

Virtual School Annual Report for August 2024 -August 2025



Annual quote from our young people

'SYPAC gets me out of the house and I get the third party support I need for college. Most of the staff that come to SYPAC are brilliant, most leave after so many years but the Virtual School worker has stayed the longest and helped when I needed it with college and other times.' Young person who attends SYPAC.

Annual Statement from Director of Children's Services

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Virtual school that outlines the work over the past 12 months to support some of our most vulnerable children and young people to achieve and succeed in their educational attainment and experience. This report details a full year of progress against the additional responsibility of the VS to support education provisions to support all children who have a social worker to have access to good educational experiences and settings, where they can be nurtured and encouraged to achieve. I am extremely proud of the service and all it does to support and encourage our children and young people to have positive educational experiences that enable them to develop and grow.

Jane Moore

Annual statement from the Virtual School Head

To have contributed to the Outstanding Ofsted Judgement in 2024, achieve the Platinum Artsmark award and go on to win Outstanding team of the year award in Autumn 2024, highlight the journey Leicestershire Virtual School have been on to provide the very best for our young people. We have a dedicated and passionate team of incredible staff, who go above and beyond to advocate for better outcomes for children in care, and I couldn't be prouder of the team we have here in Leicestershire. This year has been very busy, with even more on offer for our young people. Our method of embedding Arts and Culture and sport into our offer has grown significantly and plays a huge part in opportunities and the support for healing for our young people. Momentum is building in Leicestershire with our amazing schools engaging on our journey of Belonging and becoming trauma informed but also implementing that knowledge into practice. To our wonderful young people, keep doing what you are doing, and never be afraid to dream big!

[Contents page](#)

	Page Number
Introduction	3
Our Vision	4
Child and Young person summary	5
Virtual School – Who we are	7
Contextual data	8
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	9
Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)	10
Additional funding	11
Summary of Children in Care Attainment (provisional)	12
Previously Looked After Children	13
Attendance and Suspensions	14
Attachment Research Community (ARC)	15
School Admissions	16
UASC	16
Early Years	17
Educational Psychology	17
Post 16 Young People and Care Leavers	18
Children with a social worker (CWSW)	19
Trauma informed schools officer	23
Training	25
Participation	26
Plans for 25/26	38
2025/2026 priorities and action plan	39

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the work of the Virtual School in Leicestershire for the academic year August 2024 – August 2025 and analyse the data for the academic year. It will also look at the key priorities for the following academic year 2025-2026. National benchmark data for 2023-24 was published in April 2025 and is considered in this report, however academic year 2024-2025 data will be added after publishing in April 2026. The Children Act 1989 places a duty on the Local Authority (LA) to promote the educational achievement of children looked after by them, wherever they live or are educated through the Virtual School Head (VSH). The Children and Social Work Act 2017 added the duty to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children. These duties are set out in the February 2018 statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'.

In Leicestershire we have a team of outstanding professionals who work passionately to support this role, its duties and advocate for our young people. We bring together information about children and young people in care to Leicestershire and use this information to support schools, carers and young people to achieve their best in their education. We are committed to putting our young people first and supporting them to achieve in all aspects of their education and life. This year we were recognised for our work by being awarded Outstanding team of the year 204/25 at the Pride in Practice awards.

The Virtual School also provides support and advice for children previously in care and those who have been adopted and under special guardianship, Kinship care and the Virtual School has a non-statutory strategic leadership role for children who have or have had a social worker (in the last 6 years). This commenced from 1st September 2021. This role is being considered in the Children's Wellbeing Bill as becoming a statutory duty.



Our Guiding Principles

To be Trauma-Informed

- T** Trained staff and training offer for all stakeholders.
- R** Respectful and non-judgemental interactions with colleagues, young people and carers.
- A** Awareness and openness to others' values, opinions and
- U** Understanding the need for self-care and colleague support and supervision.
- M** Mindful, supportive and empathic approach to challenges.
- A** Acceptance, advice, and advocacy.

Our Vision

We are here to work with you, your school, carers and social workers so you can reach your potential, be ambitious and aim high!



University Days



Careers Days



Your voice



Bookclubs



Artsmark



Care to Dance



Aspirations



PEP meetings



Pedestrian Arts and Crafts



Sport

Our Model

All young people have access to education

To support with wider opportunities and targeted support where needed

To create a trauma informed whole school culture across the whole of Leicestershire that embeds relationships and inclusion into policy and practice

Our school
And all the things we do together

Early Years (ages 0-4)

About you

152 of you are on roll at the end of the year.

Listening - Your Voice

We have worked with other services to adapt our training to your settings so they can better support you.

Building Relationships

we continued working with the Dollywood project so you each get a book every month until you are 5

Outcome focused - What you learnt

You started your journey using the early years framework, learning lots of new things. We adapted the PEP so we can add your observations and see what you have been learning.

2045 books have been sent out to you, supporting with your early reading.



School Age (age 5-16)

About you

456 of you are on roll at the end of the year.
Your overall attendance was **83.7%**.

Listening - Your Voice

You want us to consider our language when you are being spoken to in meetings and at school.

Building Relationships - We did

We have trained triple the amount of your schools to ensure they are supporting your needs.

Outcome focused - What you learnt

60% achieved a 'Good Level of Development'.

72.7% of you achieved the expected standard in your phonics screening.

46.7% of you achieved the expected standard for reading in Year 6.

46.7% of you achieved the expected standard for Reading, Writing and maths in Year 6.

22.5% of you achieved a 9-4 grade in English and Maths

Post 16 (age 16 to 18)

About you

507 of you are on roll at the end of the year.
62.1% of you are in education, employment, and training at the end of academic year

Listening - Your Voice

We listen at PEP meetings and follow up any issues raised ie support in changing courses/colleges, chasing up missing bursary payments and generally directing you to where you might get support.

Building Relationships - We did

We have introduced PEPS for those of you who are not in education, employment or training. We introduced a study support programme for some of you.

Outcome focused - What you learnt

Post 16 results – pending

This Academic Year we have

Next year our key priorities to support you are:

Trauma Informed



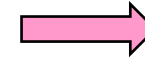
Trained **54** of your schools



Held sessions of training for foster carers and adoptors.



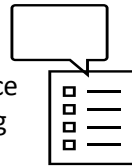
Held sessions of training for social workers



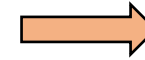
- Support more of your schools to become Trauma informed so that they can support you better

Pupil Voice

86 % of you expressed your voice in your PEP meeting



6 of you chaired your own PEP meeting

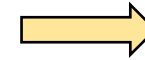


- Continue to listen to your voice and use the language of care toolkit within PEPS

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



Completed Action research and projects involving looking at culture and identity for different groups.

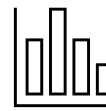


- To develop an offer following on from our research in music and how this can support young people.

Collaboration



Quality assured **95%** of your PEPS to a green or gold standard which means they are the best working documents to support you



Used data to create dashboards so we know who needs help when



- Work closely with all other teams you may work with to ensure you are receiving timely education and the right provision to meet your needs

Participation



partnered with wider curriculum and participation activities to increase your opportunities in a variety of areas.



Artsmark Platinum Award
Awarded by Arts Council England



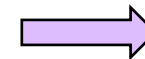
- To continue with our Artsmark to ensure you are offered as many opportunities as possible.

Support to return to education

14 of you attended University this year



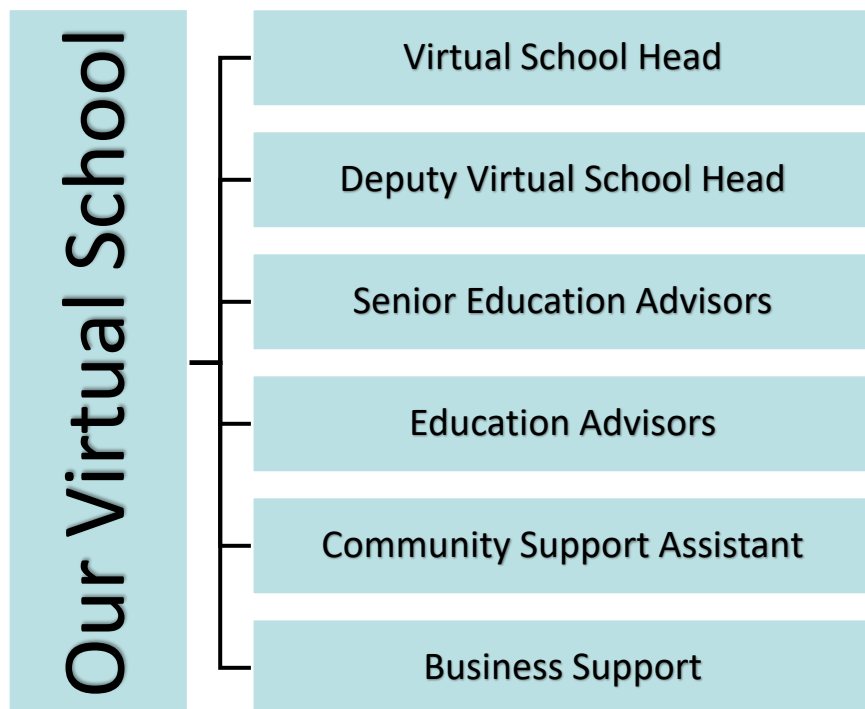
7 of you have attended a NEET PEP to reengage in education



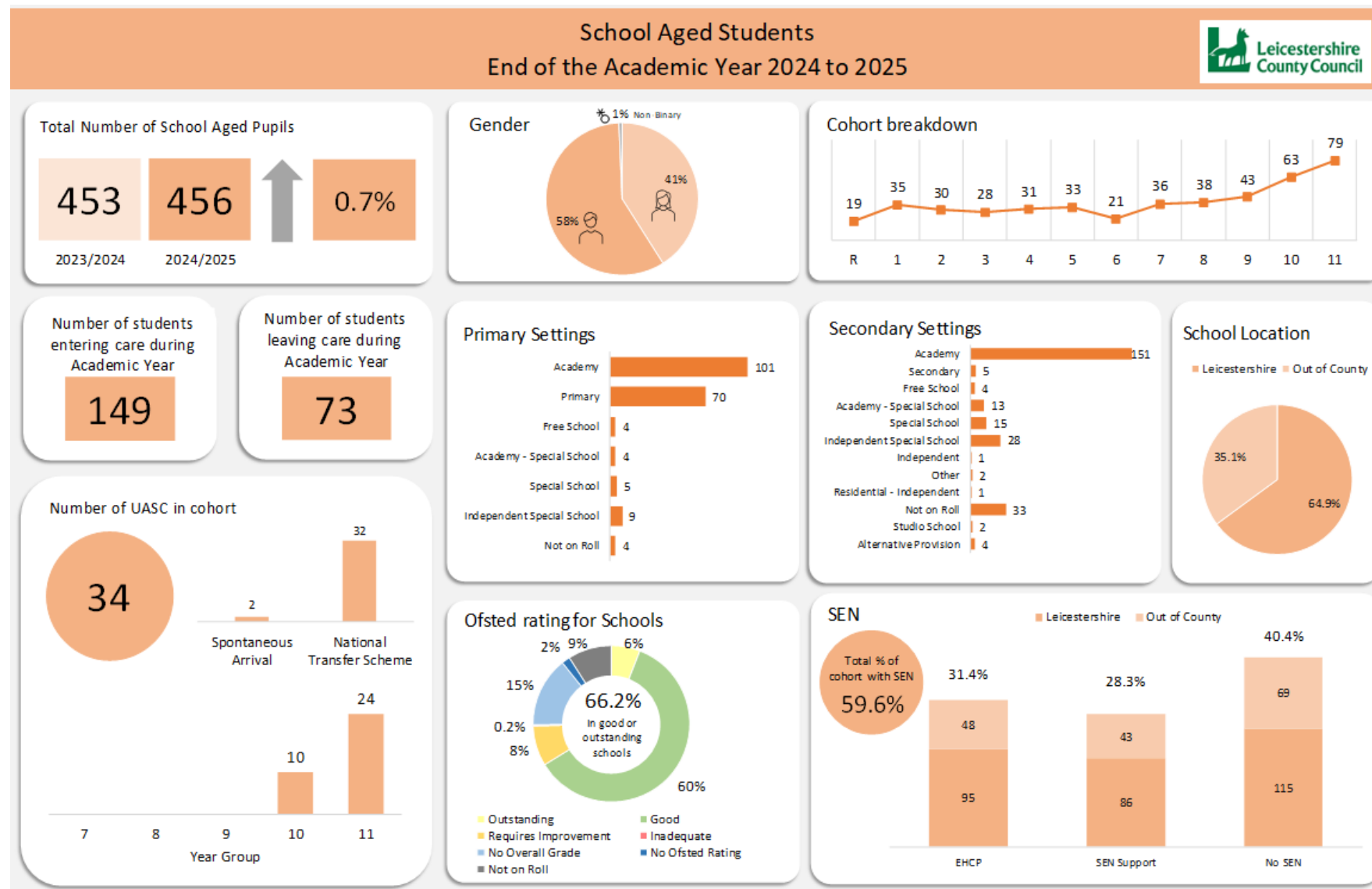
- To develop our offer to support those of you who are Not in Education, Employment or Training through study support programmes/apprenticeships.

Who we are

These are some of the people you may meet in your PEPS or at participation events. This year we won Outstanding team of the year award, in recognition for the support given to our young people, carers, schools and partnerships! We are very proud of this acknowledgment!



Contextual Data for Children in Care



Appendix 1 -
Contextual Data - Aca

Appendix 1: Virtual School Contextual Information 2024-2025



Appendix 2 -
Alternative Education

Appendix 2: Alternative Education 2024-2025

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

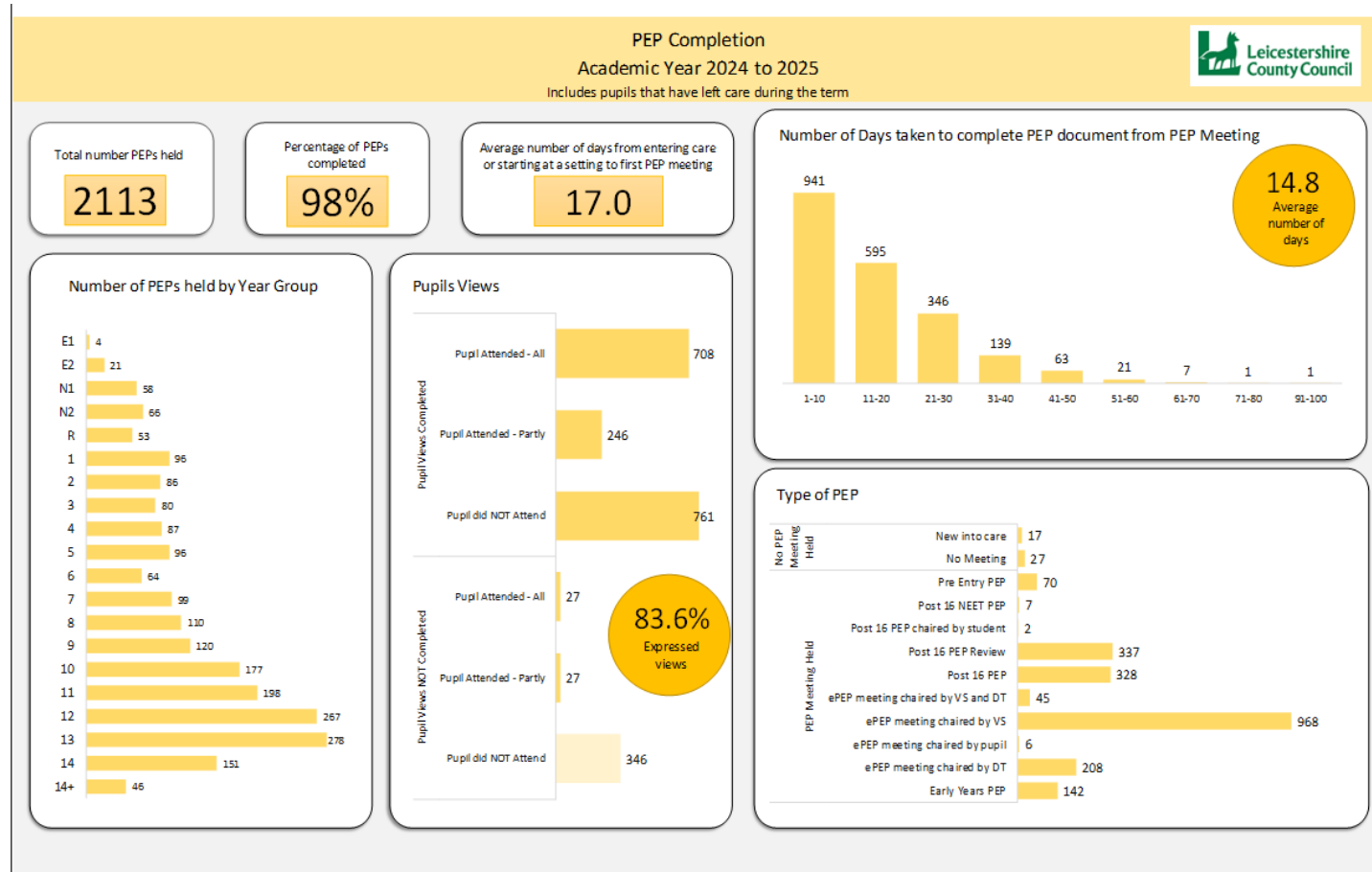
The Virtual school has a duty to ensure the quality of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and arranges PEP meetings for Early Years children attending a nursery or setting, in primary and secondary schools and in post-16 education. Leicestershire PEPs are led by the school, with attendance from the Virtual school, social worker, carer and engagement with the young person.

The Virtual School quality assure every PEP. Each section is rated (red, amber or green) and feedback provided.

NB:

- Year 14 and 14+ PEPS are only held on request of the young person and therefore, not included in overall percentages.
- The young people included in the No Meeting figure, are those young people who have not had the required number of meetings in the academic year.
- New into Care - are those young people who came into care within the last month of the summer term.

As well as the 2113 PEPs that were held, the officers of the Virtual School attended and recorded 270 additional educational meetings compared to 173 last academic year, which are not included in the PEP report.



Appendix 3 - PEP
Completion - Academ

Appendix 3: PEP Completion 2024-2025

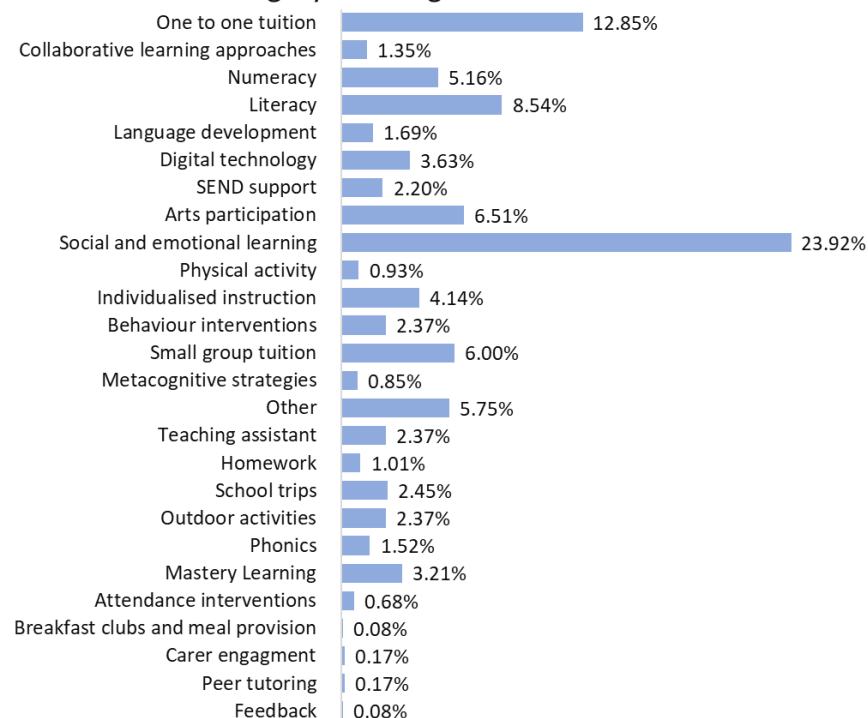
Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) Allocation to Schools (2024-25)

The Virtual School Head manages the Pupil Premium for looked after children and monitors closely its use and impact, ensuring that schools allocate funding to interventions that support the individual needs of the child. Schools are held accountable for the results of children in care and for using the PPP grant appropriately and effectively to support and improve educational outcomes. Schools complete a PPP plan within the SMART Targets section of the PEP which is monitored by the VS, who support and challenge PPP decisions on an ongoing basis via termly progress review meetings and data returns.

The impact of PPP allocated to schools during one term is monitored at the PEP meeting in the following term, i.e., the impact of PPP allocated in the final term (summer) of 2024-25 will be reviewed in the autumn term of 2025 - 26.

Analysis shows that 82.7% of targets linked to PPP spend during 2024-25 were successfully achieved, compared to 79.1 % the previous year. 59.6 % of those targets made significant or moderate impact on the outcomes for our young people in a range of areas. We have been working within our team and with schools to make targets SMARTER to ensure the impact increases moving forward. We have also seen an increase in the type of interventions being put in place around social and emotional learning.

Intervention Category for Targets



Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) – Pooled Resource

The PPP grant was set at £2,570 per eligible pupil and allocated for the Leicestershire VS to manage on behalf of its looked-after children. £470 top-slice is retained by the VSH to support pupils whose educational needs exceeded the per capita grant. When the termly PPP allocation is insufficient to meet a child's needs, additional funding can be applied for from this pooled PPP funding. The VS encourages schools to take on the responsibility for arranging any support required for pupils. This means that pooled funding is allocated to schools for them to commission provision for complex cases. This might typically be for higher-cost ongoing provision such as employing a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) to provide support for effective transitions, academic progress and emotional stability in class, ongoing 1:1 tuition or agreed therapeutic input where needs do not meet CAMHS thresholds. The VS continues to use the pooled resource to commission provision for pupils temporarily not on roll of a school e.g., 1:1 tuition and to fund VS book parcels, participation activities, incentives and rewards and to fund a bespoke service from Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service.



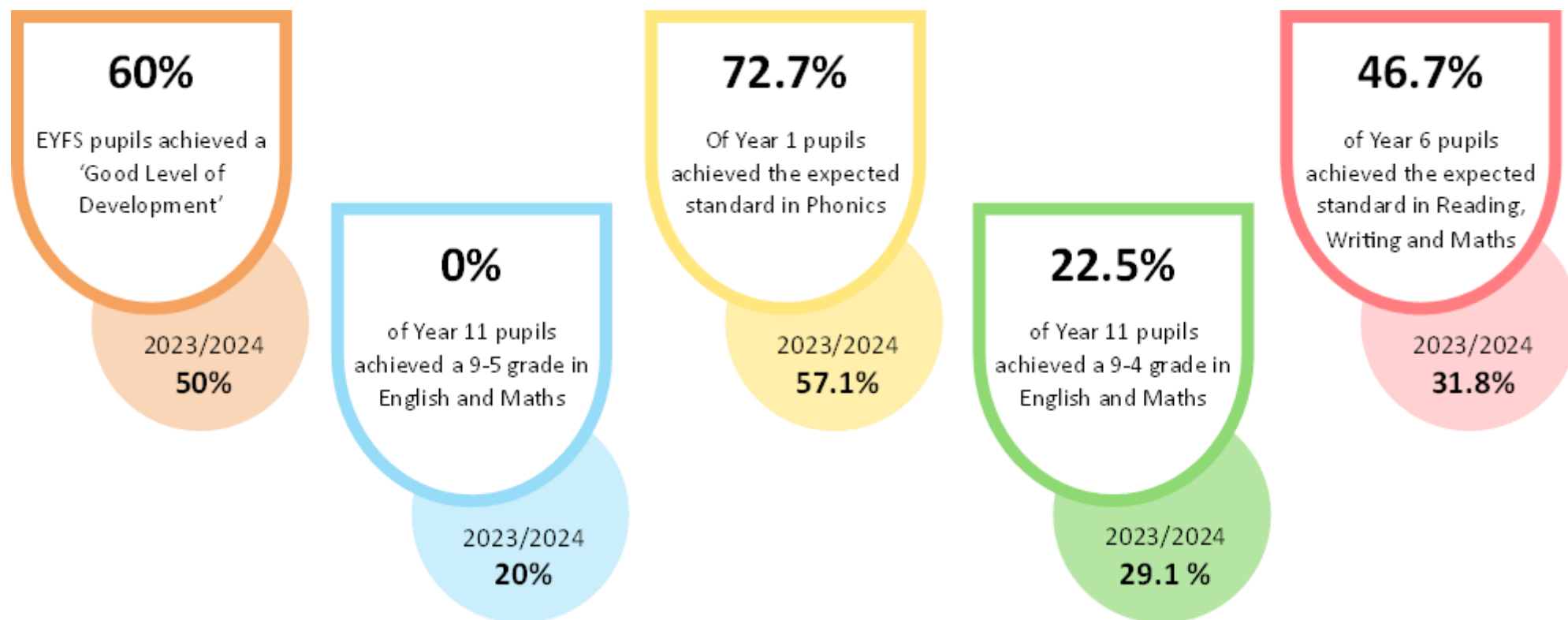
Appendix 4: Use of Pupil Premium - Academic Year 2024-2025

Appendix 4 - Use of
Pupil Premium - Acad

Additional funding in support of Catch-up

The LAC recovery premium and the Schools led tutoring ended last academic year and therefore we no longer have this additional funding stream.

Summary of Children in Care Attainment (provisional data)



All data is provisional and subject to change. Unless stated otherwise, all data is based on pupils who were in care for at least 12 months as at 31st March.

NB; Analysis of data will be provided in the April update once final data is confirmed.



Appendix 5 -
Appendix 5: Provisional Results Academic year 2024-2025

Provisional Results - 2

Previously Looked-After Children

We have continued to have a very busy year with calls from both parents, carers and guardians and from schools and social workers this academic year. We have had 152 referrals made this year, compared to 136 referrals in 2023/2024: 86 parents, 17 Social Workers, 37 teachers including HT, DT, SENCOs and 10 professionals. We received approx. 202 calls totalling 52 hours of calls, 289 emails were received, and 1 meeting attended. Compared to 2023/2024 where our calls received were 252 totalling 32 hours of call, 245 emails were sent and 11 meetings attended. The calls have involved increasingly complex difficulties and required lengthy input from the Virtual school team to raise schools' awareness and understanding of the ongoing issues faced by PLAC children. The amount of time each referral has taken has increased.

The Virtual School offer a duty line which is open every weekday.

- Calls and emails from parents/guardians/DTs or professionals will be logged by our admin team and information will be sent to the Virtual School Senior Education Advisor who is on duty. They will respond within seven working days.
- In the first instance the SEA will offer advice guidance and strategies to the caller which may also include emailing information and signposting to other agencies.
- This may also include supporting with admission and EHCP requests by checking that admissions and SEN are aware of PLAC status to ensure they are being prioritised.
- If there is a particular issue in school the officer may offer to contact school and discuss with them and then feedback to parent/guardian.
- Attachment and Trauma Training will be offered to schools and parents as appropriate.
- In rare instances where the situation in school is very challenging and where there is capacity a Virtual School officer may be able to attend a TEAMS meeting.

We are unable to attend any face-to-face meetings due to capacity.

Kinship Carers

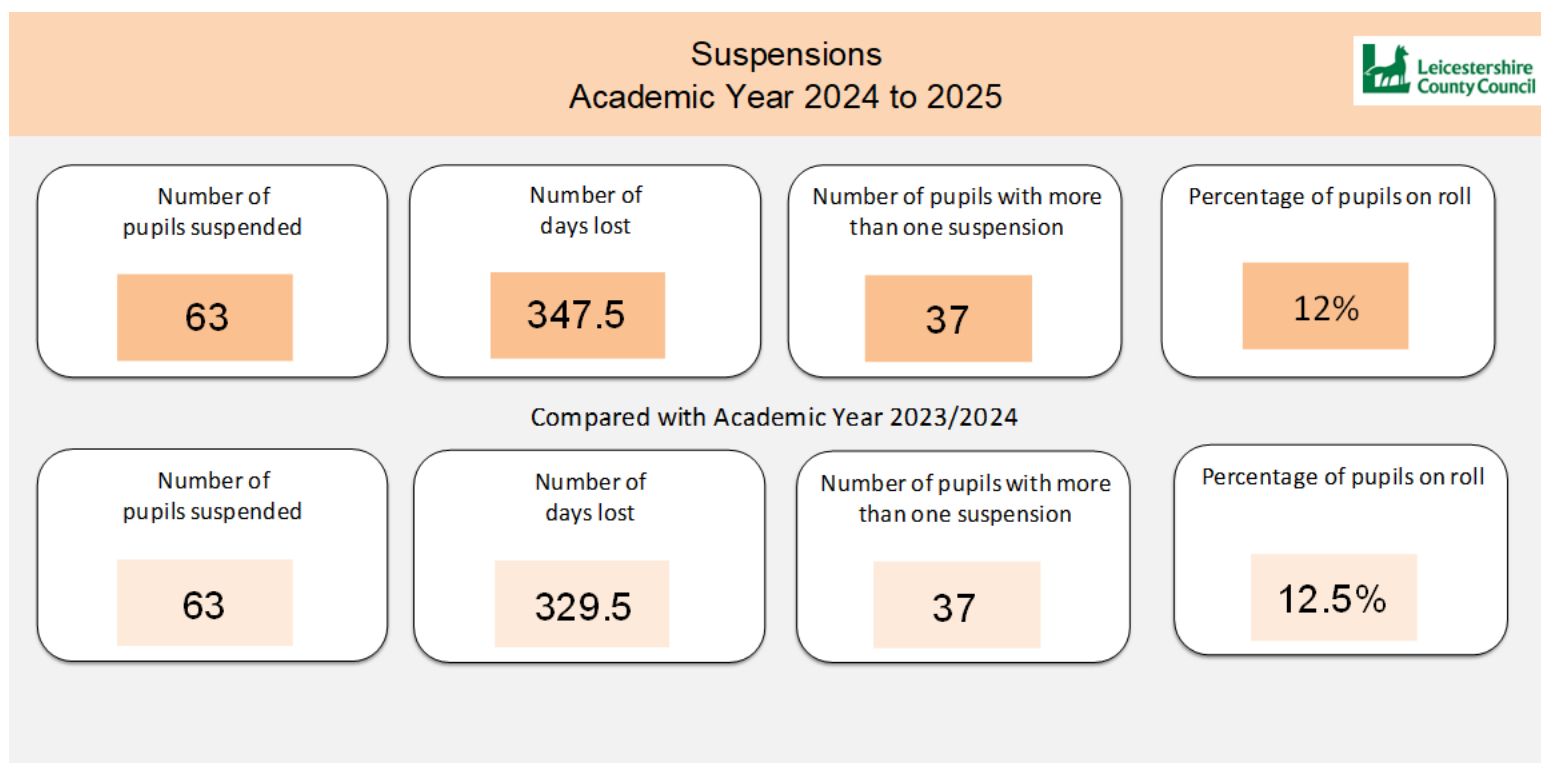
The extension to duties incorporated Kinship carers from December 2023 and therefore the above support and advice is also now offered for those young people and carers in Kinship care.

Our website links to support for PLAC including Kinship carers.

Support offered for;	Total number
Parents /school communication issues	17
School place advice	13
Admissions advice	5
Advice about Behaviour	33
PPP	14
Post 16	1
Signposting other professionals	3
Process and general advice	16
SEN /SEMH advice	29
Help with attendance codes	1
Support for exclusions	4

Attendance and Suspensions

Reporting is prompt and supported using Welfare Call alerts; weekly and ongoing attendance and exclusion reports allied to termly Social, Emotional and Mental Health RAG reports from schools enable the VS to robustly monitor and respond to issues arising.



In 2023 -2024 there were

- 22 young people not on roll at the end of the academic year
 - Of these 6 were Yr 11 UASC, 1 was a Yr 10 UASC, 12 young people with EHCP required specialist placements, 2 young people were placed out of county on entering care so were awaiting school placements, 1 young person who came into care was home educated.

In 2024-2025 there were

- 41 young people not on roll at the end of the academic year
 - Of these 26 were UASC: 19 were Year 11, 7 were Year 10. Also, there were 11 young people with EHCP requiring specialist placements, 3 young people awaiting an EHCP and a specialist placement, 1 young person placed for adoption.

There have been no permanent exclusions of children in care for several years – this is the result of collaborative work across schools/settings and Behaviour Partnerships with the VS. Reporting is prompt and helped using Welfare Call alerts; other weekly and ongoing reports against attendance and exclusions ensure we are robustly monitoring and supporting this agenda with schools and children and young people.

Overall, suspensions have remained at 63 in 2024/25. Suspensions, however, have decreased in the second half of the school year as a result of the work we are doing with the ARC audit and support with schools. Within this figure, there are 54 pupils who received fixed term exclusions (FTE) cross Year 7 to Year 11 at secondary phase. The main reason for suspensions being reported is for persistent or general disruptive behaviour which has increased from the previous year as the main reason, however decreased slightly in the summer term.

The Virtual School works closely with Schools/Settings/Services to develop understanding of issues involved and are working to improve and develop the Trauma informed agenda with schools to ensure consistent practise and support is in place for our young people.



Appendix 6 -
Suspensions - Acaden

[Appendix 6: Suspension dashboard 2024-2025](#)



Appendix 7 -
Attendance - Academi

[Appendix 7: Attendance dashboard 2024-2025](#)

[ARC – The Attachment Research Community](#)

As a result of the data informing us of the increasing number of suspensions, we implemented the ARC framework for all schools to have access to the trauma informed school's toolkit. We launched in January 2024. This tool has allowed us to identify schools who are reflecting on their own practice and asking for further support and training. We aim to continue using this toolkit into next academic year with the aim at getting more of our schools on the platform and begin awarding schools through the Matrix.

School Admissions (2024-25)

The Virtual School strives to ensure that applications for school places other than at normal transition points are processed without delay with as little disruption to the child's education as possible. In 2024-25, there were 83 applications during the academic year for a change of school for Leicestershire LAC. Admissions authorities of all mainstream schools must give the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria to looked-after and previously looked-after children and cannot refuse to admit a looked after child based on challenging behaviour or refer a looked after child for action under the Fair Access Protocol on the basis of challenging behaviour. Looked-after children can be admitted as 'excepted pupils' in relation to the infant class size limit if they are admitted outside the normal admission round and schools cannot refuse admission on the grounds of being full.

As a result of the circumstances of looked-after children, there tends to be a higher rate of in-year school admissions applications submitted for LAC than their peers. This is more usually due to placement moves.

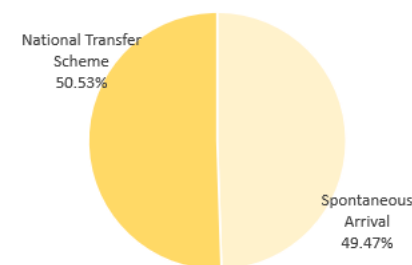
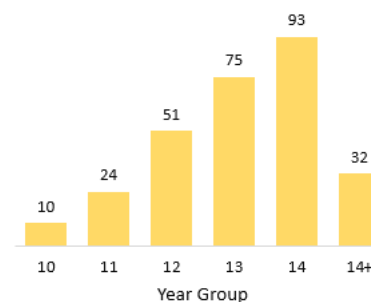
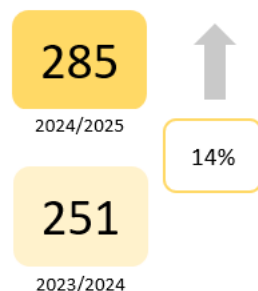
When a child is removed from the roll of one school and is awaiting a new school place, they are reported as a Child Missing Education. Under these circumstances the VS funds 1:1 tuition to maintain a pupil's engagement in education or negotiates the commissioning of 1:1 tuition by SENA services, so that the impact of the delay in accessing formal education is minimised, and to ensure all children have an offer of educational input.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

The Virtual School has the same responsibilities for UASC as it does for any other Leicestershire looked-after child or care leaver, starting with the identification of appropriate education provision and monitoring of progress once enrolled.

At the end of academic year 2024-25 there was 34 UASC students at statutory school age compared to 30 the previous year and 251 post-16 compared to 221 the previous year, making a total of 285 compared to 251 the previous year. This is a further increase in our UASC cohort. This has therefore meant we have had to continue to adapt our response to number of PEPs and increase a casework officers' role to include UASC PEP work. We are continuing to look at the needs of this cohort of young people and working in partnership with others to ensure the best education and provision is provided.

UASC



Support for Early Years

We have continued to support Early Years settings, to have a greater understanding of the attachment and trauma needs of our youngest children. We have run 3 training courses online over the year.

The SEA also offer advice in 6 monthly PEP meetings, with additional support as needed. We have supported schools, Early Years settings and foster carers with the transition to school, with a transition PEP meeting in the summer term and training for foster carers around transition and starting school.

We have liaised with the FEEE team to look at the changes to Early years FEEE and EYPP with a lot of new advice being given to settings, social workers and foster carers. The EYPP is now available to all LAC who receive FEEE from the term after they are 9mths old.

The children continue to receive the books from the Imagination library each month. These are well received by the carers and children.

Educational Psychology Service

We have a long-standing relationship with the Leicestershire Educational Psychology team, where we work collaboratively to prioritise and support our children in care with additional educational needs. This year 26 of our young people were seen by EPs, in order to support their assessments for EHCPs. This work not only involves direct work with our young people, but a collaborative shared practice across both of our teams. Together, the new Guidance for reducing suspensions has been rolled out and shared with schools. This is being used to support schools with strategies and advice on reducing their suspensions.

Inclusion and SENA

We also work closely with the Education Inclusion service and SENA, to ensure our young people in care are prioritised and supported in a timely way.

Post-16 Young People and Care Leavers

Priority is given to ensure all young people at the end of KS4 (age 16) have an identified destination and remain in Employment, Education or Training (EET) during subsequent years. College Designated Persons (DP) for looked after children are invited to the summer PEP meeting of Year 11 pupils whose college destination is known to ensure that plans are in place for a smooth transition into college.

Post 16 Senior Education Advisors conducted 714 PEPS this academic year, compared to 613 PEPs last academic year and were much busier supporting a larger KS5 cohort who had more concerns around education as a result of the uncertainty around courses. The close links with all local colleges, forged over preceding years helped to ease the passage of young people into college, and to access appropriate support.

Number of Post 16 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) over the past two years: 37.9 % in 2024-2025 compared to 34.8% in 2023-2024. We will always discuss with the social worker to make a referral where we feel a young person may be NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. The Post 16 grant has allowed us to expand our offer to focus on our NEET young people and apprenticeship drive from January 2024. This has included offering more advice and support and PEPS to our NEET cohort however the huge increase in our post 16 UASC cohort, with limited college places has meant the figure in NEET has increased.

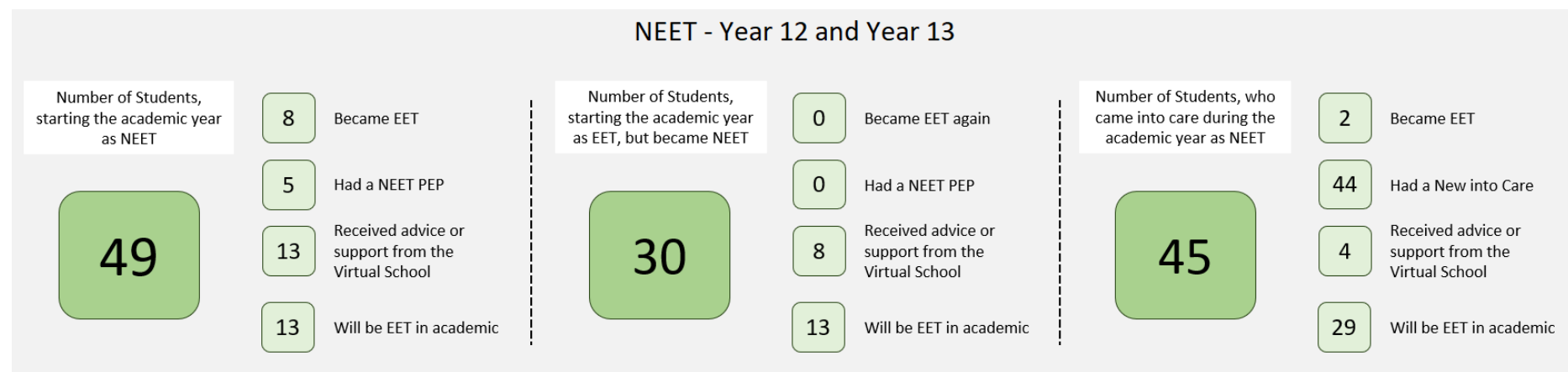
19+ NEET Study Programme

The 19+ Study Support Programme was offered to 19+ NEET YPs. The programme was a 10 week programme offering a day a week of English, maths, Digital Skills and Employability Skills and a day a week of work experience. Towards the end of the programme there were some IAG sessions and a celebration



study support
programme_.pdf

event. Please see attached write up of the programme and the impact it had.



Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

Joint Designated Teacher and Designated Safeguarding lead conference



To launch our new duties and the priorities we had set, we held a Supporting Children with a Social Worker conference in September. Dts and DSLs across primary and secondary came together, to hear about our new duties and share feedback about what support they needed in schools.

Priority 1

Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including with children's social care, to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.

Priority 2

Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting is an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.

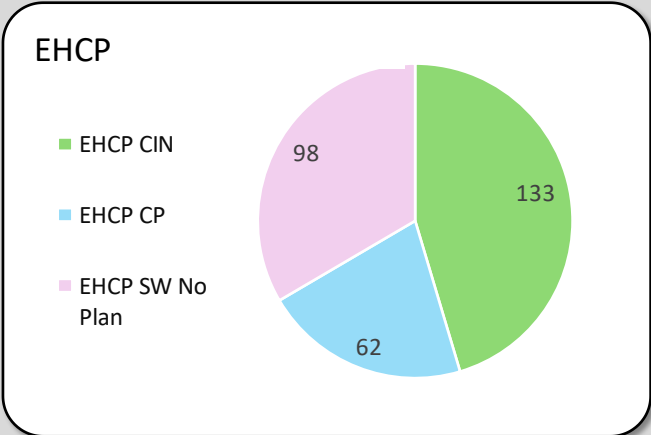
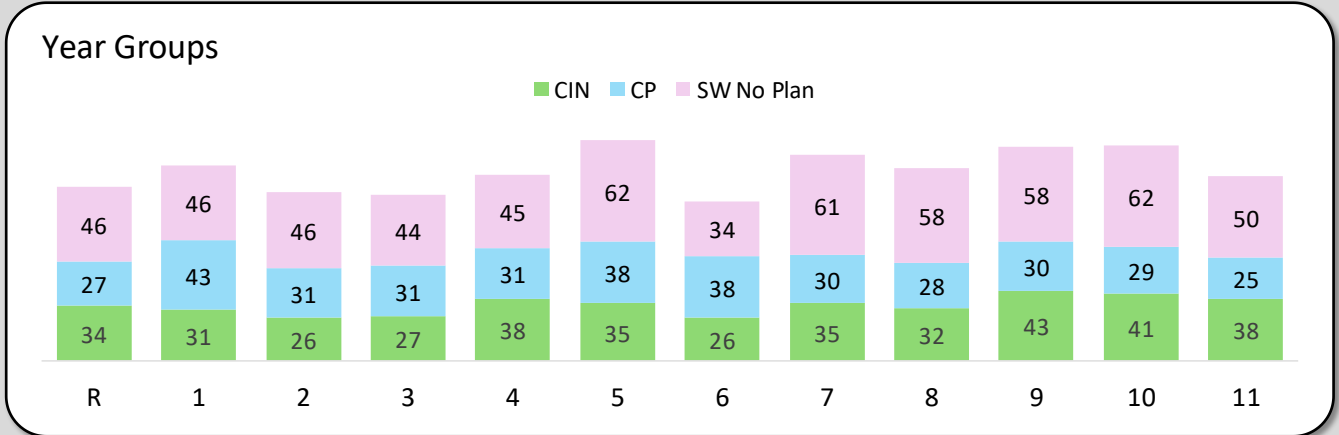
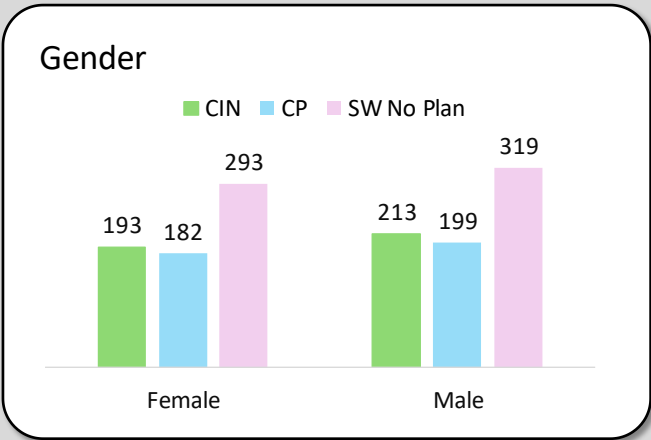
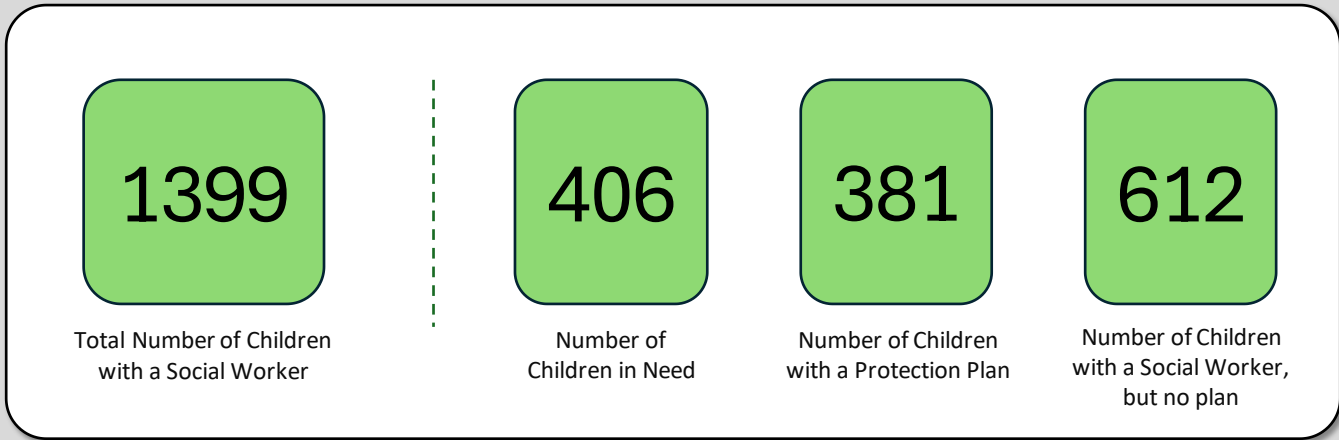
Priority 3

Narrow the attainment gap so every child has the opportunity to reach their potential – including helping to ensure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover educationally from the impact of the pandemic.

NB. This data fluctuates as children come on and off CIN and CP plans so is subject to change. We are now able to drill down to school level to look at suspensions and attendance per school, to support us in strategically identifying where to target our support.

Children with a Social Worker

(Not including Children Looked After)
As at 31 July 2025



Children with a Social Worker - Suspensions

(Not including Children Looked After)
As at 31 July 2025

Number of pupils suspended

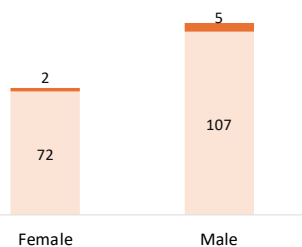


Number of days lost

1335.5

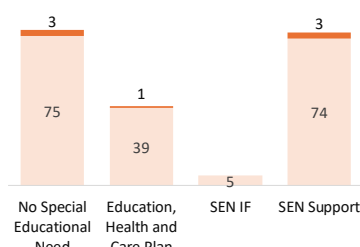
Gender

Suspension Permanent

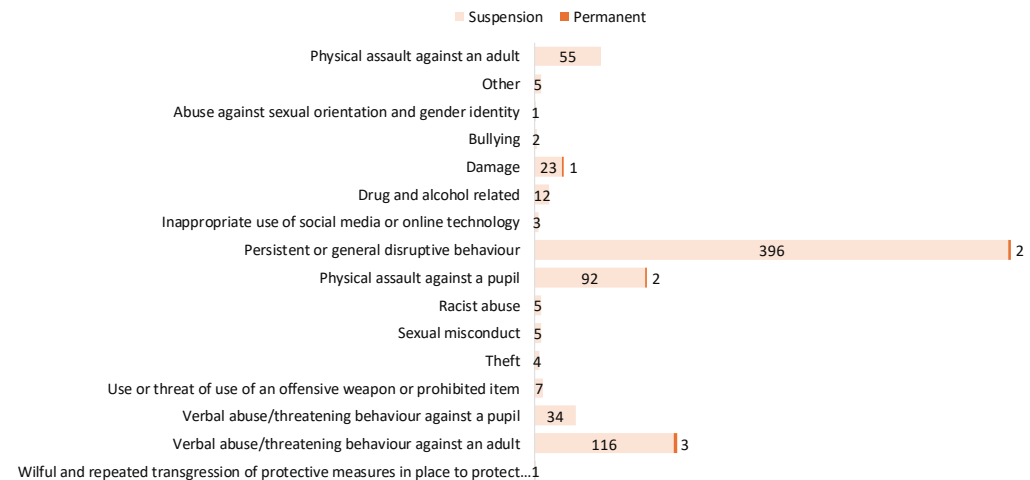


SEN

Suspension Permanent



Reason for Suspension - includes primary reason plus any additional reasons



The Academic year started with visits to all the early help teams across Leicestershire to hear about their experiences of supporting children in education. The overwhelming feedback was that staff did not always feel confident in challenging schools and know how best to advocate for the families they are supporting.

As a result, we set up a 'surgery' for both social care and school staff to talk through education concerns. This has been well utilised by social care staff with 100% of users saying that the support and guidance they received was very helpful. We continue to embed this service into schools as the number of schools calling for guidance remains low, despite growing levels of suspensions for CwSW.

Social care staff also raised concern about their knowledge of the ever-changing education sector. We have put together a series of Bitesize videos for social care staff and families they are supporting on key topics of concern:

- Attendance

- Admissions
- Fair Access
- EHCP process
- Suspensions and Exclusions

A further course on Barriers to education in partnership with Autism Outreach and Inclusion will be completed in Autumn 2025. This will cover EBSA, persistent absence and severe absence with tools for CYP, parents and carers and Schools.

Suspensions and exclusions continue to be a significant concern for all children across Leicestershire. We have worked with BI to develop appropriate reporting and tracking of attendance, suspensions and exclusions. Working alongside Education Effectiveness we are supporting our 10 schools with areas of concern. This work will be developed in 25/26. The suspensions and exclusions guidance developed in partnership with LEPs has gone out, we continue to support schools to work through this.

Working with partners in the west Midlands we ran a pilot project with schools across the Hinckley area exploring how we could support the community of schools to develop trauma informed practice. We ran a series of workshops exploring what schools felt were the main issues they needed to overcome to help change practice and support children and young people. The main areas highlighted are further support for teaching staff to understand impact of trauma and support for SLT. Taking this feedback, we are developing our SLT relational practice course for 25/26.

Trauma Informed Schools Officer

This year we welcomed a trauma informed schools officer into the Virtual school, who had been working within public health to develop and support a group of schools with their trauma informed practice. Over the year the role has grown.

In September we held a Wellbeing Event for Senior Leaders with Minds Ahead which provided a reflective and supportive space offering strategies to maximise staff wellbeing. This was complemented by the launch of the Reflective Spaces pilot in collaboration with the Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service. This tool to encourage staff group supervision has since been reviewed and adapted incorporating the feedback from schools and we will be relaunching this September.

A collaboration with CFS Child Exploitation team to complete a powerful parent interview for the regional CE Awareness Day Conference took place. This presentation explored the critical link between school exclusion and exploitation, raising further awareness with schools and wider agencies. This led to additional presentations both online and in schools. Importantly, it also initiated the development of a parent/carers resource to support families who may be experiencing child exploitation.

Intensive work with Limehurst Academy supporting them towards completion of the ARC Matrix, has led to them becoming winners of the regional ARC award recognising their commitment to trauma informed and relational practice. Work included organisation of their annual Connecting Communities event and support to gain funding for the “Pathway to Prevention” project. This whole school and community initiative will be led by Restorative Practice and Consultancy and is designed to strengthen relationships, improve communication, attendance and reduce suspensions, anti-social behaviour, and crime. This model is being developed with sustainability in mind, involving staff, pupils, parents, and community leaders. They will also go on to be the first Leicestershire ARC Hub, sharing practice more widely with other schools next academic year.

Connecting Communities Event

Thursday 3rd April 5pm—7pm



Sports Hall
Bridge Street, Loughborough

Limehurst Academy, Public Health, People Zones, and the Violence Reduction Network are excited to host the second annual Connecting Communities event for young people, parents, and carers across Loughborough. This event offers families a wonderful opportunity to connect with local organisations and services, and to learn about the support available in the area.



By completing a restorative practice conference facilitator course, has enhanced the ability to support schools to use restorative approaches to support conflict and misunderstood behaviour.

Work also includes collaborating with colleagues across Education on projects including work to support parental engagement and improve attendance, engaging in setting-specific planning meetings with the Education Effectiveness team, providing tailored follow-up support and visits when needed.

A major milestone was leading the development of “Developing Relational Practice and Policy: A Guide for Leicestershire Schools”, which is now in its final stages and due for release in the Autumn term.

Throughout the year, the trauma informed schools officer supported 22 schools to complete the ARC audit, with several of them asking for more intensive support to focus on community links and relational practice.

As Co-Chair of the Trauma Informed Schools Network, this has allowed for collaboration and shared learning across the county. engagement in cross-regional research, liaising with schools outside Leicestershire to exchange ideas and adopt best practices in order to enrich our local approach and ensured that our work remains informed by broader developments in trauma-informed education.

Training

The VS has continued to deliver a wide range of training to schools and college staff, governors, social workers, carers and adoptive parents. We have over the year reviewed updated and added to our training portfolio.

The aim of the training is to help all professionals understand the needs of children in care and previously looked after children by identifying the barriers and strategies to support them.

Between September 2024 and August 2025, the VS offered and delivered training as follows:

- 54 Whole school Attachment and Trauma training sessions delivered to schools/mixed staff groups (2x one-hour sessions)
- Attachment and Trauma training to 1 Alternative provision and the leads of the Leicestershire SEIPS.
- 2 x Mop up Attachment and Trauma training sessions to new staff spring and summer term
- 4 x Attachment and Trauma training to Post 16 Colleges settings
- Induction Training for Designated Teachers of looked-after children and previously looked-after children- Autumn, Spring and Summer term
- DT Cluster sessions with a focus on the new extended duties and supporting Children with a social worker in the Autumn and Zones of Regulation in the Spring term.
- Intro to Virtual School and Emotion Coaching training to foster carers in Summer term
- Training to adopters of how to support children in school Autumn and Summer term
- Training to governors in Summer term
- AYSE intro to Virtual School Training Autumn and Spring term
- Attachment and trauma training for SW Autumn and Spring term
- 2x Early Years training to settings Autumn, Spring and Summer term
- 2x Training to Adopters, Autumn and Summer term
- 2x ASDAN Training to carers and PA and SW -Spring and Summer term
- Key Adult and Principles of Theraplay courses Secondary and Primary sessions - Autumn and Spring and Summer term
- Strategies for a positive transition to Secondary School (PLAC) Summer term
- Post 16 Choices and support for GCSEs for Foster Carers
- Transition to Primary School for Foster Carers Summer term
- Building attachments through play for Foster carers Summer term
- Principles of Theraplay training Autumn and Spring term.

Participants have made the following comments in response to the questions, “In what ways haven you benefited from this training and what will you do as a result of this session?”

I’ve never had training on this specific area. Speaker was very knowledgeable and told anecdotes

There has been lots of amazing content that helps to put things into practice. I personally have prior experience and psychology training so some of the content was new but it was excellent.

As an LSA we work on building relationships with the children to help support them in the best way for them. It has been brilliant to know that we are doing well as well as learning and extra knowledge and strategies.

Achievements and participation

Participation in the arts and sporting events is a huge part of our young people’s lives. It develops friendships, provides opportunities to experience things they may not have tried before and has a huge benefit in supporting wellbeing and mental health. The Virtual School are committed to providing as many opportunities as possible across a wide range of activities as possible to ensure all young people are given chance to engage in a variety of things.

Artsmark Journey

As a PLATINUM Artsmark award Virtual School, we are committed to continuing to embed our wider opportunities and an ethos that incorporates Arts and Culture for our young people’s lives. We continue our Arts journey and below share some of the wonderful opportunities our young people have experienced this academic year! The arts bring a sense of belonging, lifelong friendships and trusting relationships that enable our young people to feel safe and heard and to express themselves through different ways. For some of our young people this

opportunity has provided them with life enhancing opportunities and support.



**Artsmark
Platinum Award**
Awarded by Arts
Council England

'The Year of Belonging; Through the lens'

Secondary photography workshop

Thursday, 29th May saw the introduction of a Photography Workshop for our secondary age young people. A group of budding, young photographers were supported by a professional photographer, ably assisted by an artist, alongside members of the Virtual School, towards trying out skills linked to capturing images that meant something to them. The aim was then to show copies of the photos at a planned exhibition next year linked to a project around identifying an individual's sense of belonging.



A variety of materials were collected from the surrounding grounds of the venue at Beaumanor Hall by the young people and formed the composition of what turned out to be fantastic examples of their own artistry and imagination. Use of some chemicals in the overall development process reinforced the individuality of each person's collection of photographs and it was evident from their enthusiasm in seeking out possible subjects to photograph that this activity could possibly become more of a hobby for some of them in the future.

Thanks to the professionals for all of their hard work but most of all to the young people whose artistic flair shone through at every stage of the session. We cannot wait to see the photographs displayed in the exhibition later in the year.

Primary Photography Workshop

Thanks to Mighty Creatives, a small group of primary children enjoyed a couple of hours attending a photography workshop at Beaumanor Hall during the May half term break.



They all got involved and produced some amazing artwork with a limited amount of help. Some hard work went into the production of a nature picture using light sensitive paper and a working kaleidoscope with some wonderful designs produced.

Look out for the photos on the exhibition next year.

Theatre trips

This year we were able to offer tickets to a range of theatre trips. The shows our young people and their carers got to experience together were sell outs and a huge success. This year we got to see:

- The Gruffalo
- Adams Family
- Pig Heart Boy



ORCHESTRAS *Live*

Virtual school and Orchestra Live project

Collaborate and Innovate Action Research

This academic year we worked on an action research project funded through the Arts Council in partnership with Arts connect and The Mighty Creatives. Leicestershire Virtual school were partnered with Orchestra Live, to carry out research to the following questions:

Phase 1:

How can music organisations work with Virtual School teams to understand and overcome the challenges faced by UASC in accessing arts activities?

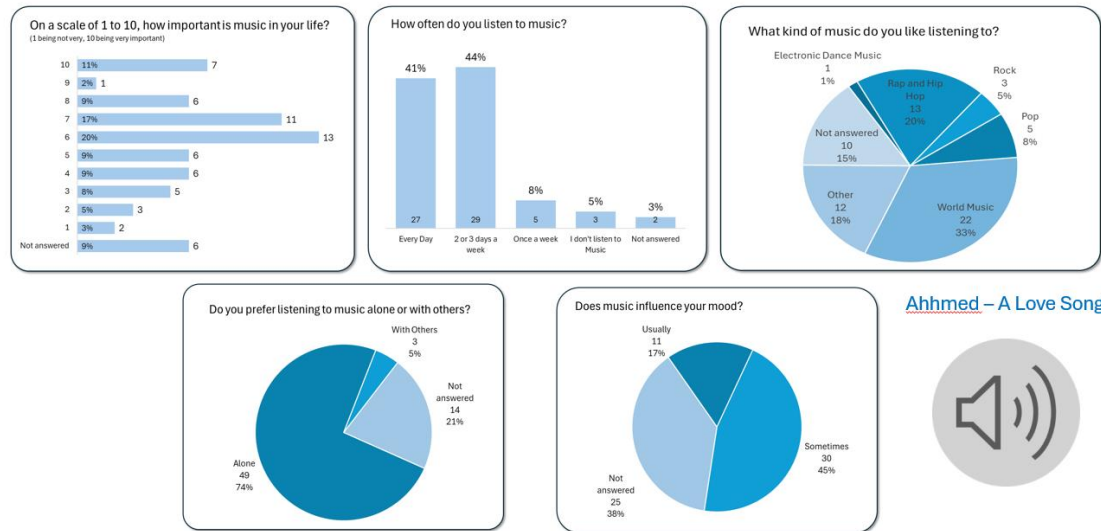
Phase 2:

To what extent can creative music approaches foster a sense of belonging for UASC?

Culture Sounds: A Space to be(long)?

Research Findings

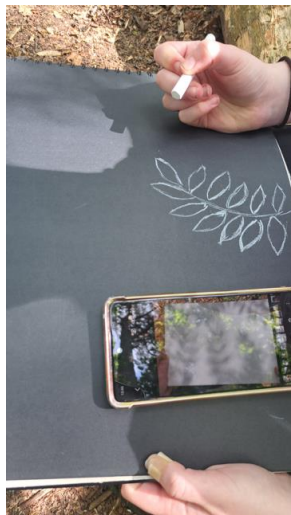
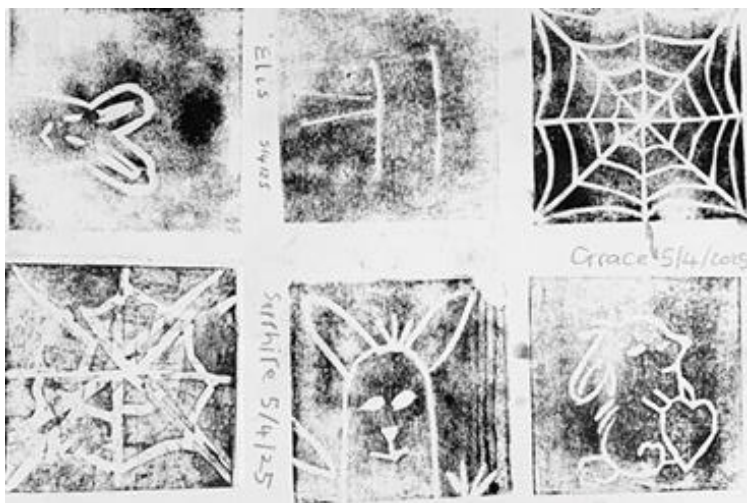
Action-Research project conducted in partnership by Leicestershire Virtual School & Orchestras Live with mentoring and support from the University of Wolverhampton, Arts Connect and The Mighty Creatives.




 UASC presentation - Copy.pptx
 [A copy of our final presentation can be found here.](#)

Forest Schools

Outdoor learning and being out in nature has huge benefits. It provides the opportunity to be creative and focus on wellbeing. The Virtual school has ran a forest school project across the year. We have had great engagement from our young people, alongside their carers, providing the opportunity to bond and build lasting relationships. We have trained one of our team as a forest school lead to support with the delivery of forest schools. In partnership with Leicester City and the Community, we have developed and offered a forest school session for those young people in residential care.



Power of the Arts Video

We worked in collaboration with The Mighty Creatives to produce a video showcasing the power of the arts through the voice of our young people. Take a watch here:

<https://youtu.be/49gX-tCiSx4>

Cricket event

After the success of our UASC cricket event last Summer our young people were offered 6 weeks of free training at the Leicester Caribbean Cricket Ground on Wednesday evenings in June and July. These sessions turned out to be a great success and it was brilliant seeing how well our young people not only engaged with the Leicestershire County Cricket staff and other coaches but also how encouraging and supportive they were of each other.

We were genuinely amazed at the ability on show from our young people.

Undoubted highlights included the appearance of Saqlain Mushtaq, a former international Pakistani cricketer, to give some bowling tips to our young people (see photo below of him with one of our participants) and the fact that some of our young people who did not have a cricket team before are now training with Leicester Caribbean Cricket Club and will hopefully soon to be playing in some games with them in one of their teams.

Many, many thanks must go to both Leicestershire County and Caribbean Cricket Clubs for offering their services for free and enabling some of our young people to participate in this sport that they love so much, along with the UASC Virtual School team who organised and supported the events.



Sports festival

Even the scorching 27-degree weather couldn't put off the 19 young people who attended the Sports Festival at Loughborough University on June 19th. The event organised by Active Together was again jam packed with noncompetitive sporting activities. Once our All Stars were kitted out with their T-shirts, drawstring bag and of course a water bottle, we were ready to compete!

Active Together state, "over the course of the last year, Active Together have begun to work with the Leicestershire Virtual School to develop the sporting provision for children in care. Active Together are committed to continuing to develop this relationship with the Virtual School to ensure the sustainability of opportunities for this group of young people in the future."

The event began with the usual opening ceremony where we all limbered up to some banging tunes and a Zumba session. As the weather was so warm we headed inside to the Tennis Centre, our venue for the day. Laid out were the day's activities which included seated Volleyball, Wheelchair Basketball, Archery and Bowling. Wheelchair Basketball was amazing with school staff taking part too. Active Together even offered to bring the activity into local schools!

Again, this year the team doubled in size, which is amazing, one young person even commenting that they had waited all year for the email to come through. We encourage all carers to come along and support their young person. This is truly a great event, and we get young people returning every year.



Youth sport trust

This year we partnered with the YST to deliver bespoke trauma informed training to all of their Athlete mentors across the country. We have delivered across all regions to ensure all athlete mentors working in schools have the basic understanding of Attachment and trauma informed awareness so that they can best support the young people they work with.



One of our young people has been awarded the young changemaker of the year award through the Youth sport trust, recognising the biggest turn around through support. We are incredibly proud of this young person and this achievement!

Care to Dance



This academic year we have continued with our partnership with Care to Dance where our young people have gained dance qualifications, participated at events and celebrations and expanded the programme through pupil voice to enhance the offer of dance. We were even recognised through the Pearson National Teaching Awards for our partnership working and the impact we have for our young people. We have several of our young people also taking part in the intensive training programme, looking to bridge that gap between Care to Dance and mainstream dance opportunities. Please see attached report.



Link to the young person's voice video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq9vR50m1Zk>

Impact report for intensive pilot programme



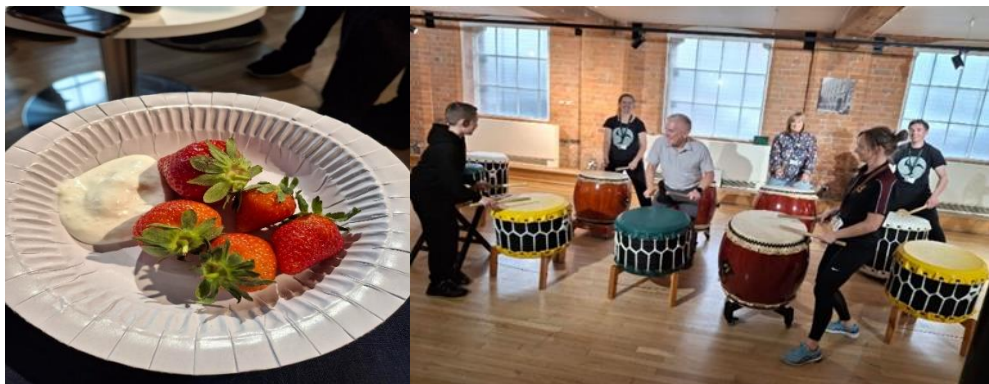
Year 6 Taiko Drumming Project

Who knew that drumming could be so much fun?

Bullfrog Arts, headed up by Juliet, Jake and Rory ran two sessions for Y6s to help with their transition to secondary school.

We didn't know what to expect when we arrived at the Hinckley Atkins Building. But after a warm-up game of giant Jenga, which the children loved, we were led to our drums. Such an assortment of drums of different shapes and sizes, all of which we got to try. After hearing a bit of background information on how to hold our sticks (bachi), we picked up some Japanese words to follow instructions and followed some simple rhythms. We played a few 'call and response' rounds to build confidence and then we were making up our own rhythms for the rest of the group to follow as well as a few challenges which had the school staff concentrating just as much as the children. We even watched an amazing performance by Kate during one session.

During the break, a basket full of different fruits was presented and the children enjoyed trying new ones. Strawberries and cream went down very well. The amazing leaders asked us some questions about drumming and the fruit and gave us some background information on Taiko, which gave everyone a chance to get to know each other a bit. After the welcome break, we were back on the drums, this time moving quickly from one drum to another and playing one of two rhythms depending on which side we were on. The highlight at the end of the two sessions I think for the children was the performance to our 'pretend' audience and the bow we took. Everyone left feeling more confident and eager to try more Taiko and we were all given a lovely t-shirt to keep. Some of the children were pleased to hear that Bullfrog Arts will be coming into their new schools next year so they can build on their Taiko skills.



Staff involvement



Circle of Adults training Music research project The impact of the ARTs nationally Training with NAVSH The stepping forward Arts programme launch

The Virtual school love to get involved in participation, meeting and supporting our young people and attending training events to deepen our knowledge. Here are some of the events we have taken part in this academic year.

Careers fair

We ran another careers fair this year, that turned out bigger and better than the last. Lots of our young people turned up to speak to various colleges, employers and support offers.



SYPAC

SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care) is a monthly social meet up for care leavers. The young people get consistent staff, engage with each other in games and activities, input into council business and policy and can access EET opportunities and advice through myself and other visitors who attend meeting throughout the year. There are regular young people who come and have been doing so for many years which means that there is no upper age limit, and we have members beyond 25yrs who find the monthly sessions incredibly valuable and important. The sessions help to alleviate loneliness particularly for those young people who are living independently. By ensuring the VS have input there have been many opportunities to encourage and advise young people to engage in education, employment, and training. For example, one young person remains at college and is aiming to achieve her English and Maths at Level 2 post 25, greatly improving her employment opportunities. Another young person has agreed to come to a pre-employment programme in the hope of working towards an apprenticeship in the future and after attending this has not only signed up to attend adult education and further study English and Maths but is also undertaking work experience. There are also 2 young people who took part in an NHS employability programme successfully and have started a period of work experience through this. The membership of the group evolves regularly, and young people get to share experiences and friendships that last and support each other.

Leicester City in the Community



We have been working with Leicester City in the Community again over the last academic year to offer additional mentoring and support for some of our young people. Over the last 2 years, we have supported 20 young people through the mentoring offer. Mentors support young people in our schools and offer a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for our young people in care. Alongside this, they offer enrichment activities, in which 36 young people engaged in. 27 of our young people then went on to other pathways including camps and kicks. As part of our offer, we were able to offer match day tickets to our young people throughout the season and some even got the opportunity to be a flag bearer! 8 young people with their Carer got to attend throughout the year to premier league men’s matches, as well as a group of 20 young people attending the Women’s game.

Enrichment

Month	Enrichment	YP Attended
June 2023	Seagrave Training Down Visit	15
August 2023	Gulliver's Land Theme Park	1
	Curve Theatre	1
	Bowling	2
	Activity Day at King Power	2
January 2024	DMH Panto	1
February 2024	Leicester Riders Basketball Match	4
March 2024	Activity Day at King Power	1
April 2024	West Midlands Safari Park	1
May 2024	Residential	1
June 2024	Seagrave Training Ground Visit	5
July 2024	Residential	1
August 2024	Transition Camp	2
	Ninja Warrior	2
October 2024	Alton Towers	1
November 2024	E-sports and Movie Night	1
December 2024	Wellbeing Event	1
February 2025	Skate Camp, Go Karting, Graffiti Workshop and Residential	TBC

Book Parcels

2045 books have been sent out by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library scheme on our behalf to children in care aged 0 to 5. 979 books have been sent out by the Virtual School to the primary school aged pupils.



We have been incredibly proud of our book clubs which have been in place since 2007! We recognise how important children's reading skills to access learning across the curriculum is. We know how much our children have enjoyed receiving the monthly parcels over the years. Last year due to budgets we had to cease our Letterbox packages, but we continued to ensure children from reception to year 6 received a bimonthly parcel. It is with real sadness that we have now had to stop the parcels for our Primary aged children. This is due to a staff member leaving and tight budgets. The increase in the number of children in care, along with the increased cost of providing high quality parcels to every child has increased year on year. We are encouraging schools to subscribe to letterbox using the PPP so children can still receive book parcels.

We are delighted that the Dolly Parton Imagination Library are still providing books to all looked-after children aged 0 – 5 years.

I like the books we get because they are fun to read

They give me a lot of books - I find the books interesting. Dottie Detective are my favourites - I've got all of the series.

Reading them, learning new things

Loves getting a parcel and they are cool because you get to read them.

I get to read books that I've never read before.

Plans for 2025/2026

Care to Dance

We are delighted to share that we are running the Care to Dance programme for another full year starting in September, after the success of our last three 12-month programmes. This is an exciting opportunity for our young people to continue this journey, with the added option of completing their dance leadership award as part of the programme and take dance to the next level with our new additional programme running alongside the core offer.

Leadership training development

We have developed a new leadership training offer for Head teachers and senior leaders, to support them in embedding a trauma informed ethos and culture across their schools. This will be rolled out from September.

Year of belonging; through the lens

Next academic year we will conclude our project with a photography exhibition at the Highcross in the Autumn term, along with a photo album to showcase all our young people photography.

Theatre partnership with Curve and Leicester City Virtual School

We are joining up Leicester City Virtual School and booking our private production for Christmas! Watch this space...

Careers event

We are busy planning our next Careers event at the King Power Stadium and hope to have a range of providers and business' who will attend to share their expertise, offer and jobs for our young people.

Coram Shakespeare pilot

We are working in partnership with Coram Shakespeare to launch a pilot project with e Multi Academy trust, engaging young people in drama. More details in the new academic year.

Germany Arts exchange

We are taking part in our first ever residential abroad! Some of our young people will be going to Germany on an Arts and Culture exchange!

[2025-2026 priorities/ action plan](#)

The VS Service Delivery Plan reflects the ambitions and ethos of the Children and Family Service Departmental plan. The priorities and actions underpinning them are under constant review throughout the year. We aim

- i. To raise the aspirations of and for looked-after children (LAC) and previously looked-after children (PLAC)
- ii. To narrow progress and attainment gaps
- iii. To improve stakeholders' understanding of the educational needs of children in care and those adopted from care and strengthen their support of education
- iv. To ensure the views of children and young people are heard, recorded, and inform decisions regarding their education.
- v. To maintain a resilient, vibrant, informed, and knowledgeable team
- vi. To work strategically to improve outcomes and support for all children with a social worker

National developments in the education landscape will always have implications for virtual schools and their support for vulnerable children. Amongst these are the development of PPP funding for post-16, the SEN Review, social care reforms and the Childrens Wellbeing bill.

Donna Chapman
Virtual School Head,
Leicestershire Virtual School,
Children and Family Services,
Leicestershire County Council.

This page is intentionally left blank