

The improvement plan for the Hertfordshire Virtual School 2017-18

Virtual School Priorities 2017-18

To be ambitious for the educational outcomes for children looked after and care leavers:

1. To support and challenge schools and other educational settings so that the progress and achievement of children looked after (CLA) and care leavers is promoted:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of PEPs
- Ensure that all schools attended by CLA complete the revised CLASEF for 2017-18
- Compile a report on the use of Pupil Premium Plus from CLASEF 2016-17 and circulate to all schools and DfE to share best practice
- Improve partner's understanding of the challenges to learning success e.g. poor behaviour and poor well-being, through training on:
 - ❖ FASD
 - ❖ Attachment and Trauma
 - ❖ Harmful sexualised behaviour

2. To use good quality data from all education establishments and evidence from research to improve CLA and care leaver's progress and inform precision intervention:

- Improve the Virtual School access to high quality educational data from schools using the ePEP
- To use technical innovation to improve tracking of academic progress and achievement
- Develop targeted interventions to improve achievement and attainment at the end of Key Stages

3. To build the capacity of stakeholders and partners to prioritise the educational progress of children and young people looked after:

- To encourage schools and colleges to train all staff for a whole school approach to the understanding of attachment theory – Attachment Aware schools and PALAC (Promoting the achievement of looked after children – UCL)
- To review, update and deliver training courses for all partners: carers, School Governors, social workers and teachers
- To focus on support for transition for CLA at all regular or in-year points to provide better support for continued progress

4. To promote effective joint working practice through leadership and partnership with all relevant stakeholders:

- To embed the 'Outcome Bees' framework to ensure the aims and ambitions of the Virtual School are focused on the best possible outcomes for CLA
- To promote the Virtual School 'Offer' so that it is understood by all partners especially carers
- To develop joint working practice with colleagues from social care, SEN, health and schools through shared meetings and shadowing
- To work with the Children in Care Council (CHICC) to develop a strategy to promote educational progress for CLA and pupil voice
- To create and launch the Virtual School website that includes an on-line learning module for Designated Teachers and School Governors

The Hertfordshire 'Outcome Bees' Framework

Ensures the aims and ambitions of the Virtual School are focused on the best possible outcomes for children looked after:

Happy Learners need to:

be healthy

e.g. helping learners to adopt healthy lifestyles, build their self-esteem, eat and drink well and lead active lives

be safe

e.g. keeping learners safe from bullying, harassment and other dangers

be ambitious

e.g. enabling learners to make good progress in their work and personal development and to enjoy their education

be resilient

e.g. ensuring that learners understand their rights and responsibilities, are listened to, and participate in the life of the community



be independent

e.g. helping learners to gain the skills and knowledge needed for future employment

Appendix 3: Case Study References:

Positive Journeys for Children Looked After

Ponsbourne St. Mary's Primary School

Context

Ponsbourne St Mary's is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School which was founded in 1847. It is a small village school and consequently the school is able to get to know its children and families very well creating a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Children aged 3-11 are taught in four mixed age classes. The stated mission of the school is to provide a planned, exciting and relevant learning environment in which all participants are welcomed and valued, as part of a Christian ethos.

Brief description

The role of the Designated Teacher is carried out by the Headteacher. The governor for CLA meets informally with the DT weekly. This governor is a member of the curriculum committee, where progress of CLA is discussed. Half termly pupil progress meetings ensure pupil progress is monitored closely.

The school encourages all children to choose their own level of challenge. Teaching to promote a growth mind-set is well-embedded in the school. Discussion and encouragement allows children who choose a challenge below their capabilities to develop a growth mind-set as opposed to a fixed mind-set which results in children challenging themselves appropriately. This has worked extremely well to meet the needs of more able disadvantaged pupils including children looked after.

Talk partners are changed each week and are randomly selected giving pupils opportunities to interact with a range of peers, building relationships and developing social communication skills.

The ability of the school to forge good relationships with parents has been evident in the good relationship which has been built with a local foster carer. This relationship began from reception when a child looked after started the school and the school had their first contact with their foster carer. A small reception class with a specific key person supporting, led to a good start to school allowing 1:1 support to be gradually withdrawn. Attachment training for staff built capacity and enhanced understanding and added to the nurturing approach provided for all children. Older children in the school also were seen to nurture and support CLA.

Targeted interventions such as Lego therapy create a balance between vulnerable learners, including CLA, who have poor empathy and others, creating the conditions to learn relationship skills. This has allowed the strengths of vulnerable learners to be celebrated e.g. leadership as well as supporting CLA to take different roles in group work e.g. observer as well as leader, relinquishing control with support. The school also provides a Forest Schools experience, which it feels is important to support the development of well-being, resilience and creativity in their learners.

A variety of universal systems support the inclusive ethos of the school. A family forum has been in operation for this academic year. All children are included and this is led by children from year 6. One asks questions and one note takes. An adult is present but takes a back seat. The discussion is topic based and is reactive to school issues and the school development plan giving all children, including CLA, a voice. Lesson study and lesson observations also include children's voice.

All school policy considers the needs of all children including CLA, to ensure that the focus is on child-centred learning, building what the school refers to as the 6 Rs: resilience, responsibility, reflectiveness, respect, good use of resources and reasoning. School systems lend themselves to tracking progress in the 6 Rs as well as in national curriculum areas providing a holistic view of progress.

Healthy Schools accreditation has been achieved and the school has a clear vision to develop PHSE in school which is improving year on year.

Impact

CLA at Ponsbourne St Mary's are making good progress both socially and academically. CLA are exceeding age-related expectations in all areas and have passed the phonics screening test.

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Positive Journeys for Children Looked After

Astley Cooper Secondary School

Context

The Astley Cooper School, an 11-18 Co-operative Trust school on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. The East Dacorum Co-operative Learning Trust was established by Adeyfield School, The Astley Cooper School and Longdean School. Since coming into existence in July 2014, the Trust has already begun to develop a number of projects that will support the schools and the communities they serve. The Trust board is made up of representatives from Roundwood Park School, BP, Rotary Club, The University of Hertfordshire, Lloyds Banking Group, The Co-operative Society and Herts for Learning. Over the last two years, there have been significant improvements in the work of the school that were recognised in the Ofsted inspection in 2016 that graded the school as Good overall but outcomes for pupils requires improvement. It is an inclusive school providing opportunities for students of all abilities. The school has high expectations of the students and student aspiration is rising.

Brief description

The role of the Designated Teacher is carried out by a member of the senior leadership team who is an assistant Headteacher. There is a governor for CLA. Half termly pupil progress meetings ensure pupil progress is monitored closely. The school fund through Pupil Premium Plus, an additional tutor for Mathematics for year 11 students who works at the school one day a week. Other bespoke interventions are arranged as a result of the outcome of discussion during the Personal Education Planning meeting and in consultation with the attached Virtual School Education Adviser, student and social worker

In 2016-17 Astley Cooper School had two year 11 CLA students both of whom had been at the school from Year 7, and both are in settled long term foster placements. Both were targeted for Grade 4/5 in English and Mathematics. They were supported by the school with English tuition, and revision classes. Both received tuition in Mathematics from the Virtual School tutor.

Pupil A struggled with focus and working memory and has a long standing difficulty in Mathematics (borderline Dyscalculia). She had achieved a low Grade 2 in Mathematics at the end of year 10 and through intervention and tuition managed to raise this to a 3 by the Mock exams and a 4 in the final exam.

In English Language she was working comfortably at a Grade 5 at the end of year 10 and achieved a Grade 6 in the externally moderated mock exam. She suffered considerable emotional stress in the run up to the exam and unexpectedly achieved a Grade 2 overall in English Language – she has explained that she had a ‘melt down’ in the exam. She passed seven GCSEs at ‘C’ or above including Grade A in Art and has been accepted into sixth form to study A levels and a Btec. She achieved a 4 in English Literature and did not need to re-sit English Language. She did however, sit a re-take in November 2017 and passed her English Language at level 5

Pupil B had really poor motivation throughout his school career. He very reluctantly attended the tuition that had been arranged for him. He attended Virtual School ‘Step up’ events and once he had identified the course that he wanted to do at College he had a sudden last minute surge of determination. From Easter 2017 he began to engage with his tutors and to attend revision courses and he achieved the five A*-C that he needed for college including Mathematics and English at Grade 5.

Impact

One of the students remains at the school and is studying in the 6th form and the other is attending a college of Further Education. Both are making good progress.

CLA at Astley Cooper School are making good progress both socially and academically. CLA are meeting age-related expectations and because support and intervention is consistently offered, they are able to respond when they feel able and motivated to do so.

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