

**REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting
Panel**

Date of Meeting: 7 October 2020

Subject: **INFORMATION REPORT** Virtual School
Headteacher's End of Academic Year Report
2019-2020

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Paul Hewitt
Corporate Director People Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Christine Robson
Schools and Young People

Exempt: No

**Decision subject to
Call-in:** No

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: None

This report sets out:

- An overview of the Performance and Standards of Children Looked After (CLA) at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 4
- Development priorities for the Virtual School (VS) for 2020-21

Recommendations:

The Panel is requested to note the:

- Actions undertaken by the VS during the Covid-19 crisis.
- Rise in pupil numbers across the academic year.
- Ofsted Report
- Alex Timpson Attachment Award for Stanmore College.

Reasons for Recommendations:

So that Members are informed about the outcomes for CLA and can discharge their duties as appropriate.

Executive Summary

The Virtual School (VS) provides timely personalised support for all pupils in their charge. Working with our key stakeholders in education brings the very best outcomes for our children, particularly during this period of global change.

This academic year has seen a 40% rise in pupil numbers in the VS with 55% of children educated within the Local Authority. The school has a ratio of boys to girls of 3:2 respectively. School attendance was at 90.9% for the Autumn and Spring Terms.

Good quality recording in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) supported pupils across the school, and particularly in Key Stage 4 to meet their target GCSE grades. PEP returns remain excellent, at 100%.

During the disruption to schools, just over 50% of our statutory school aged (SSA) children were provided with a laptop from the Virtual School. Social care and the special educational needs (SEN) teams supported with laptops for Post-16 students.

The VS increased the tuition on offer for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) as this group was identified as being particularly vulnerable during the closure of schools.

Last November Stanmore College gained The Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award (<https://the-arc.org.uk/attachment-award>) in the Post-16 category. Our February 2020 Ofsted inspection highlighted the positive work of the Virtual School and that of our partners.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

This academic year has seen unprecedented change in the way in which we go about our daily lives and more pertinently the education of our children.

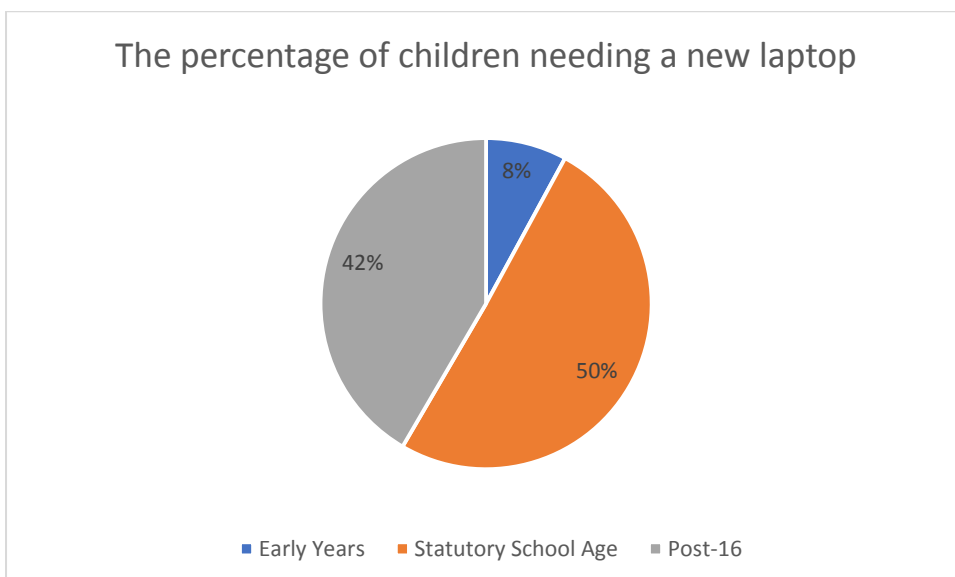
Following the Government's advice and recommendations to close schools except for vulnerable children from Monday 23rd March, the VS worked with their key partners to ensure children were supported and kept safe during this prolonged period of uncertainty during school closuresⁱ.

The VS throughout the lockdown continued to meet its statutory duties. This report sets out our immediate response to the pandemic, our continual monitoring of children's education and our priorities.

2. Response to School Closures

The VS took the following actions to ensure our CLA were not further disadvantaged by the closures of schools:

- Risk assessments, pertaining to school attendance, were conducted immediately with key partners. Across our Statutory School Aged (SSA) cohort only 25% of pupils could attend school. Nationally 20% of CLA were reported to be at school.
- An audit of laptop provision across the school was undertaken, as there became a pressing need for children to have a personal laptop for home learning.



- The VS website (www.harrow.gov.uk/virtualschool) was swiftly updated to include the following:
 - o Advice for carers on supporting home learning
 - o Enrichment and emotional well-being activities
 - o A learning platform for students from Early Years to Key Stage 4
 - o Post- 16 learning programmes
 - o Specialist programmes for EAL students
 - o Support for young people who are NEET
 - o A link to the DfE Oak National Academy and BBC Bitesize

- Face -to- face tuition moved to online teaching. In addition to this we prioritised the following students for online 1:1 tuition:
 - o English as an additional language (EAL)
 - o Year 5 and Year 10
 - o New to care
 - o Children with learning, social and emotional difficulties

- Enhanced contact by the VS with carers and social workers was put in place. Pupils were encouraged to engage in work provided by their schools. Where this was not possible, carers were signposted to specific areas of learning on our online learning platform.

- Carers needing additional support, particularly in relation to managing children and young people at home for extended periods, were

contacted by our Clinical Psychologist (CP). The advice was welcomed by carers and this has subsequently, in a number of cases, supported with placement stability.

- Our CP continued to support our most vulnerable pupils via telephone and video conferencing. The pupils concerned have found this beneficial in managing the recent changes.

3. Virtual School Context

- At the end of the academic year 2019- 20 there were 114 pupils of Statutory School Age (SSA) on roll. 60% (68/114) of SSA children have been in care 12 months or longer.
- This is an increase of 33 pupils since September 2019. The Virtual School experienced increases in pupil numbers across all phases since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Table Showing Increased Numbers across the academic year 2019-2020

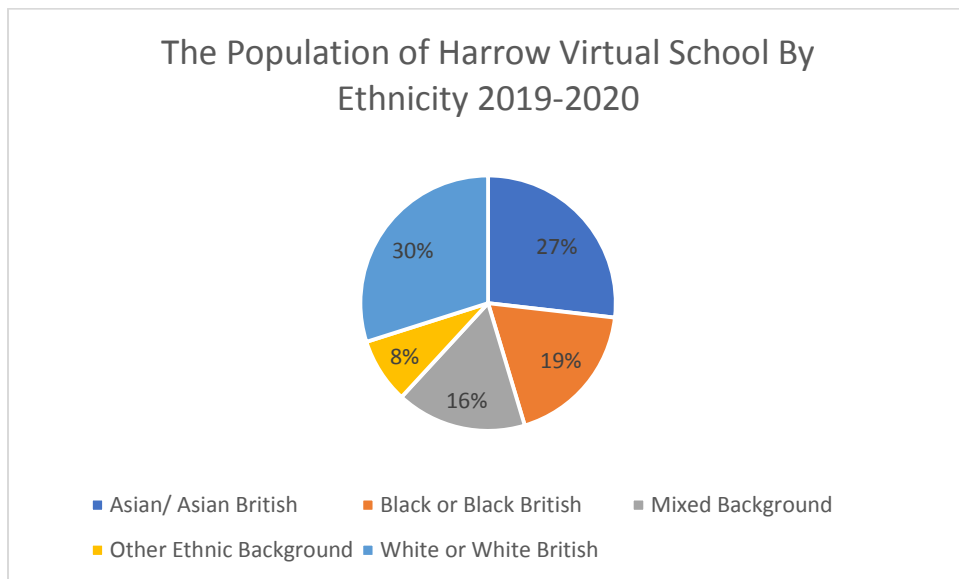
Year Group	Phase	September 2019	July 2020	Increase
11	Key Stage 4	23	33	+10
10				
9	Key Stage 3	36	45	+9
8				
7				
6	Key Stage 2	14	22	+8
5				
4				
3				
2	Key Stage 1	5	9	+4
1				
0 (Reception)	EYFS	3	5	+2
Total		81	114	33

CLA School Placements



- 45% (51/114) of Harrow's looked after students are educated outside of the Local Authority.
- 90% of Harrow CLA attend schools which are either 'good' or 'outstanding'. The map indicates the locations of Harrow's children in care.

Ethnicity



- Our largest groups are White 30%, closely followed by Asian 27%. The representation of ethnic groups has remained static over the past 2 years.

- Harrow VS continues to support our most vulnerable groups i.e. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (USAC), children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- The following strategies are deployed to support these groups of learners
 - English proficiency assessments are undertaken by our school-based EAL consultants. These reports list a range of strategies for schools to support and accelerate learning.
 - Weekly online EAL tuition is used to supplement and reinforce learning at school.
 - Robust monitoring and tracking of pupils with both SEN and EAL.
 - The Virtual School is aware of the issues which may affect some groups because of their ethnic background and will continue to monitor and support all children facing any form of discrimination.
 - Schools will be encouraged to have anti-racism programmes (where they do not exist) embedded into their curriculum.

4. Attainment 2019 -2020

In the absence of public exams this academic year the VS used robust monitoring and tracking methods to ensure that our students met their predicted grades. The summer term PEP meeting recorded the student's current attainment. All our students achieved their expected grades.

All results are to be treated as provisional until published by the DfE in March 2021. Due to this year's unique circumstances this may change.

Key Stage 1

We had two eligible students in Year 2. Both children were working just below expected standards in the Autumn Term. Neither child met expected standards across Writing, Maths and Reading. The children were given work to complete at home which would have supported their progression, but both children found it difficult to engage, despite the support provided at home. Their teachers reported that the effects of the lockdown directly impacted on their end of Year results.

Key Stage 2 (KS2)

Key Stage 2 Attainment: SATs 2020

	Harrow	England Average	London
Reading	66.7 % (1 child working at a	49%	55%

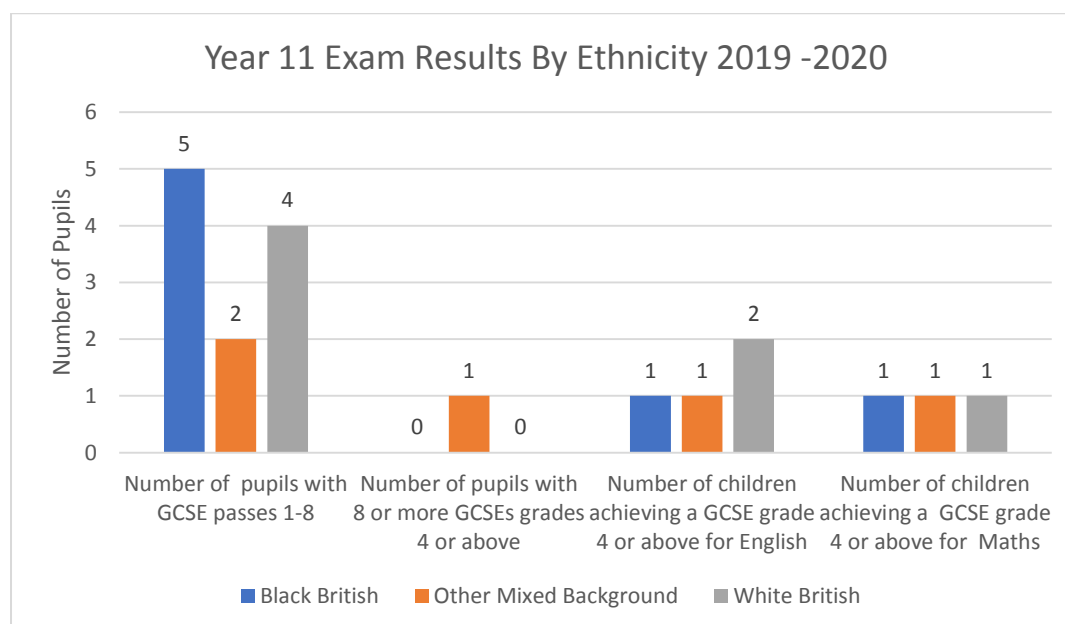
Writing	greater depth) 66.7 % 66.7 % (1 child working at a greater depth 66.7%	50%	54%
Maths		51%	57%
RWM		36%	43%

- There were 3 pupils eligible to sit the Key Stage 2 SATs in 2019.
- 1 child is working at 'greater depth' in both Reading and in Maths.
- Two children (67.7%) met expected standards across all three subjects (Writing, Reading and Maths). The England average for Reading, Writing and Maths combined is 36%. Harrow CLA (66.7%) are working well above both the England Average and the London Region (43%) for CLA for the combined subjects.

Key Stage 4 (Provisional)

In the academic year 2019-20 there were 15 students in Year 11 in care for 12 months or longer. 40% (6/15) have SEN and receive additional support at school, 20% (3/15) have an EHCP and they all attend a specialist school and 1 child has English as an Additional Language (EAL).

One student received 10 GCSEs (grades 4-8) and 2 students received 6 GCSEs (grades 4-8). All three students achieved a grade 4 or above in both English and Maths.



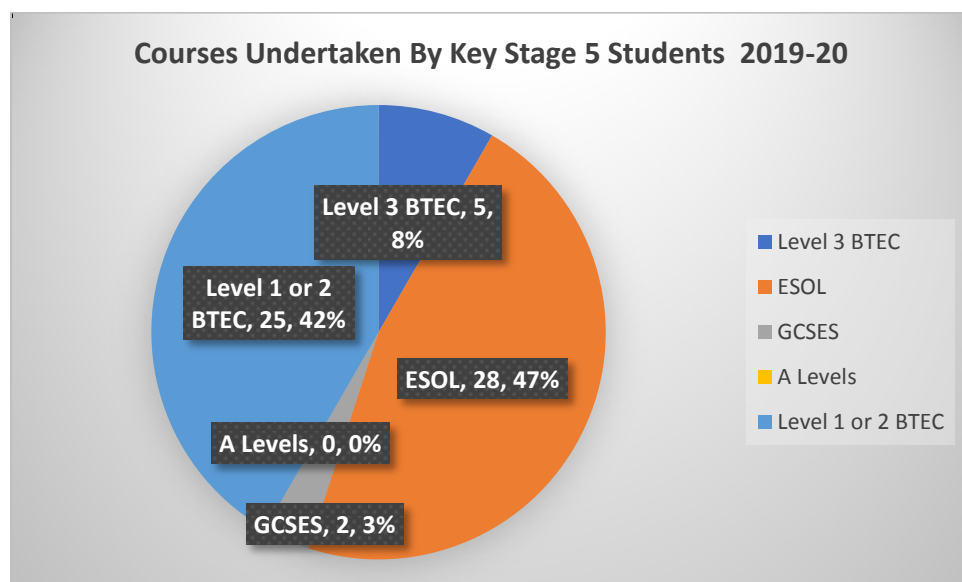
- The Other Mixed Background group achieved the highest number of good GCSE passes.
- Overall Black British (5 pupils) and White British (4 pupils) achieved the highest number of GCSE passes (grades 1-8)
- White British children performed better in terms of achieving grade 4 (or above) passes in English when compared to other groups.

It should be noted that because our cohort numbers are very small the data may show a skewed picture regarding performance against ethnicity.

Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13)

At the end of academic year 2019 -20 there were 89 students in Key Stage 4. This is an increase of 15 students from the previous year.

71% (63/89) of students were in Education, Employment and Training (EET) and 95% (60/63) of pupils that were EET were in education. Only 3 students were in employment.



- Only 1 Year 13 student is going on to university this year. A number of students in this year group are planning to attend university in September 2021 as they complete another year of study at college.
- ESOL learners are progressing through BTEC qualifications so they are ready to move to the next stage of their learning.
- There are no students in KS 5 taking A levels this academic year, 2019-2020.

- Many of our students are retaking GCSEs and other Level 2 qualifications. They will undertake higher learning when these are complete.

5. Personal Education Plans

- Since March 2020 all PEP meetings took place remotely. This has been very successful.
- The online meetings allowed the VS team to speak and see the children. Pupils' views were noted and responded to.
- A number of children reported that they missed seeing their teachers and friends. Schools kept in regular contact with our children who were learning at home.
- The VS continues to have PEP returns of 100% and all PEPs were of good or better quality.

6. Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Reception -Year 11

- In 2020 12% (14/114) of Harrow CLA had an EHCP. This is a decrease of 6% from 2018-19. Harrow CLA remain below the England average (28%) for CLA with an EHCP.
- Four children were identified as needing an educational psychologist (EP) assessment during the closure of schools. Our link EP from the Educational Psychology Service will undertake assessments in the Autumn Term.

Key Stage 5

- There were 12 students in Key Stage 5 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). 58% (7/12) of students with an EHCP were EET.
- 2 students have had assessments from our CLA Educational Psychologist. The recommendations from these assessments have been beneficial in supporting their needs both at college and in their placements.
- Pupils who are CLA and with SEN remain a priority. Overall Harrow's performance is very good in this area.

7. Ofsted

The release of our Ofsted Report coincided with and was, sadly, overshadowed by the COVID-19 lockdown news. The overall judgements were good in all areas. Ofsted made the following comments regarding the work of the VS:

The virtual school's philosophy is 'Achieving Excellence Together', with the child at the heart of the school's programmes. Education, training and employment outcomes for children in care and care leavers are good, and children achieve well across all key stages. Schools are complimentary about the support offered by the virtual school team (VST). They believe the team to be approachable and efficient. School leaders say that, often, the VST staff will go 'over and above' to support the pupils. Electronic personal education plans are detailed, focus on the key areas, and include pupil targets and the pupils' perspectives. A range of extra-curricular activities are available to support and enrich the lives of children in care.

The virtual school is proud of its achievements to date. Staff know that although attendance has improved, there is more to do. This is an area of priority. The virtual school carefully tracks the progress of all pupils and is quick to intercede should a child's attendance start to reduce. At the time of the inspection, there were six pupils with highly complex needs who, despite constant efforts by all agencies, were without a school place for several months without a resolution. (Ofsted: Inspection of Children's Service, Harrow 2020).

The VS will continue to prioritise the work of our most vulnerable children to ensure that there is no drift and delay regarding the school enrolment process.

8. Stanmore College - The Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award

- This award recognizes and celebrates best practice in attachment and trauma aware schools and settings.
- The VHT was invited to nominate a college or sixth form with good practice around CLA for the Post -16 category.
- Having reached the final round of the nomination, Stanmore College was granted the award.
- The college had also produced a video showcasing their support for CLA and Care Leavers.
- The ceremony was attended last November by the Deputy Principal of Stanmore College, our VS Advisory Teacher and the VHT.

9. Continued Professional Development

Foster Carers

- The VS now has an established foster carer network group which is attended by approximately 19 participants.
- The programme is participant lead and topics covered are based on the needs of group.

Designated Teachers (DTs)

Our annual training for DTs new to role took place in the Autumn Term. It was attended by 15 participants. The following areas were covered:

- The role of the DT
- CLA school audits
- Reporting to school governors
- Supporting the educational needs of previously looked after children
- Understanding the social and emotional needs of CLA
- Presentations by our CLA nurse, a foster carer, a DT and an IRO to highlight joint working regarding CLA

During COVID-19 we increased our online training offer for schools and started a DT forum. The first session took place in the Summer Term and will be continued in the new academic year.

10. Foster Carers

Throughout the period of the closure of schools where many of our children were then supported in their learning at home, our carers have had increased responsibilities in supporting education. Carers worked tirelessly to ensure that children were engaging with their learning and the following case studies highlights this:

Case Study 1. Reception Male.

X's carer has been a key person in supporting him to make progress in his learning and well-being. She has created a mini nursery setting in her home. For example, she has made a toy shop and set up different learning zones for him to utilise, as if he were at school. All learning is themed and she has dedicated 1:1 learning time with X so that he can practise his numbers and phonics. She has kept a daily record of his learning through pictures, so that this can be shared with the school, upon his return. Due to all of her creative ideas and close, consistent communication with the school, X is really progressing well.

Case Study 2. Year 11 Male.

X had missed lots of education prior to settling in this placement and at his current school. Since being in her care she has supported him to have excellent attendance, engage in Speech and Language Therapy Assessments and to apply for local colleges. He has made remarkable academic progress by attending tuition after school, which was encouraged by his carer. X is now at home engaging with online tuition sessions whilst social distancing. At the start of the lockdown she had frequent contact with his Designated Teacher to check that she understood the home learning tasks set by his teachers; she initiated fortnightly conference calls with his school and social worker to help put in place a plan around his education.

Case Study 3. Post-16 and Care Leavers.

Our key workers support many of our post-16 students in semi-independent placements. They have helped arrange college enrolments and support with setting up of the new laptops for UASC students who would otherwise not be able to progress their education. They continue to have regular communications with colleges and monitor the students' engagement with their online lessons.

11. Enrichment

Many of the planned enrichment activities due to take place during the Easter and Summer breaks had to be postponed due to COVID-19. The Virtual School recognised that enrichment was even more important for our students' well-being particularly during a period of sustained lockdown. By working with our providers and tweaking existing programmes our children were able to attend some of our tried and tested projects this year. Please see below:

Study and Enrichment Partnership with Harrow School

- This moved to 1:1 online tuition from May till July. There were 25, 40-minute sessions each week. Lessons also took place over half-term.
- Pupils in Years 9-12 participated in range of lessons to include English, Maths, Science and Art. One session was dedicated to career's advice.

'We Belong' by A New Direction (Virtual Afternoon Tea Feedback Session)

- This programme is targeted at Post -16 and care leavers. This was a joint venture with Harrow and Ealing Care Leavers.
- All young people brought a piece of cake or fruit and a hot drink to join in the fun
- The event highlighted some of the work the young people had taken part in over the course of the programme.
- Creativity and culture were at the heart of the activities and ranged from digital music, stop motion animation, lino drawing, fashion design and circus skills.
- The young people created a very poignant film, which expressed their views on how CLA are perceived. This valuable resource can potentially be shared for training purposes with schools and other key partners.

Exscitec - Discovery

This project focusses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Employability and Life Skills. It is targeted at pupils in Year 8 and above.

Last year our students attended Brunel University; this year it was moved due to COVID-19, to an online summer school.

- The summer school ran for 5 days during the summer holidays via Microsoft Teams.
- Resource boxes were posted to the young people beforehand at their home address.
- As a group the children made the following: Hovercrafts, BoeBots (moving robots programmed to 'dance' and move), paper bridges, slime, bath bombs, lip balms, colourful corrosives. All low concentration chemicals and protective equipment was provided.

Models made by children at home

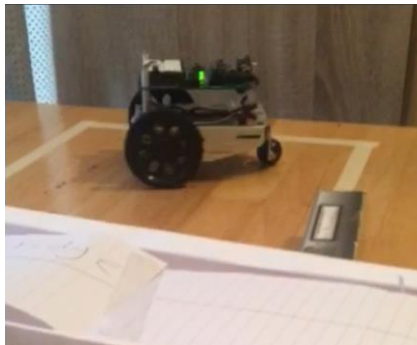


Figure 1: A BoeBot

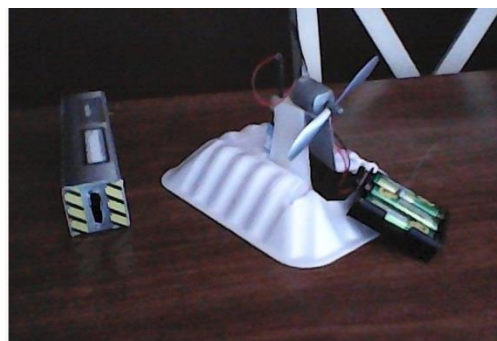


Figure 2: A Hovercraft

Equine Summer Camp

This is our second year of attending this project which has supported our CLA with managing and regulating their emotions and behaviours. With COVID 19 safety measures in place, four students attended for a week during the summer holidays.

The feedback from the students from all the enrichment activities was positive; many are keen to take part in these or similar activities again.

12. Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

The Department for Education (DfE) allocates to local authorities a provisional amount of £2345 per child looked after for at least one day, as recorded in the March children looked-after data return (SSDA903), and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August. The DfE updates and finalises this allocation in December based on the number of children looked after.

Harrow Virtual School (HVS) works to a 'child's needs driven' model which is monitored via the PEP process. The termly PEP reviews and provides evidence of PPP spend and how progress is monitored and measured. The PPP is 'top-sliced' and schools receive £1500 per child a year.

The remaining budget is used to support a range of activities and interventions to raise the attainment of CLA. This includes, but not exhaustive of the following:

- Enrichment activities for students
- Attendance monitoring
- e-PEP service
- Training for schools, social workers and carers
- 1:1 tuition
- 1:1 mentoring
- VS staffing
- Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) placements
- Pupil resources
- Top-up pupil premium of schools
- Educational Psychologist Support

13. Development Priorities.

For HVS to work effectively with schools and other key partners to raise the overall performance of CLA by closely tracking and monitoring the following groups.

Pupils:

- In Year 3 who did not meet expected standards in Writing, Maths and Reading at the end of Year 2.
- In Years 5, 6, 10 and 11 as they approach end of key stage crucial exams.
- Requiring an EP assessment so timely support and interventions are in place as soon as possible
- In Key Stage 5 as they prepare for university
- With poor attendance remains a priority for our Virtual School. Persistent Absence (9.1%) showed some improvement for the Autumn and Spring Terms.

14. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications as this report is for information purposes.

15. Financial Implications

The Virtual School is funded from a combination of general fund and Children Looked After Pupil Premium Grant. In 2019-20 the funding was as follows:

- General Fund budget £128k
- CLA Pupil Premium £274k
- Total funding £402k

16. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The weak performance of particular underachieving groups is a concern and the Local Authority through the Harrow School Standards and Effectiveness 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.

18. Council Priorities

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 9 th September 2020.		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, this is an information report only
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	N/A information report only

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Mellina Williamson-Taylor	Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School for CLA, PLAC and Care Leavers. Mellina.williamson-taylor@harrow.gov.uk 020 8416 8852
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Background Papers: None

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

*(for completion by Democratic
Services staff only)*

~~YES/NO/~~ NOT APPLICABLE*

** Delete as appropriate
If No, set out why the decision is
urgent with reference to 4b - Rule
47 of the Constitution.*

ⁱ Schools remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers.