Corporate Parenting Board
March 2021

Walsall Council

What is a virtual school?

All local authorities must have a Virtual School to make sure looked after children are reaching their educational potential.

Our Virtual School includes
- Education advisors
- Key workers
- Mentors
- Tutors
- Careers advisors

We carry out direct work in and out of school with children and young people. We provide support and challenge to schools to ensure they are doing everything they need to support your education and we work closely with social workers and parents/carers to ensure they understand how children and young people learn

All children and young people attend their own school but are also on the roll of the Virtual School. We currently have over 550 children and young people aged 3-18 on the role of our virtual school

What do we do?

Attending good schools

We make sure that children and young people attend the best schools possible by regular tracking the Ofsted ratings of all schools and making sure if looked after children have to move school they move to a good or outstanding school.

We recognise the importance of children staying at their school so would not move a child from a school rated less than good if the young person was safe, happy and making progress. If a school receives an inadequate Ofsted rating, a meeting is held with the child's parent/carer and social worker to discuss what actions should be taken.

At the end of the 2020 academic year
89% of children in early years attended a school/setting rated good or better
75% of primary aged children attended a school rated good or better
68% of secondary aged young people attended a school rated good or better

Attainment & Progress
We meet every term to track and monitor the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of all looked after children. We use the data to help us identify which children and young people need additional support help them to achieve their predicted outcomes.

1:1 face to face tuition, Group tuition in school, online tuition, mentoring, online learning programmes are some of the interventions available to children and young people to help them catch up

What do we do?

Attendance

We use a company called **'looked after call'** to collect the daily attendance of all looked after children. This enables us to track and monitor attendance closely and highlight any young people who are not attending school.

Attendance of looked after children is good as the overall attendance for all our school aged children is 96.3%. This is better than that of all looked after children in England and all children in Walsall.

Children and young people with below 90% attendance are classed as '**persistent absentees**'. The number of looked after children in Walsall who are classed as persistent absentees is 7%. This again is better than that of looked after children in England and all children in Walsall

Exclusions

We work closely with schools to ensure looked after children are not excluded from school but in some cases we do move young people schools to avoid a permanent exclusion.

During last academic year we supported 12 young people who were at risk of exclusion. In some cases intensive support such as 1:1 support in schools enabled the young people to remain at their school but in other cases intervention such as managed moves or moves to alternative provision have taken place to avoid a permanent exclusion.

We also work with schools to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions given to looked after children and young people.

What do we do?

Personal Education Plans

All looked after children aged between 3-18 must have a personal education plan (PEP) which takes place within 10 days of the children/young person becoming looked after and is reviewed at least termly.

The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked-after children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential.

A member of the virtual school attend every first PEP and continue to attend if there is a need for us to do so. Some of the reasons we might attend are:
* Children and young people not reaching their potential
* Being at risk of exclusions
* Having poor attendance
* Support for parents/carers
* Requested by the young person
* Helping to improve the meeting

We are also responsible for making sure the PEP is good quality and records what is needed to enable children and young people to make progress.

Our key workers quality assure the PEPs and give them a rating of outstanding, good, requires improvement and Inadequate and challenge schools where PEPs are not rated as good or better

What do we do?

We also

- Provide training to school staff, social workers and parents/carers on how to support the education of looked after children

- We make sure pupil premium funding is being used to improve educational outcomes and increase participation in enrichment activities

- We work with post 16 providers to reduced the number of young people who are classed at NEET

- We also provide information, advice and guidance to parents, carers and schools in relation to children who were previously looked after, such as children who have been adopted or have left care through a special guardianship order or child arrangement order

- We work with social workers and managers to plan and deliver celebration events such as the Excellent Tea Party for primary aged children and the Excellent Night Out for secondary aged pupils

How we supported looked after children through Covid 19

How we supported looked after children through Covid 19

During lockdown some children and young people attended school but some chose to receive their education at home. For those who were learning at home:

- We made regular contact with parents/carers to ensure children and young people were able to take part in virtual learning at home
- We provide over 50 children with laptops/tablets to enable them to continue with their learning in the home.
- Online tuition was provided to children and young people who requested additional support
- Weekly emails were sent out to parents and carers providing lists of educational resources and websites for different areas of learning and development
- Artslink resource packs were provided for children and young people aged 3-12
- Reading books and learning resources were been sent to all primary aged children
- Log in details to our own digital learning platforms were provided to all children and young people

Do you have any Questions?