

8 January 2013

Title of the Report: Outcomes for Looked After Children and Impact of the Virtual School

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew – Childrens Services

Executive Summary:

The importance of education in securing good outcomes for looked after children and young people is acknowledged across the partnership within Walsall. The Virtual School has a strong and highly visible presence across the authority and, as evidenced in the recent Ofsted report, effectively supports children and young people, schools, social workers and carers through clear priorities, robust support, challenge and the provision of training opportunities.

However, there remain a number of significant challenges which our looked after children face in overcoming some major obstacles as identified by the Virtual School and in recent Ofsted and All Party Government Reports and which the wider partnership needs to address.

This report provides Scrutiny and Performance Panel with an overview of the educational outcomes for looked after children in Walsall including results by key stage, trends over time and National comparisons, where available.

Reason for scrutiny:

Members have requested an overview of the educational outcomes for looked after children and young people, including trends over time, National Comparisons (where available) and young people who are deemed to be NEET ~ Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Recommendations:

That:

- 1. Members note the contents of this report.**

Background papers:

Reports to Virtual School Management Committee including:

- Virtual School Annual Report
- Virtual School Self Evaluation Report
- Virtual School Development Plan

available from Walsall Children's Services Serco

Reports to Corporate Parenting Board:

- Virtual School Annual Report
- Overview of Education Matters in Care ~ The All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and The Impact of virtual schools on educational progress of looked after children Ofsted 2012

available from Walsall Children's Services

Resource and legal considerations:

The Children Act 1989, (as amended by the Children Act 2004) places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and to promote the welfare of the children they look after. They also have a particular duty to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they live.

Education must therefore be an integral part of the care planning arrangements for a child. The care planning requirements on local authorities are set out in the *Care Planning, Placements and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010* and the *Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010 – statutory guidance*.

In addition to the statutory guidance on all aspects of care planning, which summarises the main things local authorities need to consider in relation to education, there is a separate volume of statutory guidance *Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children - statutory guidance for local authorities* to help local authorities implement their statutory duty.

The Government has recently announced their intention to introduce legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows to make the Virtual School Head a statutory post.

Providing strong leadership as Corporate Parents will assist the Council to support and challenge all partners to prioritise the importance of education for looked after children.

Citizen impact:

Looked after Children are citizens of Walsall; supporting them to make good progress in educational attainment and outcomes through challenge to partners, educational providers and carers, the development of enrichment activities and being the champion for their education remains the focus for the Virtual School.

Environmental impact:

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Performance management:

It may help the Council to see where additional support can be provided to individual children to assist them to make good progress as well as identifying targeted challenge as required.

Equality Implications:


No Equality Impact Assessment been carried out. However the Virtual School undertakes analysis of data by individual child to identify areas of learning where additional individual support or challenge to school, carer or social worker may be needed.

Consultation:

None as the report is based on data and published sources.

Contact Officer:

Carol Boughton – Head of Service

 01922 686406

Carol.boughton@walsallcs.serco.com

1. The Context in which the Virtual School Works

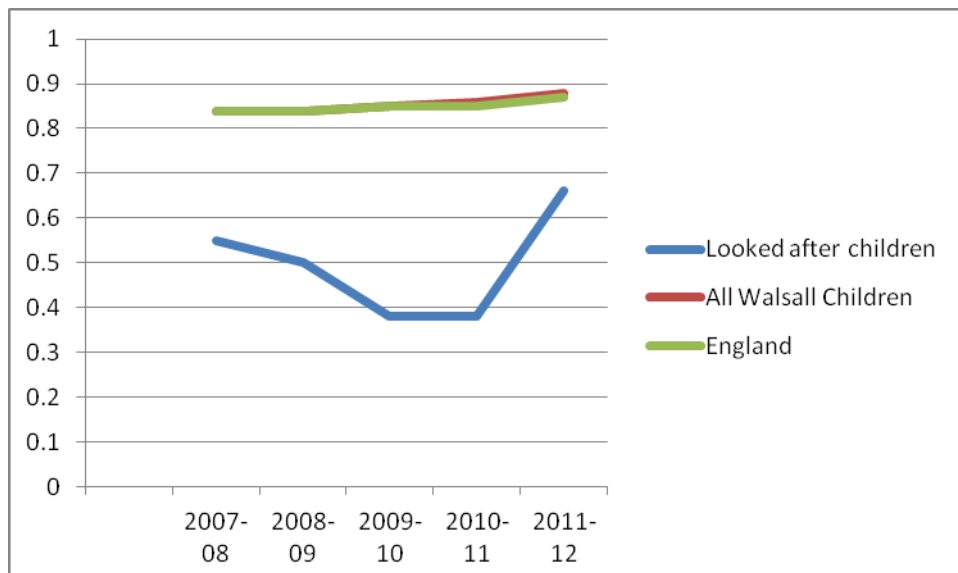
- 1.1 Looked after children have the right to expect the outcomes we want for every child ~ that they should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve in life, make positive contribution to society and to achieve economic well being. To achieve these outcomes, the Local Authority, as their Corporate Parent, must demonstrate a commitment to helping every looked after child to achieve the highest educational attainment she or he possible can.
- 1.2 The Virtual School provides support to looked after young people and their carers, training for social workers, carers and Designated Teachers in schools and challenge to schools, social workers and others to placement and education decisions that might affect the education outcomes of looked after young people.
- 1.3 Over the last 2years the Virtual School has faced a number of challenges relating to the high number of young people who are accommodated in Key Stage 4, many of whom already have established patterns of behaviour relating to attendance and engagement with education.

2. Outcomes

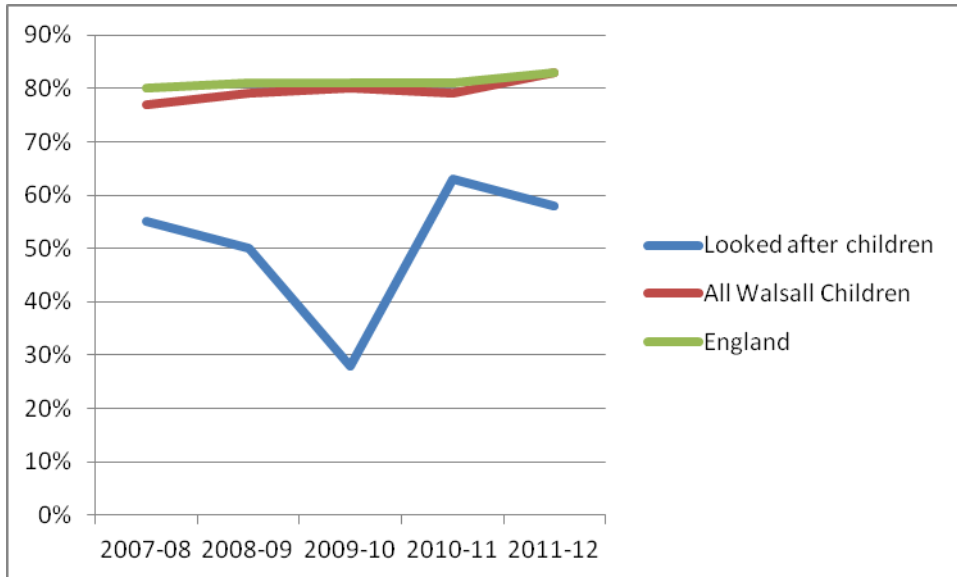
2.1 Key Stage 1

These graphs show the outcomes for looked after children who have been looked after for 12months or more at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and maths. The cohort for the academic year 2011/12 was 26.

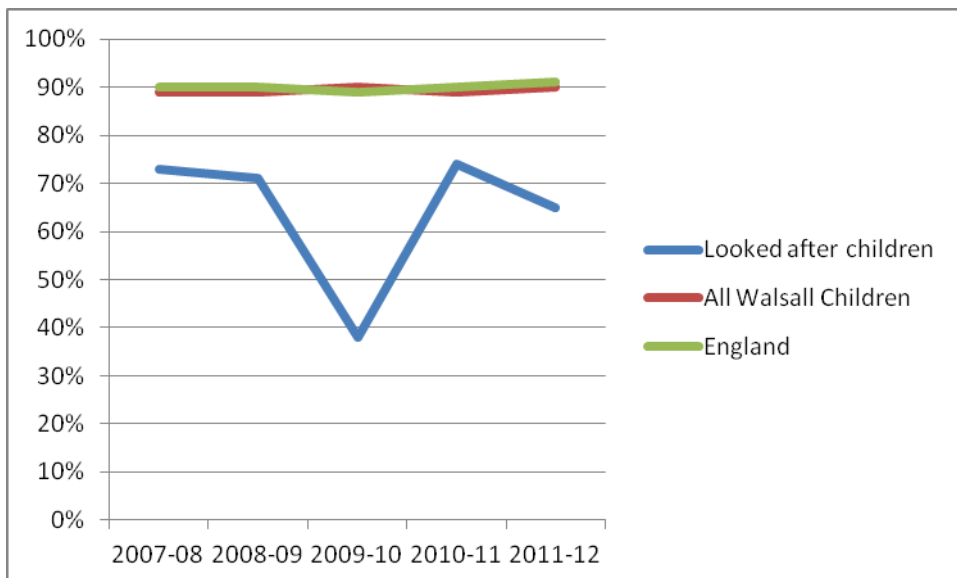
Reading



Writing



Maths

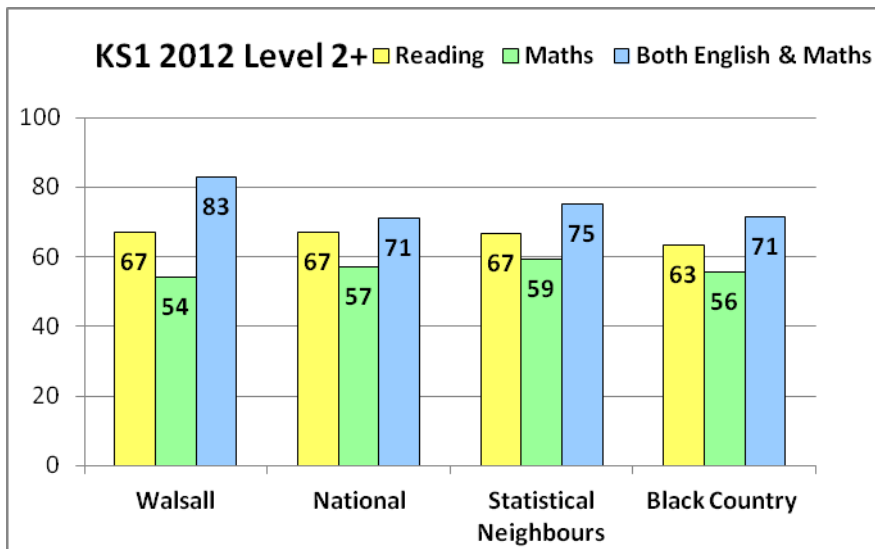


At Key Stage 1 in 2012/13 (38%) of looked after children in the cohort had a recognised additional learning need including 3 who had a full Statement of Special Education Need.

The needs of the Key Stage 1 cohort for 2012/13 indicates that an increased number of children this year have additional learning needs.

2.1.2 National Comparisons

At Key Stage 1 the outcomes for looked after children who achieve both Maths and English are above National outcomes.



The Virtual School has developed an early enrichment pack for the youngest children containing:

- a book to read and share
- associated oral games and rhymes
- activities to develop fine motor skills and cognitive skills
- maths and language activities

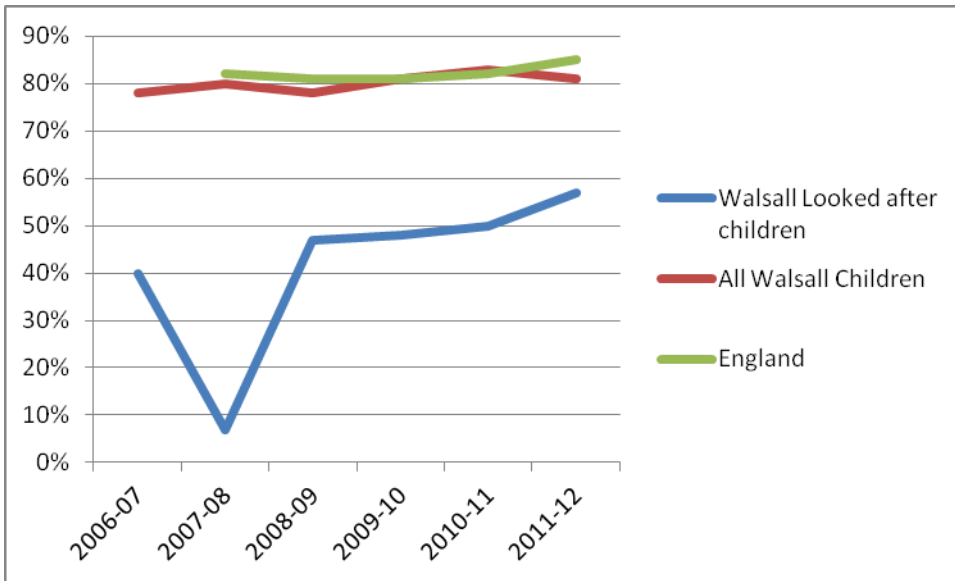
all of which contribute to school readiness and positive outcomes. All looked after children in nursery and reception received the Project packs with an evaluation form for carers and children to complete and return. 55% of the evaluation forms were completed by carers and a similar number from children.

The Virtual School has also arranged 1:1 tuition for 7 children focusing on maths and English utilising both Pupil Premium and additional funding.

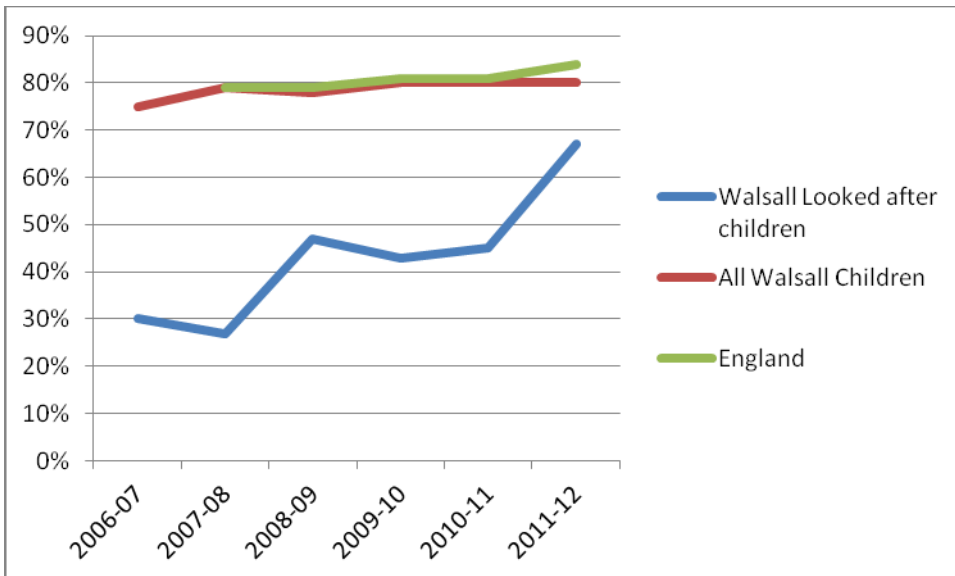
2.2 Key Stage 2

These graphs show the outcomes for looked after children who have been looked after for 12 months or more at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and Maths. The number of children in this cohort for the academic year 2011/12 was 21.

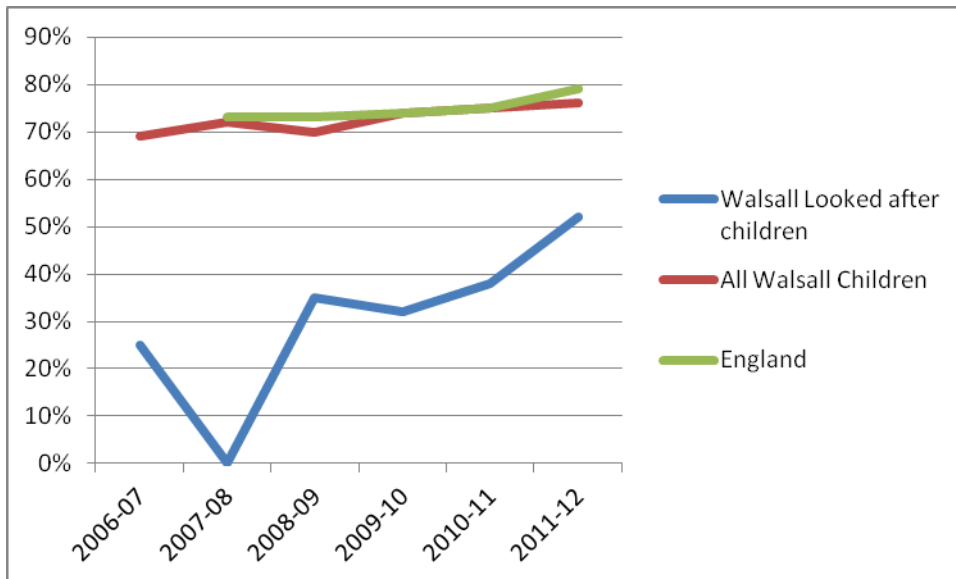
English



Maths

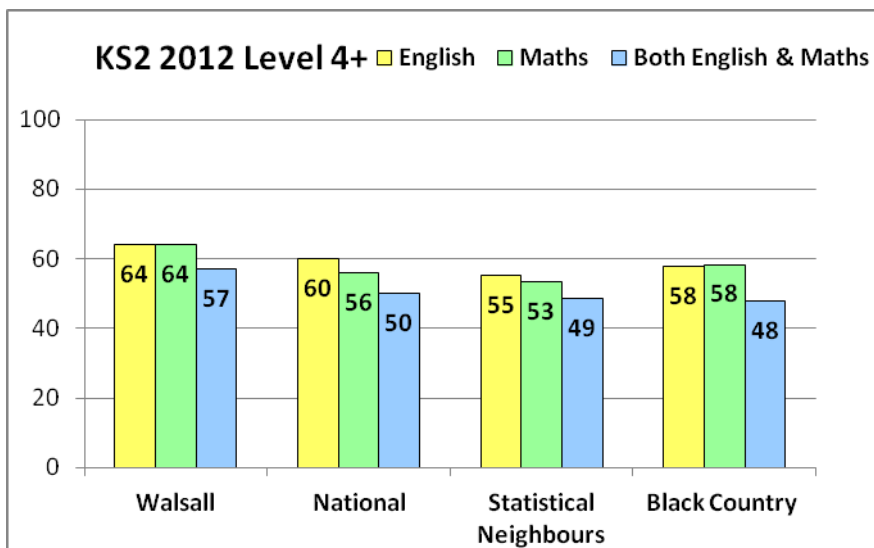


English and Maths



Outcomes for looked after children remain below those of Walsall children generally at this stage of education; however, steady improvement and a strong trend of upward improvement can be seen. In 2012 only 3 children out of a cohort of 21 had any additional learning needs.

2.2.1 National Comparisons



Outcomes for looked after children are above national outcomes. The Virtual School has negotiated a range of enrichment activities available to looked after children. This has included:

- Queen Mary's High School Project for Girls (Key Stage 1 & 2)
- Queen Mary's Grammar School After School Club & Mentoring
- Leamore Primary ICT Boys Project
- The Fire Project
- The Transition Project

- 1:1 tuition for 39 children focusing on maths and English using Pupil Premium and additional funding

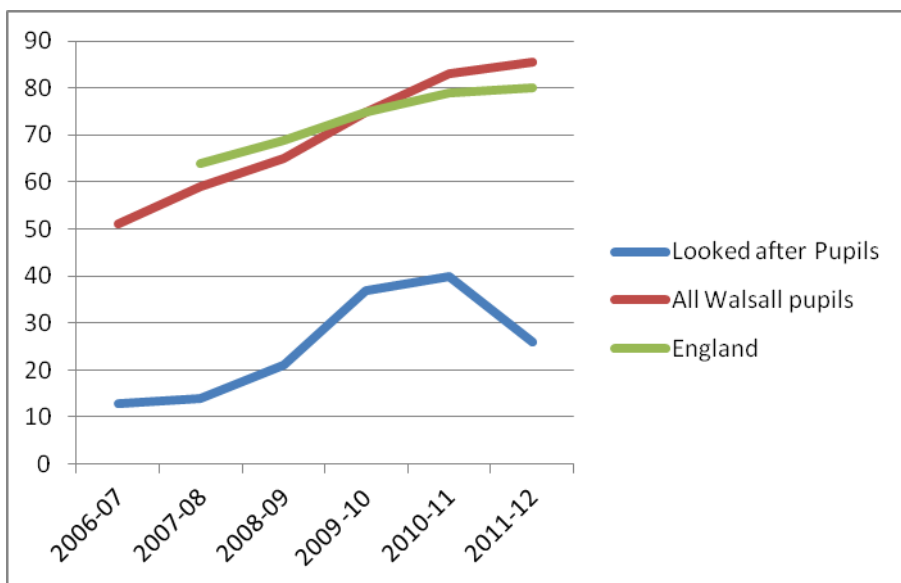
Each of these Projects were designed to enhance children’s learning and were well received by those children and young people who took part. The After School club was open to all children in the carers household including any birth children.

Unfortunately securing the necessary support from carers ~ both foster carers and residential workers ~ has proved extremely difficult resulting in very poor attendance at the After School Club. As a result the Grammar School have reluctantly withdrawn their 6th form pupils who have been offering support and mentoring.

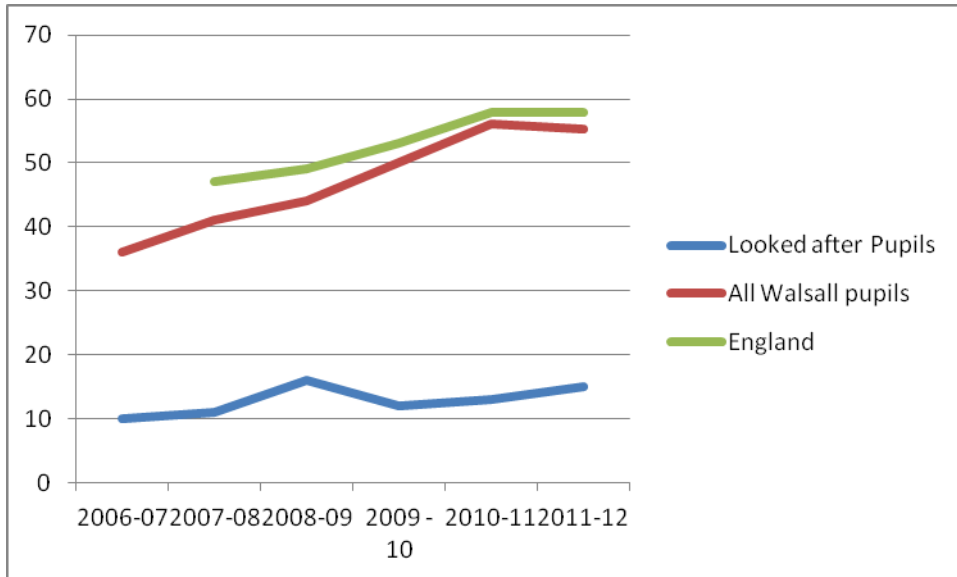
2.3 Key Stage 4

These graphs show the outcomes for looked after children who have been looked after for 12 months or more at the end of Key Stage 4. The number of children in this cohort for the academic year 2011/12 was 32.

5 A* - C



5 A*- C including English and Maths

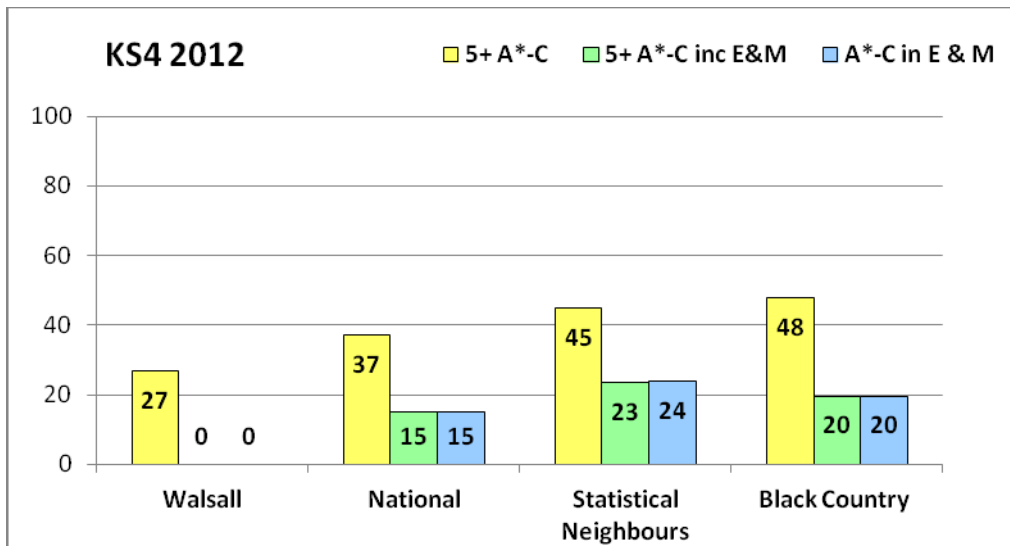


Children in this cohort who achieved the best outcomes had experienced stability in their care placement and their school. 12 young people (35%) experienced a placement move during their exam year and 8 of these young people also experienced a school move in the same year.

59% (19 children) had a recognised additional learning need including 9 who had a Statement of Educational Need.

Children who commence their looked after career after Year 9 are more likely to have entrenched attitudes towards attendance and attainment.

2.3.1 National Comparison



Outcomes for looked after children at Key Stage 4 were below national outcomes.

The Virtual School have arranged 1:1 tuition for 6 young people focusing on Maths and English.

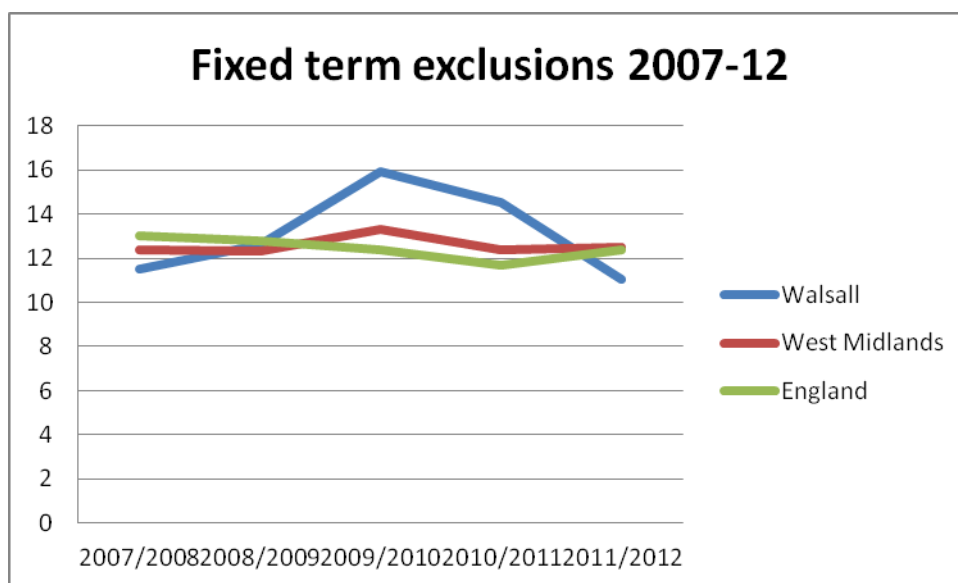
Where young people have refused to engage in mainstream education activity the Virtual School have arranged places with Training Providers offering accredited training in vocational areas designed to offer a personalised approach to learning and with a view to maintaining the young person in education or training.

2.4 Attendance and Exclusions

In 2011 the attendance indicator for looked after children changed from 25 days to reflect the national indicator of 15%.

In the academic year 2011/12 there were 11 looked after children who were deemed to be persistently absent. 10 of this group were Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and 6 of these were placed in a children's home.

Fixed term exclusions for looked after children were below the national average.



There have been no permanent exclusions for looked after children for 8 years.

2.5 Not in Employment, Education or Training

The total current cohort of young people aged 16-18 is 81.

There is a member of the Connexions team co-located within the Virtual School who takes responsibility for ensuring that each 16year old has an offer of education, training or employment. This is known as 'the September guarantee'. All 32 young people this year had a positive offer by July for September and 71.3% of the total group were engaged in positive activity at the end of September 2012.

