed an increase in the complexity of casework in the primary phase which reduced the capacity to deliver preventative work.

Bullfrog Arts

This year, Bullfrog Arts have worked with:-

- Over 100 young people across 30 different schools and settings
- 5 residential childrens homes
- 2 foster families
- 8 young instrumentalists
- 10 young people on the Philharmonia project
- 4 schools on the Singing Project
- 1 Special School for the Taiko Residential
- 10 young leaders
- 4 settings to develop the Taiko Tots programme

The Virtual School commissions work by Bullfrog Arts, who have been engaging the most vulnerable children and young people of Leicester City in high quality arts activities this year. Using singing and music, the work focuses on improving emotional health, well-being and self-efficacy and is unique to Leicester. All the work is carefully tailored to meet the needs of the individual and support the creative, expressive and musical ability of those they work with. Bullfrog Arts staff are skilled musicians, teachers, social workers and creative practitioners who are specialists in working with Looked After Children and supporting learners who have experienced trauma and loss in their lives. The Bullfrog approach has been proven to help children and young people regulate stress, improve self-confidence, build resilience and nurture a positive sense of self-image and worth.

Taiko drumming is a Japanese art-form that is very engaging, quick to learn and can be especially beneficial to students who have difficulty regulating their emotions or who display challenging behaviour. It is a spectacular and very accessible medium with a rich cultural legacy that has the additional benefits of engendering confidence, team-work skills, concentration and the ability to regulate emotions amongst students.

Bullfrog Arts have worked on several strands, as agreed with the Virtual School this year. These include: -

- Bullfrog Taiko, working with individuals to develop self-regulation and emotional resilience
- Bullfrog Taiko residential, with young people and staff from Tatlow Road Residential Home
- Bullfrog Performance Group
- Making Music project
- Singing Project, working with 4 schools this year to train the adults around the children to sing with them and embed singing into routines
- Fostering Voices, an opportunity for Foster Carers to meet weekly and sing together and share experiences
- Peripatetic music teaching, delivering one to one music lessons for young people to develop emotional resilience, delivered to 8 young people this year
- Bullfrog Orchestra, a partnership project between Bullfrog Arts and the Philharmonia, fusing Taiko drumming with orchestral music, delivered to 10 young people this year

Use of Pupil Premium Plus funding

In 2022/2023, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation was £2345 for each young person who had been in care for 12 months up to 31 August 2022.

The Virtual School continued with the practice of using up to £400 per pupil as a pooled resource to fund a range of core activities delivered by the Virtual School, including Aim Higher Reach Further, Bullfrog Arts Interventions, Educational Psychology support and one to one tuition.

Schools now request Pupil Premium Plus funding, linked to smart learning targets, in a child's Personal Education Plan. There is an expectation of this relating to issues identified in attainment data so that impact of the funding might be measurable. Sometimes, funding is for staffing or additional staffing and the impact of this might be the young person remaining in their education or avoidance of exclusion.

1:1 Tuition

Virtual School tutors worked with 114 different young people in 2022/23 up from 57 in the previous year.

In 2022/2023, young people from all key stages benefitted from personalised 1:1 tuition. This is agreed during PEP meetings or by referral from a learner's school, with tuition usually focussed on core subjects, to support the young person achieving their target grade or to make them feel more confident in English or Maths. Tuition usually takes place at home, outside the school day. Some may have just an hour a week of tuition to develop confidence and address underachievement in one area of the curriculum, whilst others may have more intensive tuition to address gaps in their learning usually associated with their education before coming into care.

The Virtual School employs 4.6 tutors who work during term time to deliver bespoke learning support to our young people. Delivery is now a mixture of virtual and face to face, according to need. Working in this way means that these tutors can teach more pupils than when they were travelling between schools. The Virtual School still has cause to use tutors from Agencies, because need outstrips supply all the time, but the following information shows the impact of the tuition provided.

Analysis of the impact of the Virtual School tutors is very clear in recognising the difference they make to our young people.

Overall annual tutor impact

- 51.6% made 1 level of progress
- 16.7% made 2 or more levels of progress
- 18% awaiting final progress data
- 13.7% made no progress

The impact our tutors have is very clear. Furthermore, we are in the unique position of successfully becoming a certified exam centre in January 2023. This now means we are in a position to offer Entry Level Maths and English to all students as well as Functional skills Maths and English in the near future. Our ambition is that none of our learners will reach the end of Year 11 without a relevant qualification in English and Maths. This year students have sat the following exams with us:

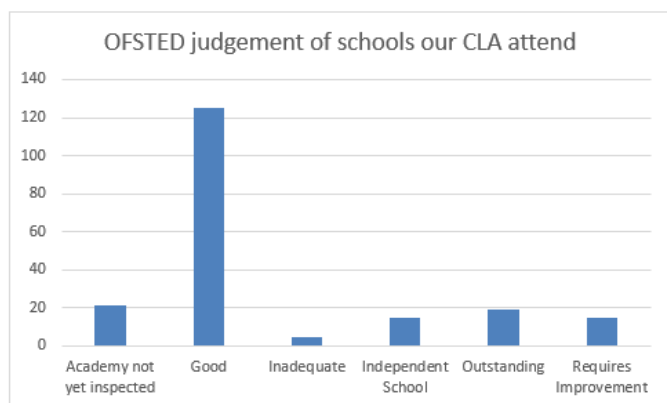
- 2 pupils took Entry Level 1 Maths and passed
- 1 pupil took Entry Level 1 English and passed
- 2 pupils took Entry Level 2 Maths and passed
- 2 pupils took Entry Level 2 English and passed
- 3 pupils took Entry Level 3 Maths and passed
- 1 pupil took Entry Level 3 English and passed

About the schools our pupils attend

Quality of provision attended

It is our aim for all our Looked After Children to attend an OFSTED registered school that is at least good. However, there are several factors that need to be considered when identifying a school, including proximity to the home address, friendship bonds and a school's capacity to support vulnerable learners. There may also be situations where a school judged by OFSTED to be less than good is the most appropriate place for the pupil to be educated and where a young person comes into care already placed at a school judged inadequate, it may be more damaging to move them to another school than to leave them where they are when that school place is the one element of stability in a child's life.

Our young people of statutory school age attend 200 different schools and establishments. 88% of them attend a school judged by OFSTED to be either good or outstanding.



Leicester City Council Virtual School

Leicester's Virtual School Team is managed by the Virtual School Head, Vivien Tetley. Leicester City's Virtual School is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH).

The Virtual Head meets termly with Virtual Heads from the East Midlands region. These meetings give the opportunity to remain abreast of national developments and to be briefed by Ofsted on key messages. They also provide opportunities to share good practice and reflect on both strengths and areas for development. This information is disseminated to the virtual school team, schools, carers and social workers as appropriate.

A Deputy Virtual Head is responsible for the operational management of the team and we have a Senior Virtual School Officer who is responsible for our response with regards to young people who are previously looked after.

The rest of the team consists of five officers, one mentor, one project officer/mentor, one administration assistant (0.6) and an Information Officer (0.6) and 4.6 tutors. Virtual School officers, the mentor and tutors work during term time only. VST officers are responsible for ensuring that each child has an up to date and effective Personal Education Plan, as well as providing advice, support and challenge to social workers, carers and schools in order to ensure that each child is making good progress at school. Each officer has a caseload of schools and is expected to develop a positive working relationship with each school in order to support both the school and the children placed there. Each officer is responsible for tracking and monitoring the attendance, progress and attainment of children in the schools they oversee. The officer will also ensure where issues arise with a child's education these are resolved quickly and effectively. The work of the officers is overseen and supervised by the Deputy Virtual Head.

Recommendations Going Forward:

- Investigate use of funding to support children seeking safety (UASC) and new arrivals to access education and to provide appropriate support for learning to enable them to access formal education in a timely way
- Add training about education and the Virtual School to Social Care training offer and embed in induction for new social workers
- Explore and provide resources to foster carers for Early Years children to help to develop language and communication and improve school readiness
- Encourage schools to access free attachment aware and trauma informed training and to become advocates of trauma informed practice by using the ARC (Attachment Research Community) audit and action plan, which is linked to OFSTED inspection criteria
- Embed delivery of Functional Skills in English and Maths by Virtual School Tutor Team to reduce CLA completing Year 11 without a qualification in English and Maths

APPENDIX A: Monthly Data return Information, 2022/2023

Monthly Key Indicators	Sep-21	Sep-22	Oct-21	Oct-22	Nov-21	Nov-22	Dec-21	Dec-22	Jan-22	Jan-23	Feb-22	Feb-23	Mar-22	Mar-23	Apr-22	Apr-23	May-22	May-23	Jun-22	Jun-23	Jul-22	Jul-23
Number of LAC of school age	391	373	395	376	405	382	399	386	400	393	399	400	401	394	397	393	409	397	409	407	407	408
No. of LAC with concerns regarding school place	79	64	73	84	83	90	77	97	113	84	84	94	83	137	88	100	104	106	92	112	85	89
% LAC with concerns regarding school place	20%	17%	18%	22%	20%	23%	19%	25%	28%	21%	21%	24%	18%	35%	22%	25%	25%	27%	22%	28%	21%	22%
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance	54	42	47	52	55	58	53	79	80	45	57	48	58	69	61	54	64	62	63	62	64	52
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/CITY schools	25	28	22	26	27	32	25	41	30	24	26	27	24	33	37	26	40	31	36	35	27	23
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/OOC Schools	29	14	25	26	32	26	28	38	50	21	31	21	34	36	24	28	24	31	27	27	37	29
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance	72	51	58	69	73	81	67	85	103	59	75	68	73	110	75	74	89	77	78	86	78	71
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/CITY Schools	33	33	27	31	34	42	30	44	38	33	35	38	28	44	40	38	56	39	44	47	37	36
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/OOC Schools	39	18	31	38	39	39	37	41	65	26	40	30	45	66	35	36	33	38	34	39	41	35
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance	93	80	99	110	105	118	103	120	150	82	120	118	106	146	104	114	118	145	105	115	88	128
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/CITY Schools	46	43	49	48	50	64	42	56	65	48	49	55	45	80	54	51	74	67	57	61	36	73
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/OOC Schools	47	37	50	62	55	54	61	64	85	34	71	63	61	66	60	63	44	78	48	54	52	55
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Monthly	6	7	2	5	11	9	5	8	16	8	9	9	19	12	5	5	7	6	7	13	1	2
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Cumulative	6	7	8	12	29	21	34	29	50	37	59	46	78	58	83	63	90	69	97	82	98	84
No. of LAC with less than 25 hours education per week	7	13	15	15	10	9	10	12	10	25	9	26	10	27	13	26	15	29	14	26	7	18
% of LAC reported by school via PEP on trajectory to meet target set by school	67%	49%	68%	67%	68%	70%	67%	70%	66%	73%	67%	72%	67%	71%	67%	71%	67%	71%	67%	67%	66%	71%

% school age Children in Care with current Personal Education Plan (Statutory school age only) (VH info)	98%	75%	98%	95%	98%	95%	99%	96%	99%	96%	98%	98%	99%	98%	99%	97%	99%	97%	98%	97%	96%	97%
% of PEPS QA'd as 'on target'	57%	40%	63%	59%	66%	55%	60%	59%	73%	62%	78%	65%	64%	65.00%	74.00%	65%	74%	65%	76%	62.00%	69%	62%
% of PEPS QA'd as good or outstanding	12%	30%	28%	20%	26%	14%	19%	14%	14%	13%	17%	12%	18%	13.00%	16.00%	13%	15%	14%	11%	15%	14%	15%
No. of PEPs quality assured by Virtual Head	107	61	185	57	120	108	61	135	86	105	98	49	150	184	276	160	182	116	117	162	247	165