

Consider the performance of the Virtual School

Executive Summary:

Local authorities have a duty under the children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a specific duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated.

The Virtual school Head (VSH) is responsible for ensuring that the local authority effectively discharges its statutory duty to promote the education of looked after children

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School and report on the 2017-18 educational outcomes of Walsall's looked after children

Attainment and attendance data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Walsall Council for a year or more as at 31 March 2018.

Recommendations:

The Corporate Parenting Board consider the report

Background papers:

There are no background papers attached to this report

Corporate Parenting Pledges

Children and young people receive a planned and supportive education from early years through to higher education and into work.

Resource and legal considerations:

There are no specific legal considerations arising from this report

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

CH1 - Children will be ready for school

CH2 - The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed for all under achieving groups.

Citizen impact:

There is no direct impact on citizens arising from this report.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact arising from this report

Performance management:

As part of the Council's annual cycle of Employee Performance Reviews, all members of the Virtual school have non-negotiable objectives related to pupil outcomes.

Reducing inequalities:

All pupils receive appropriate levels of support and funding to achieve successful educational outcomes.


An Equality Impact Assessment not been carried out.

Consultation:

There has been no consultation in relation to this report

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1.0 **The role of the Virtual School**

The role of the Virtual School is to improve the educational outcomes for Walsall's looked after children and young people from the age of 3-18 by:

- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of all looked after children
- Using tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and providing additional educational support.
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic outcomes.
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) needs are identified and supported appropriately
- Coordinating and quality assuring Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- Ensuring that all professionals who work with looked after children fully understand the impact of attachment and trauma and are supported to ensure that looked after children can thrive in education.
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with the 'Pupil Premium Grant 2017 to 2018 Conditions of Grant and Pupil Premium: Virtual Heads' Responsibilities
- Encouraging children and young people to have high aspirations about their future
- Delivering training to designated teachers, social workers, foster Carers on improving outcomes for looked after children
- Celebrating achievements

2.0 **The Virtual School Team**

The Virtual School is made up of the following staff members.

- Virtual School & Vulnerable Groups Lead
- Education Liaison Officer x 2 (1 vacant post)
- Key Worker x 4 (2 Vacant post)
- PEP co-ordinator x 2 (2 vacant posts)
- Information & Finance Officer
- Business & Admin Apprentice
- Tutor x 4 (2 vacant posts)

2.1

The Virtual School staff are funded through pupil premium and are currently on fixed term contracts, which are due to end in October 2019.

3.0 **Cohort information**

As of the December 2018 the Virtual School cohort consists of

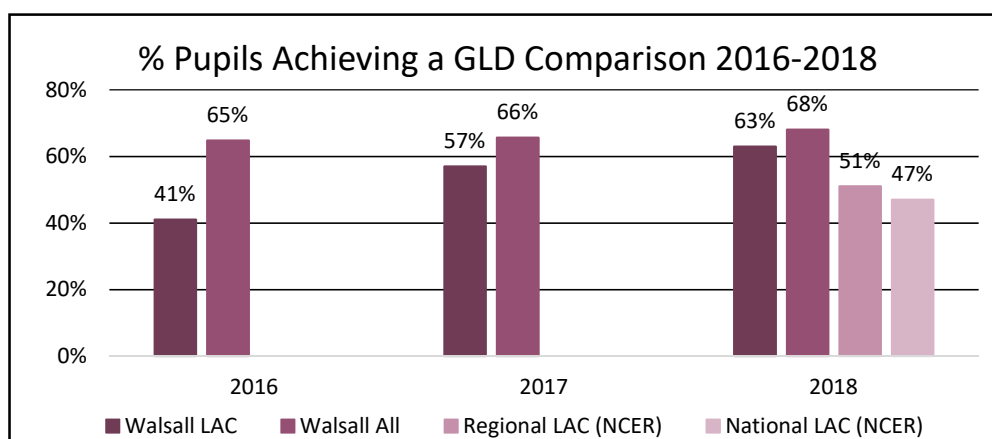
Total Virtual school Cohort (3-18)	541
Total nursery aged pupils	28
Total Post 16 aged pupils	90
Total pupils (Reception-Year 11)	423
Total pupils educated in Walsall	256 - 61%
Total Pupils educated outside of Walsall	167- 39%
Total attending primary schools	180 – 43%
Total attending secondary schools	188 – 44%
Total attending Pupil Referral Units	4 – 1%
Total attending special schools	51 – 12%
Total with identified SEND	174 - 41%
Total with EHCP	86 – 20%
Total on SEN Support	88 – 21%

4.0 Attainment information (provisional data)

Please note, Walsall, regional and national Looked after children data has been taken from the NEW Early Children looked after reports available in NCER NOVA as of 14/12/2018 08:07am. This early data is calculated by matching the SSDA903 to a child's attainment data using their UPN, gender and DOB as the match criteria. Regional and national data is highly provisional at this stage as these figures are calculated on the strength of the number of LAs uploading their SSDA903 Children looked after data into the NCER system. Currently 114 out of 152 LAs have imported their SSDA903. Validated data is expected to be released in March 2019.

4.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

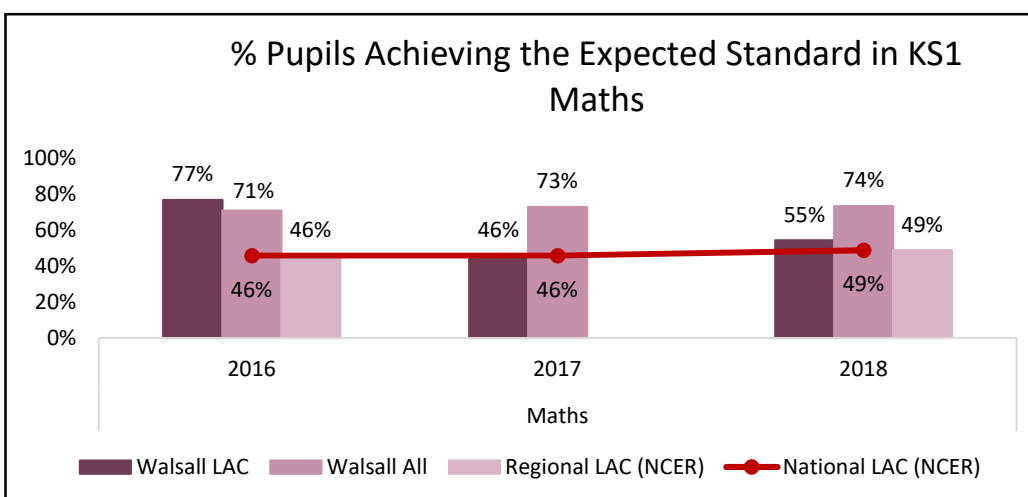
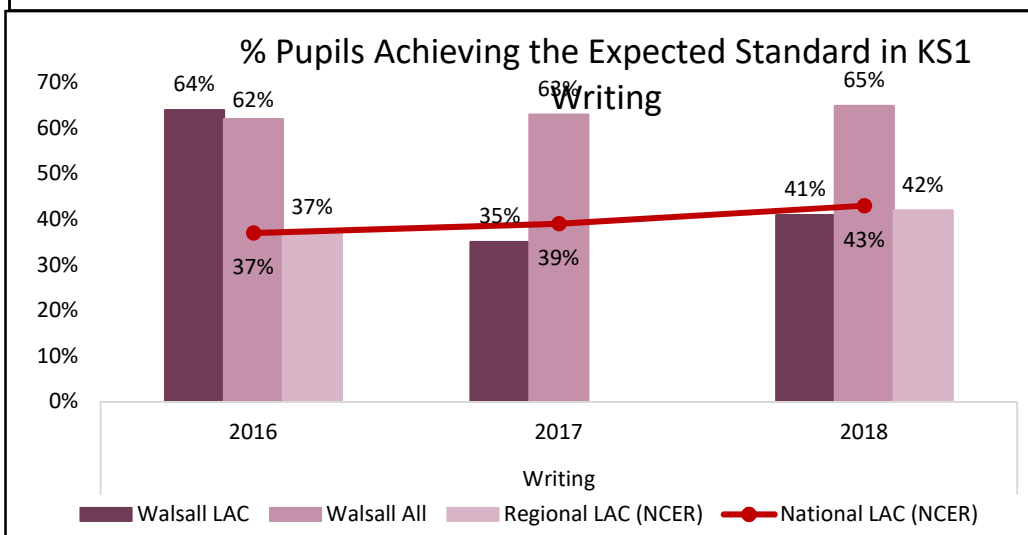
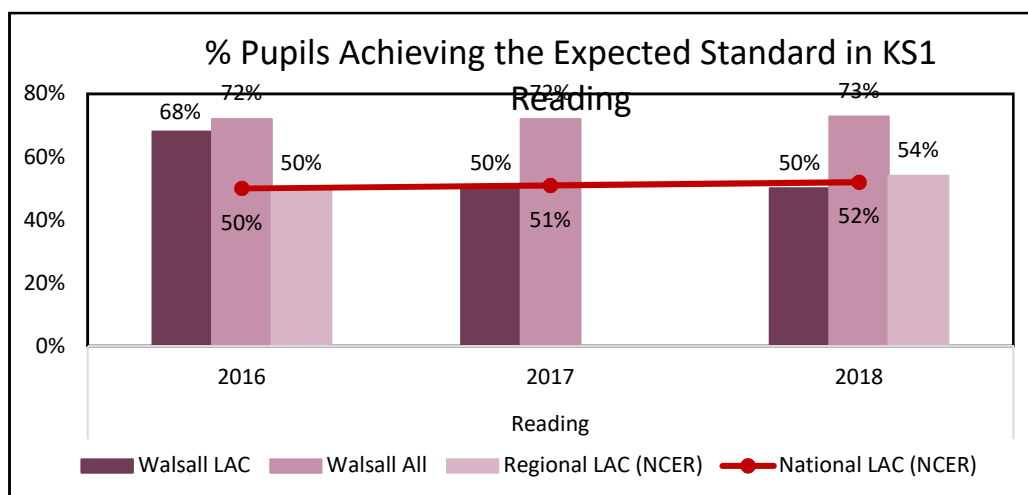
- In 2017/18, 63% of children in the early year's cohort achieved a good level of development compared to 68% of all children in Walsall.



4.2 Key Stage 1

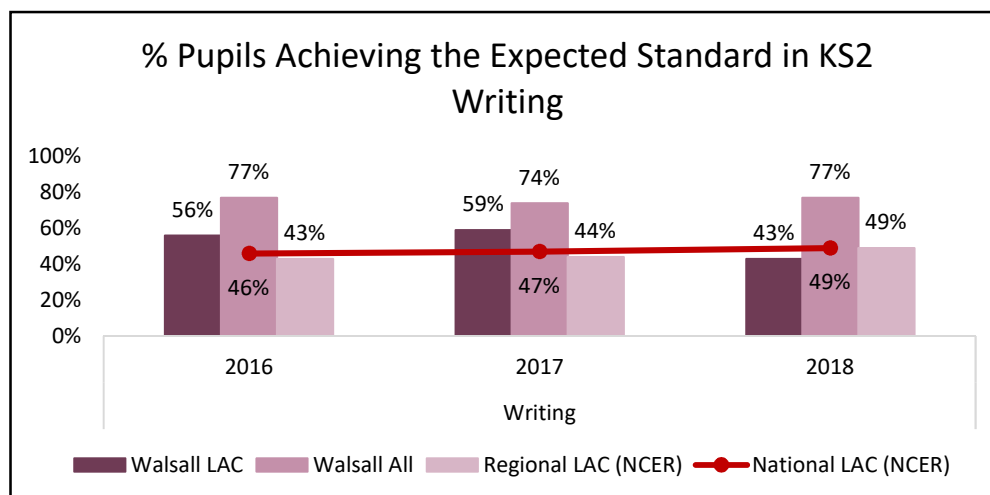
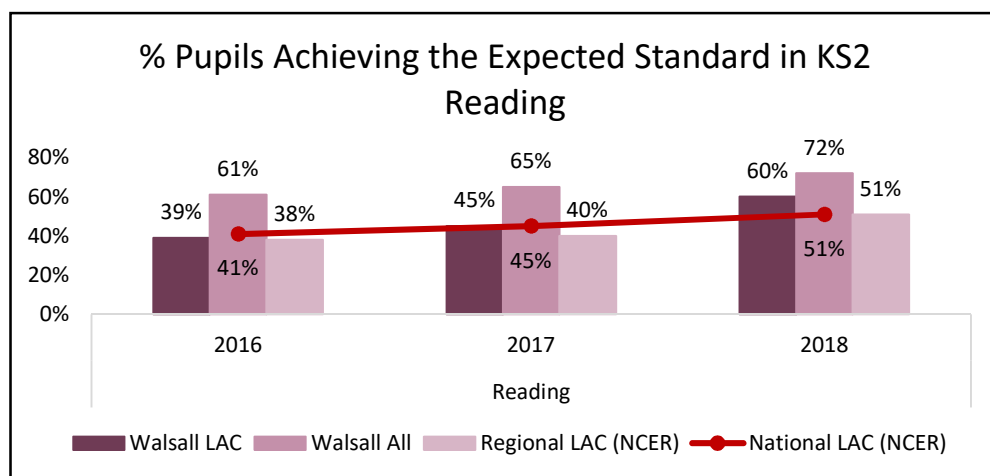
- 50% of children at the end of key stage 1 achieved the National Standard in reading compared to 73% of all children in Walsall

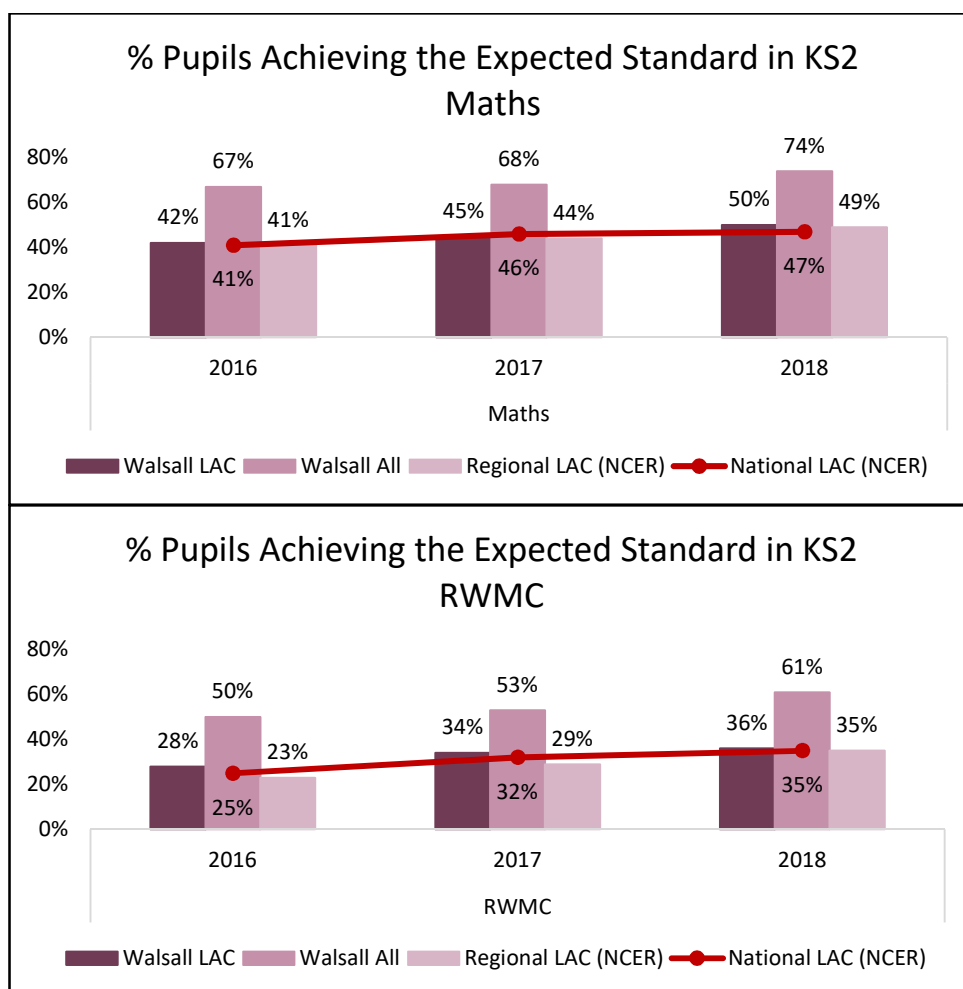
- 41% of children at the end of key stage 1 were assessed to have achieved the National Standard in writing compared to 65% of all children in Walsall
- 55% of children at the end of Key stage 1 achieved the national standard in maths compared to 74% of all children in Walsall.
- 52% of the cohort have an identified SEN



4.3 Key Stage 2

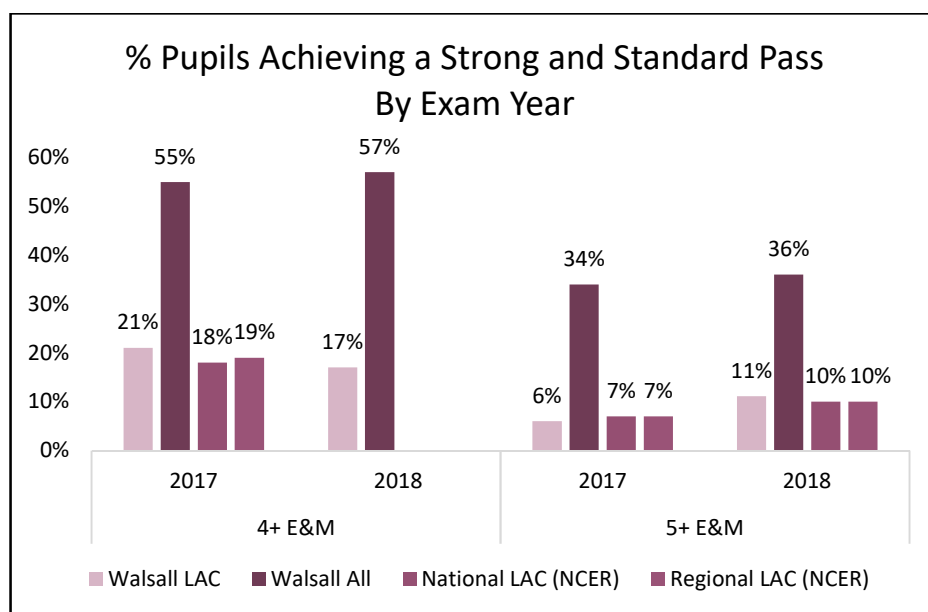
- 60% of children at the end of key stage 2 achieved the National Standard in reading compared to 72% of all children in Walsall
- 43% of children at the end of key stage 2 were assessed to have achieved the National Standard in writing compared to 77% of all children in Walsall
- 50% of children at the end of Key stage 2 achieved the national standard in maths compared to 74% of all children in Walsall
- 33% of children at the end of Key stage 2 achieved the national standard in reading, writing and maths combined compared to 61% of all children in Walsall
- 61% of the KS2 cohort have an identified SEN



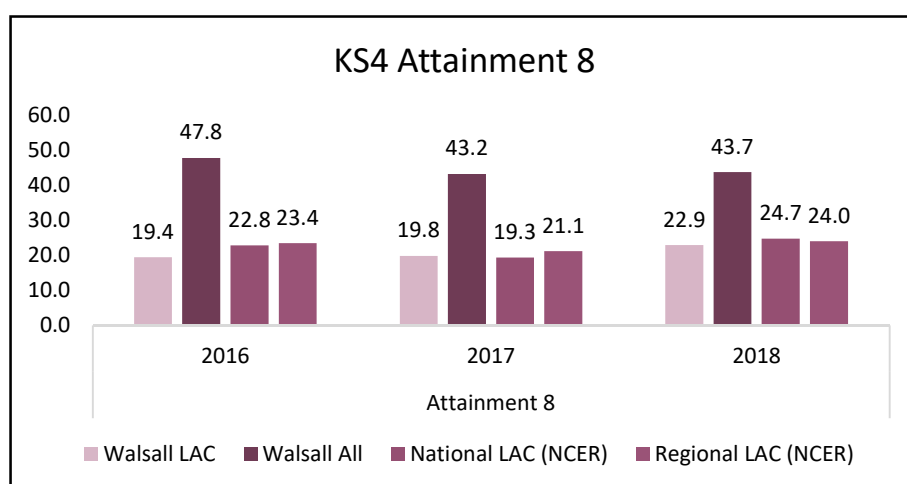


4.4 Key Stage 4

- 17% of children in the cohort achieved a standard pass (4+) in English and Maths compared to 57% of all children in Walsall
- 11% of the cohort achieved a strong pass (5+) in English and maths compared to 36% of all children in Walsall.



The average Attainment 8 score in 2018 was 22.9, all children in Walsall had an average score of 43.7.



4.5 Key Stage 5

The Virtual School are responsible for looked after children up to the age of 18. There are currently 90 young people in the 16-18 cohort, of those 90

- 32 (36%) attend 6th form provision
- 36 (40%) attend college
- 1 (1%) is in work based learning (Council apprenticeship)
- 14 (16%) are with a training provider
- 1 (1%) young person is in custody
- 6 (7%) are NEET

We work alongside carers and social workers to support these young people through the transition to year 12 and further education courses and training.

The Virtual school, TLC managers, IMPACT workers, Post 16 strategic Lead staff and social care managers have formed a NEET action group (NAG) and meet on a monthly basis to review the NEET cohort. Interventions are identified and actioned by the virtual school staff and IMPACT advisers

4.6 Summary of Attainment

There has been a year on year improvement in the percentage of looked after children achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception. In 2018, 63% of the cohort achieved a GLD compared to 57% in 2017 and 41% in 2016. The attainment gap between Walsall looked after children in early years has also narrowed from 24% in 2016 to 5% in 2018.

There has been an improvement in the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in both writing and maths in key stage 1 since 2017. Reading has stayed the same at 50%, writing has improved by 6% and maths has improved by 9%. The attainment gap between Walsall looked after children and all Walsall children has increased by 1% in reading but narrowed by 4% in writing since 2017 and by 8% in maths.

There has been an improvement in the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in both reading and maths in key stage 2 since 2017. Reading has increased by 15%, maths has increased by 5%. Writing has decreased by 16%. The attainment gap between Walsall looked after children and all Walsall children has narrowed by 8% in reading and 1% in maths since 2017, but widened by 19% in writing and 6% for reading, writing and maths combined.

In 2018, 17% of looked after children in KS4 achieved a grade 4 or above (standard pass) in English and maths. This was 4% lower than 2017 and 40% lower than the 2018 Walsall All figure. 11% achieved a grade 5 or above (strong pass) in English and maths, increasing by 5% compared to 2017 results, closing the gap to Walsall All by 3% from 28% in 2017 to 25% in 2018.

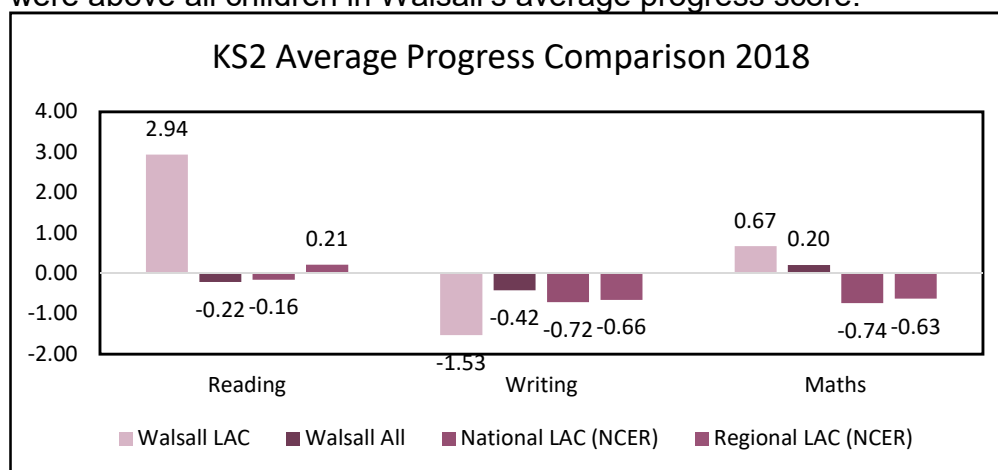
In 2018, 11% of Walsall KS4 Looked after children were entered for the English baccalaureate, 24% less than Walsall All. Compared to Walsall All, Looked after children have an EBacc average point score of 1.75, 1.94 below Walsall All. EBacc APS is a new headline measure from 2018 therefore benchmarking and comparisons to previous years cannot be made.

The average Attainment 8 score in 2018 was 22.9, improving by 3.1 since 2017 and closing the gap to all children in Walsall's figure of 43.7 from 23.4 in 2017 to 20.8 in 2018.

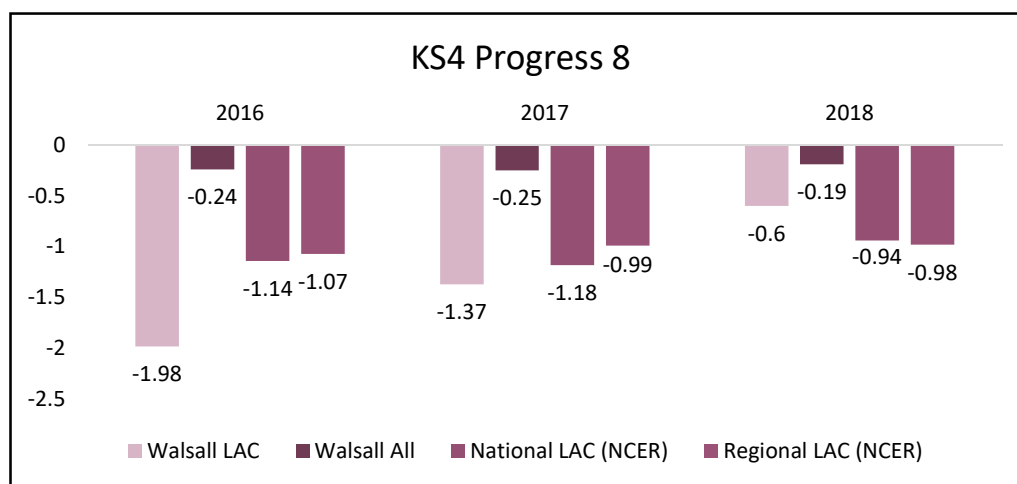
Monitoring and improving outcomes for looked after children is a key priority for the Virtual School and although LAC numbers are relatively small, national and regional comparisons allow an understanding of educational and other outcomes achieved for children in care.

4.7 Progress

For KS1-2 progress, reading had an average progress score of 2.94, writing had a score of -1.53 and maths had a score of 0.67. Reading and maths were above all children in Walsall's average progress score.



- There has been a large improvement on the average Progress 8 score since 2017 from -1.37 to -0.60 in 2018. All children in Walsall had an average Progress 8 score of -0.19.



4.8 Further developments

- Working in partnership with our teaching schools to develop borough wide projects for looked after children i.e.

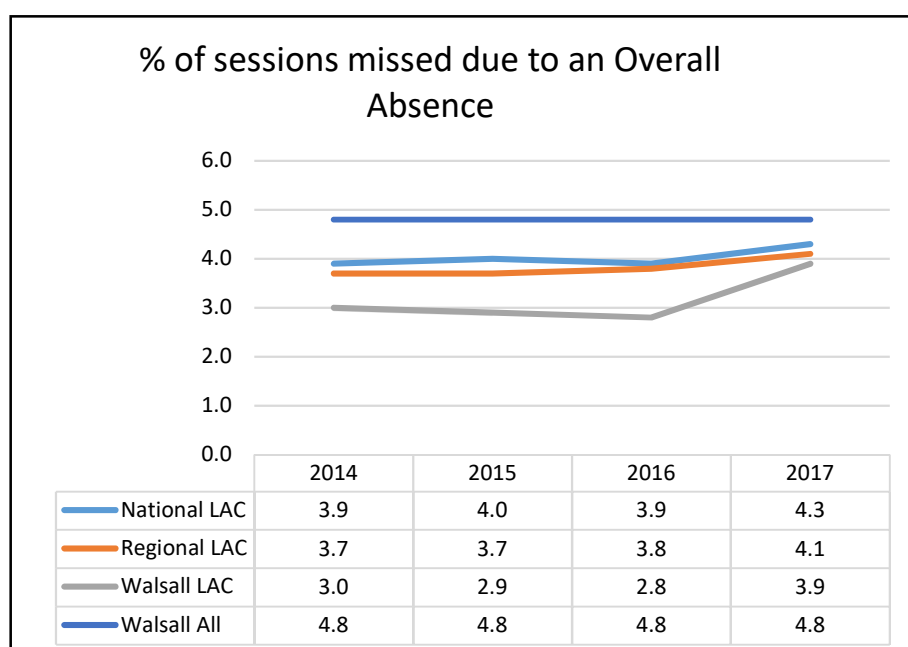
- A language development programme for children in Early years
- A programme to develop writing for children in KS1 and 2
- A Speech & Language Project for pupils in KS3/4

5.0 Attendance & Exclusions

Absence and exclusion information is collected in arrears and the latest available data is for the 2016 to 2017 school year.

5.1 The Virtual School use 'Looked After Call' to collect attendance and exclusion data for children placed in and out of the borough. This allows the Virtual School to immediately challenge any absences from school. The allocated key Workers will also respond to information from Schools, Social Workers, Foster Carers, IROs etc. where it appears a pupil's education is either being disrupted, a pattern of poor attendance is beginning or they are accumulating fixed term exclusions.

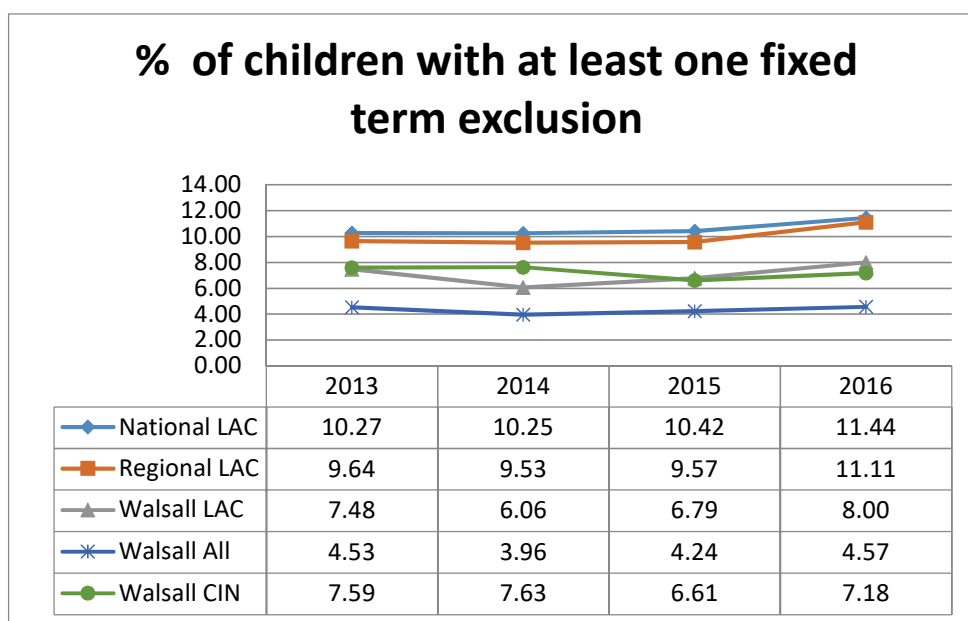
5.2 Overall absence



Overall absence rates for Walsall looked after children has increased slightly by 1.1% from 2.8% in 2016 to 3.9% in 2017. It remains below regional by 0.2%, national by 0.4% and below Walsall All by 0.9%. Compared to neighbouring authorities in the West Midlands, Walsall's overall absence rate placed them in the lower half of the regional rankings.

Fixed term exclusions

5.3



The percentage of fixed period exclusions for Walsall Looked after children has marginally increased by 1.2%. However, they continues to be below national, and regional looked after pupils and had the lowest percentage of fixed period exclusions out of all the neighbouring authorities in the West Midlands.

The Virtual School works closely with schools to provide interventions to avoid exclusions. All Walsall secondary schools and a number of primary schools have first day provision in place for any child who receives a fixed term exclusion.

5.4

Further Developments

- Develop a pupil tracker to identify looked after children who are at risk of missing education i.e no school place, persistent absentees and risk of exclusion and present to DMT each month

6.0 Personal Education Plans (PEP)

6.1 It is the statutory duty of the local authority to ensure that all looked after children aged 3-18 have a high quality, up-to date personal education plan (PEP).

6.2 PEPs should take place within 10 days of the child/young person becoming looked after and be reviewed termly.

- 6.3 In September 2018, we moved from the integrated PEP on Mosaic to an ePEP system. This new system allows designated teachers, parents/carers and other relevant professionals to have access to, and input onto the PEP. It also allows for schools to have direct access to request pupil premium funding
- 6.4 At the launch of the ePEP it was agreed that the responsibility of leading on the PEPs would transfer from social workers to designated teachers. We have already seen an improvement in the quality of the PEPs and an increase in the amount of funding requested by schools
- 6.5 As of 14th December 2018,
- 90% of our children/young people have an up to date PEP. This is an increase of 30% since July 2018
- 6.6 The Virtual School regularly audit PEPs for quality. PEPs must include a full profile of the young person, current attainment and progress data, and SMART targets to achieve a good RAG rating

Of the 90% complete PEPs
 2% were RAG rated as outstanding
 65% were RAG rated as Good
 33% were RAG rated as requiring improvement

The majority of the PEPs rated as requiring improvement were missing current attainment and progress data. This has been fed back to all schools through the ePEP system.

- 6.7 Further Developments
- Working in partnership with schools and social care staff, develop a robust recording system to ensure all parties are aware of PEPs that are out of timescales or of poor quality and systems are in place to improve PEPs

7.0 Ofsted Ratings

Where there are plans in place for a looked after child to move school careful consideration is always given to the Ofsted category of school a pupil is to attend. We will never place our children in a school rated as inadequate by Ofsted unless there is no possible alternative. If a child is attending a school when its rating falls we will recall the child's PEP to discuss whether it is in the child's best interest to remain at the school.

7.1 Ofsted ratings EYFS

- 21% attend a setting rated outstanding by Ofsted
- 64% attend a provision rated good by ofsted
- 4% attend a provision rated inadequate by Ofsted

- 11% attend a setting with no current Ofsted grade
- Primary
- 13% attend a setting rated outstanding by Ofsted
 - 69% attend a provision rated good by ofsted
 - 12% attend a provision rated as requiring improvement by Ofsted
 - 5% attend a provision rated inadequate by Ofsted
 - 1% attend a setting with no current Ofsted grade
- Secondary
- 14% attend a setting rated outstanding by Ofsted
 - 61% attend a provision rated good by ofsted
 - 16% attend a provision rated as requiring improvement by Ofsted
 - 4% attend a provision rated inadequate by Ofsted
 - 4% attend a setting with no current Ofsted grade
- Total- All children
- 80% attend a setting rated good or outstanding by Ofsted
 - 12% attend a provision rated as requiring improvement by Ofsted
 - 5% attend a provision rated inadequate by Ofsted
 - 3% attend a setting with no current Ofsted grade

Schools have unknown ratings is they have converted to an academy and the previous reports are removed by Ofsted.

8.0 Pupil Premium

- 8.1 The Virtual School's main budget is the Pupil Premium which is funding , devolved to the local authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the Virtual School Head to best promote achievement and progress of Walsall's looked after children as identified in their personal education plan.
- 8.2 The guidance makes it clear that while it is expected that the majority of the funding is used for direct support of children, it does not need to be allocated equally as some children will need less than £2300 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also states that the pupil premium can be used to fund staff or central services as long as they have a direct impact on improving the educational experiences and outcomes for looked after children.
- 8.3 Summary use of pupil premium 2018/19 to date

Direct payments to schools	£326,000
Virtual School activities	£90,000
Learning resources	£5,000
ICT equipment	£7,000
Celebrating achievement	£20,000
VS staffing	£150,000
Inclusion project	£90,000
Alternative Provision	£20,000
Specialist educational support	£100,00

How schools use pupil premium

8.4

- 1:1 tuition
- In class support
- Group work
- Play Therapy
- Enrichment activities
- Trips/residential
- Training
- Mentoring/counselling

All pupil premium must be requested through the child's ePEP and attached to a SMART target. Funding can be paid direct to schools, foster carers or direct to suppliers.

8.5

Further Developments

- Devise a mechanism for evaluating the impact of pupil premium

9.0

Enrichment activities/projects/celebrating achievement

It is part of the role of the virtual school to provide the support needed to help children realise their short and long term academic achievements and aspirations. The virtual school run a number of activities and projects to ensure our students are able to experience learning in a variety of different ways and in different settings. These include:

9.1

Aspire to University

The Aspire to University Project (A2U), a project jointly run by Wolverhampton University, Walsall, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Virtual Schools and the Creating Chances Trust. The project is targeted at those looked after children who are reaching the expected standards at the end of key stage 2. The University oversees a number of events and initiatives that are tailored to raise aspirations and break down barriers to Higher education. Each looked after child on the programme has a dedicated university mentor who works with them in the home. Work experience placements and enrichments activities are provided by the Creating chances trust. There are currently 35 Walsall looked after children attending the project.

9.2

Letterbox Project

The Letterbox Club is an award winning national programme managed by Book trust, in partnership with the University of Leicester. The scheme provides literacy and numeracy resources to children aged 5-12 via the post from May- October

Walsall Council subscribe to the Letterbox Club for every looked after child between the ages of five and nine. Children receive a parcel of selected books, maths activities, stationery and other materials once every month for six months, from May to October. Each child participating in the programme receives the brightly coloured parcels directly, addressed to them at home, distributed through the Virtual School to help encourage and stimulate learning at home.

Feedback from children and carers include the following comments:

“He is much better with counting and writing in his books for Maths and before was very shy to do any maths work due to no confidence”

“We do more together as a family it's had such an impacted at school and home it's made them more confident with reading and writing and maths”.

“It's been great receiving these parcels not just for the kids but for me as a parent, it helps been to help teach the girls the right way, letterbox also helps you to bond with your kids and for you to see for yourself how they have grown with the activities. I thank you for the parcels. I hope many more people feel the way I do.”

The Queen Mary High School Project

9.3

14 primary aged children have so far attended the Queen Mary High School Project. The project runs every Tuesday afternoon, the children are collected from their school and transported to Queen Mary for an afternoon of forensic science, storytelling, Japanese and origami. The scheme has been running for over 5 years

Other activities delivered by the virtual school include:

9.4

- Year 6 transition residential to Edgmond Hall
- Storytime magazine
- Tiger who came to Tea theatre trip
- The Malthouse Activity Centre
-

An Excellent Night Out with the Pop Stars

9.5

The Excellent Night Out was attended by over 140 children and their carers, as well as many staff from across the Council. Children and young people received awards for numerous achievements.

There were appearances from Bruno Mars, Little Mix, Ed Sheeran, and Simon Cowell (lookalikes and tributes). A young person and staff from across the service also performed at the event as Ann-Marie with our Ed Sheeran lookalike, the Spice Girls, and Bruno Mars dancers.

9.6 Further developments

- Develop a working group to oversee the design and implementation of the celebration events

The Virtual School Service Plan/Corporate Parenting Steering Group Action plan is attached for further information on the Virtual School