worcestershire
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**AGENDA ITEM 6**

# CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
# 19 JANUARY 2016

# THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WORCESTERSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

**Summary**

1. This report provides data on the educational progress of looked after children in care to Worcestershire County Council who have been in care for at least 12 months with comparison data between their peers, with looked after children in statistical neighbours and nationally.

2. It also provides data on all looked after children in Worcestershire schools which includes those looked after children from other local authorities.

3. It also provides a detailed description of the role of the Virtual Headteacher.

**Background**

4. Nationally looked after children are an underachieving group. Closing the gap between the attainment of looked after children and all young people remains a high priority nationally and locally. To support this priority, the government has put the virtual school head role on a statutory footing to signal how important it is for everyone to champion the education of looked after children, wherever they are placed. The Virtual Headteacher will ensure the educational attainment of the children they look after is tracked and monitored as if the children attended a single school.

5. In April 2014 additional funding via the pupil premium was introduced for looked after children. Local authorities are allocated funding of £1,900 based on the number of eligible looked after children from the first day of care rather than, as previously, six months. The distribution of Pupil Premium funding has to relate directly to targets relating to improved progress in the Personal Education Plan.

**Commentary on the results of Worcestershire looked after children**

6. The cohorts reported on nationally are those looked after children in care to Worcestershire who have been looked after for 12 months or more. In Worcestershire the cohorts are small in each Key Stage so one pupil not achieving can have a profound effect on overall performance. Another significant factor which impacts on educational outcomes is the higher than average percentage of looked after children identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities which at 75% in January 2014 is higher than statistical neighbours at 70% and the national figure of 67%. For comparison the percentage of their peers with SEND is only 20%.

7. We are aware that the gap is not narrowing sufficiently at Key Stage 1 nor at Key Stage 4 although there has been slight improvement between looked after children and their peers at Key Stage 2 from 2013 to 2014. However they are still 12 percentage points (ppts) below their statistical neighbours and 13 ppts below looked after children nationally.

Key Stage 1

8. At Key Stage 1 data indicates that in 2014 in Reading 62% of Worcestershire looked after children are achieving level 2 or more compared to 90% of their peers. They also achieve less well than their equivalent cohorts within the statistical neighbours and nationally.

9. In Writing only 58% achieved level 2 or more compared to 87% of their peers. The percentage of Worcestershire looked after children achieving level 2 or more was 12 ppts lower than their statistical neighbours and 3ppts lower than National figures.

10. In Maths 65% of Worcestershire looked after children achieved level 2 or more compared to 92% of all children in the authority. They are achieving 12ppts lower than their statistical neighbours and 7ppts lower than National figures.

Key Stage 2

11. At Key Stage 2 in Reading, Writing and Maths there has been a slight improvement in the percentage of Worcestershire looked after children achieving level 4 and above from 2013 to 2014 at 35% in 2014 compared to 33% in 2013 but for all Worcestershire pupils 72% achieved level 4 in 2013 and 77% achieved this standard in 2014.  Looked after children were still 12ppts below their statistical neighbours and 13 ppts below looked after children nationally in 2014.

Key Stage 4

12. At Key Stage 4 the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 or more A*- C at GCSE including English and Maths has fallen over the last three years with only 13% in 2014 and 11% in 2015 achieving this benchmark. In 2013 the national figure was 16% and in 2014 it was 12%. The gap between looked after children and their peers was 46% in 2014 and this has widened to 49% in 2015.

School Absence

13. In the academic year 2014/15 the overall absence rate for LAC was 4.7% which is 0.2% higher than all pupils in Worcestershire.  In 2012/13 the overall absence rate for Worcestershire LAC was 4.6% compared to 4.9% for all pupils. In 2013/14 the overall absence for LAC was 4.6% compared to 5.1% for all pupils.  However LAC missed 1.1% of sessions due to unauthorised absence compared to 0.8% for all pupils.

14. There has been a slight increase in the rates of unauthorised absence in the LAC population in 2014/ 15 at 1.1% compared to 0.6% in 2013/14 and 0.7% in 2012/13. Equivalent figures for their peers stand at 0.8%, 0.9% and 0.9% respectively.

**Commentary on all looked after children in Worcestershire schools**

15.  In 2015 the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 or more A\*-C including English and Maths was 16% both in Worcestershire and nationally, compared to 60% of non-looked after children in Worcestershire schools and 56% of non-looked after children nationally.

16. The percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A\*-C not including English and Maths is 20% compared to 70% of non-looked after children. Nationally the figures for comparison are 22% of looked after children and 65% of their peers respectively.

17. The percentage of looked after children achieving 5 or more A\*-G was 62% in Worcestershire schools compared to 63% nationally but the figures for their peer is 95% and 94% respectively.

18. Progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 for all pupils in English and Maths combined is significantly above expectations. This is the case for children who are not looked after in each of these subjects as well as combined. For example progress in Maths is 6ppts above expectations and for looked after children progress is better than expected for Maths by 2ppts whilst being 1ppt below expectations for English. There is no combined measure of progress for English and Maths for looked after children.

**The role of the Virtual Headteacher**

19. The Virtual Headteacher should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's looked after children, including those placed out of authority.

20. There are three key cohorts of children for whom the Virtual Headteacher has to have knowledge. Those who are in care to Worcestershire and are educated in Worcestershire schools, those who are in care to Worcestershire but educated out of the authority and those children placed in Worcestershire schools, who are in care to other local authorities. For reporting purposes data however is only collected on those children who are in care to Worcestershire.

21. There are three key areas of responsibility for which the Virtual Headteacher is accountable

a. **To make sure that there is a robust system to track and monitor the attainment, achievements and progress of looked after children by**

- maintaining an up-to-date roll of its looked after children who are in school or college settings and gathering information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress
- informing Headteachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked after by the local authority
- ensuring that baseline data is collected when a child comes into care.
- ensuring that schools know their looked after children and make sure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place for any looked after Child in the care of Worcestershire.
- ensuring that the PEP cycle works well and informs the care planning process.

**b. To ensure that all looked after children have a robust and effective PEP and access any additional support to improve their attainment by**

- working with relevant professionals to ensure PEPs are of high quality, demonstrate outcomes and that Pupil Premium is used to support any targets set
- ensuring social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP
- challenge and support schools to provide the necessary additional support through effective use of the Pupil Premium grant to looked after children.

**c. To champion the educational needs of looked after children across the authority and those placed out of authority by**

- advocating for looked after children with all relevant partners such as Social Care, Head teachers, Educational Psychology, Admissions, School Transport, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities teams, Exclusions and Post 16 Engagement
- working with Virtual Headteachers in other authorities to ensure that the needs of all looked after children are met.
- reporting regularly on the attainment of looked after children through the authority's corporate parenting structures
- ensuring that all Corporate Parents are aware of their role and their responsibilities to the looked after children.
- ensuring that all looked after children are placed in good or better schools.
- ensuring that any decisions which Social Workers wish to make about changes in education placements are agreed by the Virtual Headteacher at the planning stage before changes are made.
- ensuring that any permissions given by Head teachers or Social Care staff to allow holidays in school time are discussed and challenged.
- ensuring that, where a child is attending a school that it is not rated as good, that the Virtual Headteacher and Social Worker review the appropriateness of the child continuing to attend that school or moving to a better school at a natural transition point in that child's education.

## Purpose of the Meeting

22. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities

## Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 - Comparative data for looked after children in care to Worcestershire

- Appendix 2 – Raise online data for all looked after children in Worcestershire schools

## Contact Points

<u>County Council Contact Points</u>
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<u>Specific Contact Points for this report</u>

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## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.