REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting:	15ʰ June 2016
Subject:	**INFORMATION REPORT** - Harrow Virtual School Attendance Report December 2015
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Chris Spencer Corporate Director Children and Families
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Christine Robson Children, Schools and Young People
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out:
- A summary of Harrow's Children Looked After school attendance figures for Autumn and Spring Terms 2015-16
- An analysis of the DfE National Data over the last 4 years

Corporate Parent Panel members are requested to :
Note the performance of Harrow's CLA in relation to their attendance.

Harrow**COUNCIL**
LONDON

Section 2 – Report

2. Introduction

Virtual Schools nationally have a pivotal role in improving the educational outcomes for Children Looked After (CLA). The role of the Harrow Virtual School is to:

- champion the educational needs of CLA, wherever they are being educated by supporting, scrutinising and challenging key partners in their education
- drive up standards of CLA educational achievement in order to improve their life chances and overall outcomes.
- monitor and track the attainment, progress, attendance and engagement of every pupil in the school
- develop strategies and approaches that accelerate the progress of CLA, raising their standards of attainment and thereby closing the achievement gap between them and their peers
- disseminate good practice, by raising the level of awareness amongst schools, social work teams and carers regarding the importance of good attendance, potential barriers to learning and pupil engagement with the wider curriculum
- raise aspirations for all CLA and Care Leavers; so they are aware of their choices regarding further and higher education, apprenticeship opportunities and routes to gainful employment

3. Attendance

3.1 Harrow Virtual School (HVS) commissions a company, Welfare Call, to monitor the attendance and exclusions of CLA students. Welfare Call contacts schools daily to ensure that student attendance is tracked closely. The Virtual School Education Welfare Officer (EWO) receives and responds to this information and provides early intervention to prevent situations escalating.

3.2 At the time of this report there were 102 pupils of Statutory School Age in HVS. 25.5% (26 out of 102) students have been identified as having absences causing concern, that is an absence percentage figure of 90% or lower (See Section 3.7).

3.3 65.3% (17 out of 26) pupils with poor attendance are educated outside of Harrow LA. This is too high and actions are in place to address this (See section 7.)

3.4 The ratio of girls to boys with poor attendance is almost equal, currently standing at 46:54.

3.5 The total absence percentages across the school by Key Stage for the 26 pupils with persistent absence are as follows:

Key Stage	EYFS	1	2	3	4
Number of Pupils and Percentage	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (7.7%)	19 (73%)

3.6 All pupils are monitored by HVS from their point of entry into care, which will inflate the percentage of pupils with poor attendance. The Department of Education (DfE) , only monitors pupils who are on a school roll and have been in care 1 year or longer. (See Section 4). The published DfE figures will therefore be much lower, thus giving the authority a much healthier data set.

3.7 HVS Attendance Monitoring of 26 persistent absentees: Autumn and Spring Terms 2015-2016

Year group	Local authority where young person attends school	Attendance % (i.e time in school or education)	Education Synopsis and Virtual School Intervention
11	Brent	<5	X was in a young offender's institute and prior to that was not attending school. X has had a careers interview and has been in care for less than a year.
10	Hounslow	<5	X has been absconding and became involved in crime, which has now resulted in X being sent to a Young Offenders institution where X is now accessing education.
11	Haringey	22	X has refused to attend school over a period of time. A specialist provision was sort for X and home tuition has been made available but X consistently refused to engage. X had to change placements in March.
11	Harrow	22	X has been refusing to attend the school where X is on roll. 1 to 1 tuition has been arranged to take place at home, as well as 1 to 1 at an alternative learning provision. This education package offers core subjects with work experience. Initially X agreed to participate and attendance has been sporadic. Career interviews have also been arranged for X.
11	Wigan	23.8	X has not been engaging with education for a long period of time. X has begun to engage and attendance is gradually improving. X has an EHCP.

9	Shropshire	29	X is placed out of borough; X was not on roll for the first 12 weeks of term and attended an assessment centre. X is now at school and has been looked after for less than a year.
11	Tendring (Essex)	33.5	X absconded from placement for a period of time. This lead to a breakdown of the placement. The placement was eventually restored but X had to go to an alternative provision to complete year 11. Since attending the alternative provision attendance has been good.
10	Tendring (Essex)	34.9	X absconded from placement for a period of time this lead to a breakdown of the placement. The placement was eventually reinstated, and after negotiation by the Virtual School the previous school has taken X back and attendance is good since X returned.
11	Harrow	35	X was not on roll for the first 15 weeks when coming in to care as a UASC. Since being in school attendance has not been a concern. X has been looked after for under a year.
10	Conwy (Wales)	52.3	X has been moved to a specialist placement in Wales and attendance has improved. X has been looked after for less than a year.
10	Southampton	54	X has an EHCP. Last year X was moved from the special school to a mainstream school. Attendance recently has been going down. The Virtual School has visited the school and the situation is beginning to improve. The Virtual School will also attend the SEN review.

11	Harrow	55	X was managed moved from a main stream school to a PRU. School felt that there are unresolved mental health issues which are preventing X from engaging with education. A plan was made with school and reviewed on a weekly basis but this has had limited success due to X preferring to stay with a sibling who is living in East London. Attendance is sporadic.
11	Harrow	61	X was living in Croydon but it was felt for consistency that X should remain at the alternative learning provision in Harrow. X has recently moved to Hounslow and attends school sporadically. School are still working with X and school has been a constant in X's life. Regular visits are made by the Virtual School to discuss what can be done for X. X has been looked after for less than a year.
10	Harrow	68.5	X was refusing to attend school at the beginning of the academic year as X did not want to attend a PRU and wanted to go back to a mainstream school after having been permanently excluded from X's previous school. The Virtual School supported the application by writing supporting letters and meeting with the headteacher. The Virtual School now attends regular meetings at the school to support the transition and after a trial basis is now at the school permanently. X has also moved recently to a new placement. Attendance is improving at the new school.
10	Thanet	71	X had to move out of borough. Since going on roll X has been engaging well with education. X has been looked after for less than a year.
1	Enfield	71	X has a serious life limiting illness which affects attendance at school. X attends a special school and has an EHCP.

R	Brent	71	X was not on roll for the first 4 weeks of the academic year which accounts for the low attendance figure. X became of statutory school age in the Summer term.
11	Harrow	72	Attendance is poor when X spends time with birth parent. Attendance has started to improve as X is beginning to adhere to the plan of staying with the carer during the school week.
11	Brent	74	X was absent for the first week of term. Since then attendance has been improving.
4	Nuneaton and Bedworth	78	X has an EHCP and attends a special school. Absences are due to illnesses and medical appointments. X has been looked after for less than a year.
10	Lichfield	81.9	X has been moved out of borough to a specialist provision. Attendance is now improving.
R	Suffolk	83	X was had 2 weeks of illness which is the reason for the low attendance.
11	Harrow	84	X is on roll at a PRU and attending a college. Initially X did not like the education course on offer. X was encouraged to embark on the course and is now making progress in terms of attendance and educational progress.
7	Hertfordshire	84.5	X was not on roll for the first 2 weeks of term which is why attendance is below 90%
11	Harrow	86	X is an unaccompanied asylum seeker. X was not enrolled until 23rd September which accounts for the low attendance. Attendance has been good since being at school. X has been looked after for less than a year.
R	Harrow	89.4	X has had a total of 8 days illness since becoming looked after in October. X became statutory school age at the start of the Summer term.

4. National Data

4.1 The DfE defines percentage absence of 90% or less as persistent absence (PA). This is measured across an academic year. The table below (Section 4.4) shows Harrow data for 'Missed Sessions' and PA from 2012 to 2015. Comparisons are made, where data exists, with Statistical Neighbours (SN) and England.

4.2 The data represents CLA who have in care after 1 year plus at 31st March and who are enrolled at a school. Harrow has maintained a steady improvement in attendance for ' sessions missed' over the past 4 years with a small increase of 1.3% in 2015. Our attendance figures is above the England Average and our SN, which analytically represents a downward trend. (See table 4.4)

4.3 PA for Harrow CLA is suppressed. Our data represented by the letter 'X' for cohort numbers less than or equal to 5 or percentages where the numerator is less than or equal to 5 or the denominator is less than or equal to 10.

 4.4 Table showing attendance data for CLA

5. Updates from January's Report: School Attendance from 1 September 2015 to 31 March 2016

	Harrow 2012	Harrow 2013	England Average 2013	SN Average 2013	Harrow 2014	England Average 2014	SN Average 2015	Harrow 2015	England Average 2015	SN Average 2015
Percentage of sessions missed. (CLA 1 year+)	7.8	4.4	4.4	4.18	4.3	3.9	4.28	5.6	4.0	4.2
Percentage classed as persistent absentees (CLA 1 year+)	x	x	5	6.10	x	4.7	8.13	x	4.9	4.8

- During this period there has been some degree of fluctuation with the number of pupils on our school roll. 23 children have become looked after (this includes two sibling groups of 5 children) and 11 children have left care.

- Of the 79 education meetings undertaken by the Virtual School since September 2015, 39 of these (48.1%) have related to pupils placed outside of Harrow local authority.

- Whilst the Virtual School continues to prioritise our pupils educated outside of Harrow, the pressing needs of our pupils placed in Harrow still needs to be preserved.

- Where school visits have been made by the Virtual School there has been a marked improvement (see table 3.7) on pupil attendance and engagement with education, for example

    o Social workers and foster carers have worked in partnership with the Virtual School to explore a range of strategies that will promote good school attendance, for instance 'Contact time' in a small number of cases has been rearranged so it does not impact on the school week; arranging medical appointments during the school day is also discouraged.

    o Schools have also been creative in their use of the Pupil Premium Grant to support pupil participation, to include, but not exhaustive using specialist staff for interventions such as play therapy or counselling, utilising local alternative learning provisions, arranging work experience days for key stage 4 pupils and offering lessons at home

6. School Attendance: Common Themes

- New cases with complexities, particularly around suitable care placements may, unintentionally delay a pupil starting school
- The small peak of emergency care placements over the last 2 terms, has made it difficult to forward plan in terms of the education provision and this has contributed to 'lost' school days
- A number of Key Stage Four pupils (see table 3.7) not engaging with their education plan and subsequently refusing alternative learning packages on offer.

7. Development Priorities for Attendance

- To reduce attendance percentages of all CLA upon entry to care by 50% and bring Harrow's overall absence figures in line with the national average that is, from 5.6% to 4% by July 2017

- The Education Welfare Officer will
    - meet with other Virtual Schools to share good practice in terms of new approaches and strategies to support good attendance

    - set-up a rewards system for those pupils with attendance percentages of 90% or higher

    - supported by the VHT will set up multi-professional groups within the Local Authority looking specifically at school attendance

- Virtual School Team members will prioritise pupils with poor school attendance educated outside of Harrow LA

- The Virtual School will work with key stakeholders, to avoid, where necessary 'lost' school days due to placement moves

- To continue to work closely with our local school admission's team to ensure school moves are actioned promptly avoiding any unnecessary drift or delay.

Legal Implications

The Virtual School Headteacher has a statutory responsibility to the LA Authority and the DfE for monitoring all the education of CLA and Care Leavers regardless of where they are placed. Schools leading on their education may be scrutinised, challenged and supported to improve outcomes, including attendance for this vulnerable group.

Financial Implications

The indicative budget for the Virtual School in 2016-2017 is £256k. In addition the Virtual School Headteacher is accountable for the spend of the Pupil Premium Grant and has a statutory responsibility to ensure that it is used to improve educational outcomes for CLA. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The weak performance of particular underachieving groups is a concern and the Local Authority through the Harrow School Improvement Partnership has established a 'Closing the Gap' strategy to ensure that all groups achieve in line with the high standards of achievement in Harrow. The strategy is focussed on supporting and challenging individual schools to improve the quality of their provision, so that all groups achieve well against their peers.

Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

This report provides information on the performance of underachieving groups, and as such is focused on making a difference for the vulnerable. Educational performance and standards are critical in making a difference to the life chances and aspirations of families and communities. A well educated and skilled workforce secured through quality educational provision in Harrow, contributes significantly to local businesses and industry, within and beyond Harrow.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name : Jo Frost Date: 6 June 2016	✓	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Name: Sarah Wilson Date: 3 June 2016	✓	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Ward Councillors notified:	**NO,** The information contained in this report affect all Wards
EqIA carried out:	**NO** This report is for information only. There is no decision to be made which would have an impact on the Council's Equality, Policies and Procedures.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mellina Williamson-Taylor, Head teacher, Virtual School
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Background Papers:

NONE