

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	18 th July 2012
Subject:	Children Looked After (CLA) Attainment
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director, Children, Schools and Families
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Councillor Christine Bednell, Councillor Zarina Khalid, Children and Families
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Current Virtual School action plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report summarises and evaluates achievement data for Harrow Children Looked After (CLA) using the Department for Education definition of CLA – ie looked after continuously for more than 12 months on 31st March – for the last 5 academic years.

Recommendations:

This report is presented for the Committee's consideration and comment.

Context

The concept of the 'Virtual School Head' for Children Looked After was first outlined in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DCSF, June 2007) and was piloted on a national basis with 11 local authorities between September 2007 and August 2009.

It was envisaged at that time that the Virtual School Head would be;

- A senior individual working within a local authority
- Charged with ensuring improved educational achievement for this specific group
- Responsible for overseeing a coordinated system of support for children looked after
- Responsible for holding to account providers of services for children looked after (with a specific educational focus)

Harrow was not part of this national pilot but nevertheless decided to establish the post of 'Virtual Headteacher for Children Looked After (CLA)' in 2008. This post, which was part-time, was shared by three local Headteachers, each with experience of different stages and phases of education, on a secondment basis. The decision to introduce the 'Virtual School' model independently of the national pilot is evidence of the authority's long standing commitment to improving life chances for its CLA.

This system had several advantages, particularly in terms of communication with and support for other education professionals; however, when the model of provision was reviewed in 2011 it was decided to establish the role of Virtual Headteacher as a single, permanent role within the authority. As a result, a permanent appointment was made in December 2011 with an associated brief to establish a high performing 'Virtual School' for CLA, drive forward a 'step change' in local practice and performance and take the lead for coordinating a local Improvement Plan.

It was therefore imperative to make an initial review of current practice so that areas for development could be identified and prioritized. This initial review included

- Discussions with a range of staff, including the outgoing Virtual Headteachers
- Review of available data sources, means of access and methods of reporting
- Review of a sample of CLA files, including Personal Education Plan (PEP) completion
- Review of current attendance performance, including action plans produced by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)(CLA)
- Review of the current educational performance of the 2011-2012 Year 11 cohort and their predicted performance at the end of this academic year
- Discussion with the staff currently allocated to the Virtual School (PEP Coordinator, Educational Welfare Officer for CLA) regarding current practice

This initial review enabled the identification of key issues regarding current functioning and highlighted areas of practice needing to be developed further. The subsequent sections of this report will discuss those issues in more detail and describe current work.

Issues:

National guidance regarding the key responsibilities of a Virtual School Head (VSH Toolkit, DCSF 2009) states:

The three key areas of responsibility of a virtual school head for which s/he should be accountable are:

- *To make sure that there is a system to track and monitor the attainment and progress of looked after children*
- *To ensure that all looked after children have a robust and effective personal education plan and access to one-to-one support, including personal tuition where appropriate*
- *To champion the educational needs of looked after children across the authority and those placed out of authority*

This guidance provides a helpful framework for further consideration of current practice and issues arising from this.

1. To make sure that there is a system to track and monitor the attainment and progress of looked after children.

Current practice indicates that, although a great deal of data is currently collected and stored regarding attainment and progress (and, in addition, attendance and exclusion) this data is often somewhat fragmented in its collection and storage and therefore not easily accessible for the purposes of tracking and monitoring either individual pupils or groups of pupils.

For example:-

Welfare Call provides information, collected on a daily basis, regarding Harrow CLA attendance (and exclusions). Information on exclusions is always retrospective.

Framework-I has PEP's stored on individual client files; information from school (letters, information re targets/progress, school reports) may also be scanned into client files – but this practice is not consistent and information stored this way cannot be easily accessed or reported on.

EMS holds information, including Fischer Family Trust data, for children in Harrow schools (but not for Harrow children placed elsewhere)

Currently there is no effective system for collecting and collating data on CLA from other authorities in Harrow schools; systems (other than Welfare Call) are equally 'patchy' regarding CLA from Harrow placed out of Borough.

2. To ensure that all looked after children have a robust and effective personal education plan and access to one-to-one support, including personal tuition where appropriate.

Harrow's current system firmly places responsibility for initiating the Personal Education Plan process with individual social workers. Support may be available from the PEP Coordinator (requested on a case by case basis) but each caseworker must

- Arrange and attend the PEP meeting
- Complete the PEP on Framework-i
- Make the PEP available to the Independent Reviewing Officer/CLA Review.

As part of the review a 'snapshot' audit of Personal Education Plan completion took place, together with a closer examination of Year 11 pupil files. This highlighted some issues around the quality of completion and access to other information provided by the school (such as school reports).

Further development work will be needed before Harrow can confidently claim that all its CLA have a 'robust and effective personal education plan' or that individual support is being offered in all cases when appropriate.

3. To champion the educational needs of looked after children across the authority and those placed out of Authority.

The Virtual School Head in any authority carries a clear remit of both support and challenge for CLA and those professionals working with them so far as educational issues are concerned; there are three distinct groups of CLA which need to be taken into consideration;

- Harrow CLA educated in Harrow schools
- Harrow CLA educated in other authorities (including specialist settings)
- CLA from other authorities educated in Harrow schools

Discussion with the previous VHT's indicated that, up to this point, the clearest focus and greatest effort had been concentrated on the first of these three groups, with some support being offered for Harrow CLA in other authorities – usually at a point of crisis - but with much less attention being given to those CLA based in Harrow schools but belonging to other authorities.

Section 2 – CLA Attainment

1. Information on the attainment of CLA is collected by the Department for Education on an annual basis. All figures used in this report are based on the definition of CLA used by the Department.
2. Information, with comment provided in the report, covers the following areas :
 - % CLA attaining at least Level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2)
 - % CLA attaining at least Level 4 in Maths by the end of KS2
 - % CLA attaining at least 5 GCSE's (grades A*-C)
 - % CLA attaining at least 5 GCSE's (grades A*-C) including English and Maths (NI 101)

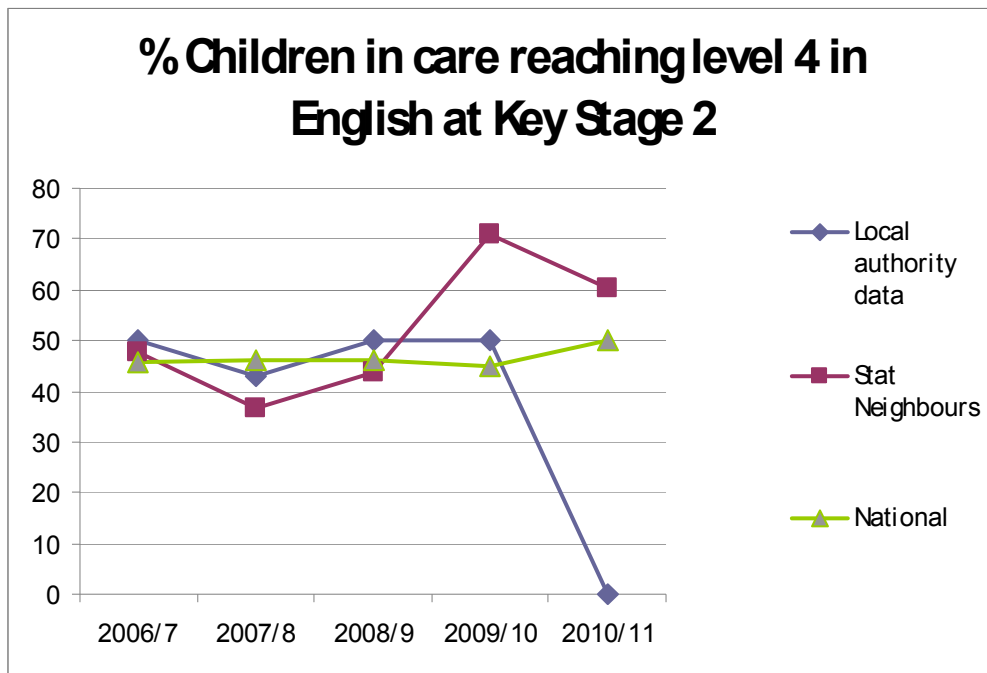
for the academic years 2006/07 to 2010/11.

3. In addition, graphs are provided which show information on

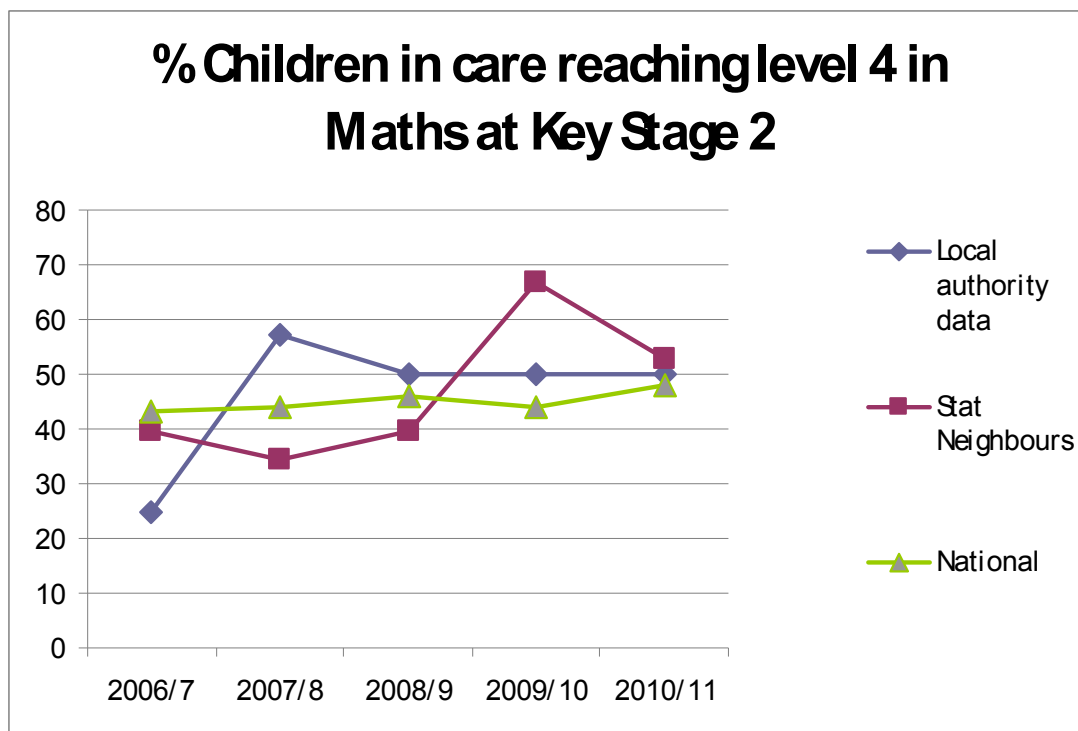
- Fixed-term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion
- Persistent absence
- Overall absence of CLA for the same five academic years.

Current situation

4. CLA attaining at least Level 4 in English at the end of KS2 (Age 11)



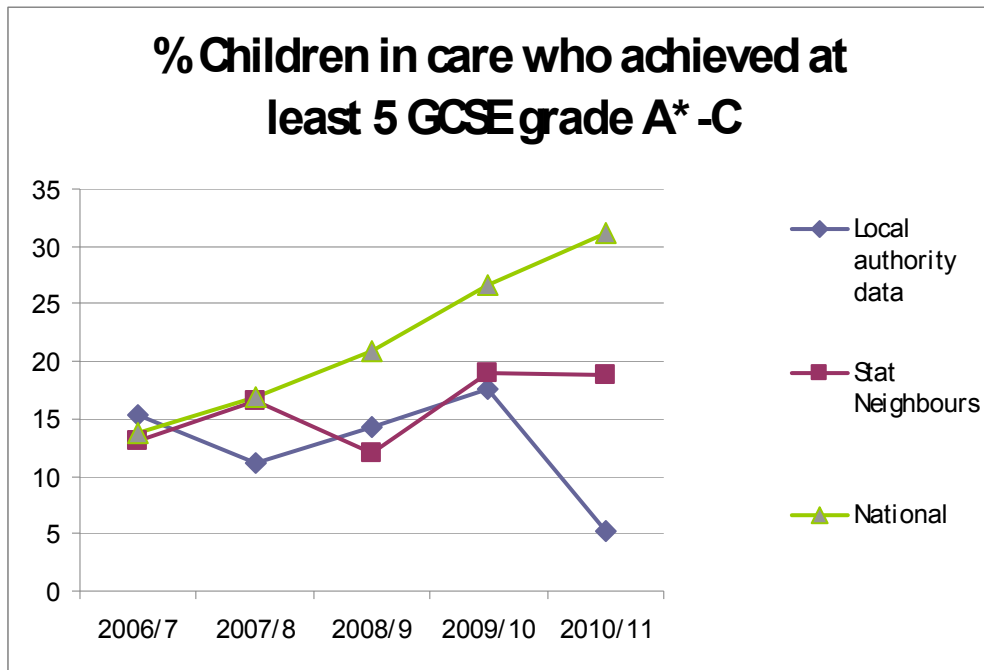
5. CLA attaining at least Level 4 in Maths at the end of KS2



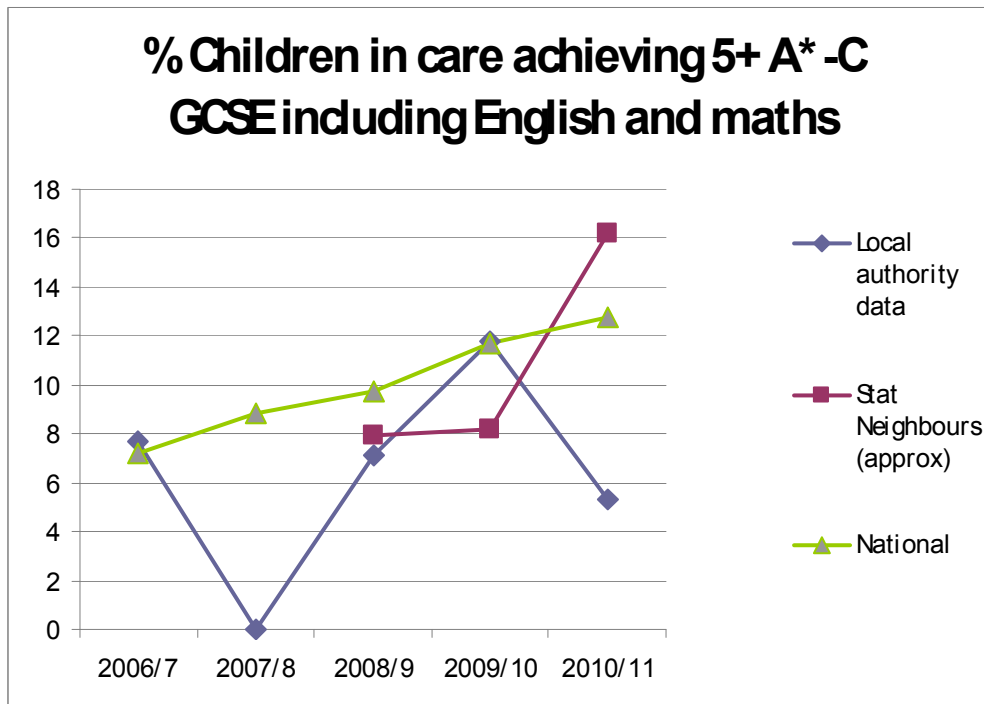
6. Commentary

- 6.1 It is difficult to clearly identify trends from year to year as the overall cohort size is so small (smallest – 2 CLA; largest – 8)
- 6.2 There are some differences between attainment in English and Maths, but it is worth noting that:
- In most academic years Harrow results are better than national figures for CLA;
 - In most academic years Harrow results are also better than those of our statistical neighbours;
 - The gap between Harrow CLA and all Harrow children remains wide; over 80% (85% for English, 83% for Maths) achieve at least Level 4 by the end of KS2 ; for CLA the average is around 50%'and;
 - Both national results and those for statistical neighbours demonstrate improvement over time. We need to maintain a clear focus on improvement for Harrow children, ensuring that appropriate intervention is used to ensure the best possible outcomes for our CLA.

7. CLA attaining at least 5 GCSE's at grades A*-C



8. CLA attaining at least 5 GCSE's at grades A*-C including Maths and English



9. Comment on attainment at GCSE level

9.1 % CLA attaining 5 GCSE's at grades A* - C

- The overall cohort size is larger for this age group than at KS2 (9 – smallest; 19 – largest) but is still relatively small
- As a result trends can be difficult to establish and are not statistically significant

9.2 The year on year fluctuations serve to highlight differences between Year 11 CLA in the Virtual School and the total Year 11 cohort in Harrow in terms of:-

- Cohort size
- Consistency of approach
- Stability of school placement
- Ability to directly influence approaches used

9.3 A relatively high number (compared with the overall cohort) of Harrow CLA were placed in specialist placements which aimed to meet specific educational or care needs. These young people were less likely to achieve success using the 'traditional' measures of GCSE grades.

9.4 The gap between Harrow CLA and all Harrow students is wide (2011 CLA; 5% - 1 student – all Harrow students: 80%) and whereas the overall cohort demonstrates a steady year on year improvement the CLA group fluctuates from year to year. It is worth noting that even with these apparently low success rates there are individual cases of very high achievement (the one student gaining 5 A* - C grades last year was also an exceptionally high achiever).

9.5 As far as statistical neighbours / national figures are concerned:

- National results indicate an increasing pace of improvement year on year
- Statistical neighbour results indicate small increases year on year heading towards 20% of CLA attaining at least 5 A*-C.

9.6 % CLA attaining 5 GCSE's at A*-C including Maths and English:

- Harrow CLA outperformed national CLA results in 2006/07 and 2009/10
- National results indicate a steady year on year improvement in attainment in small incremental steps

10. Other comments

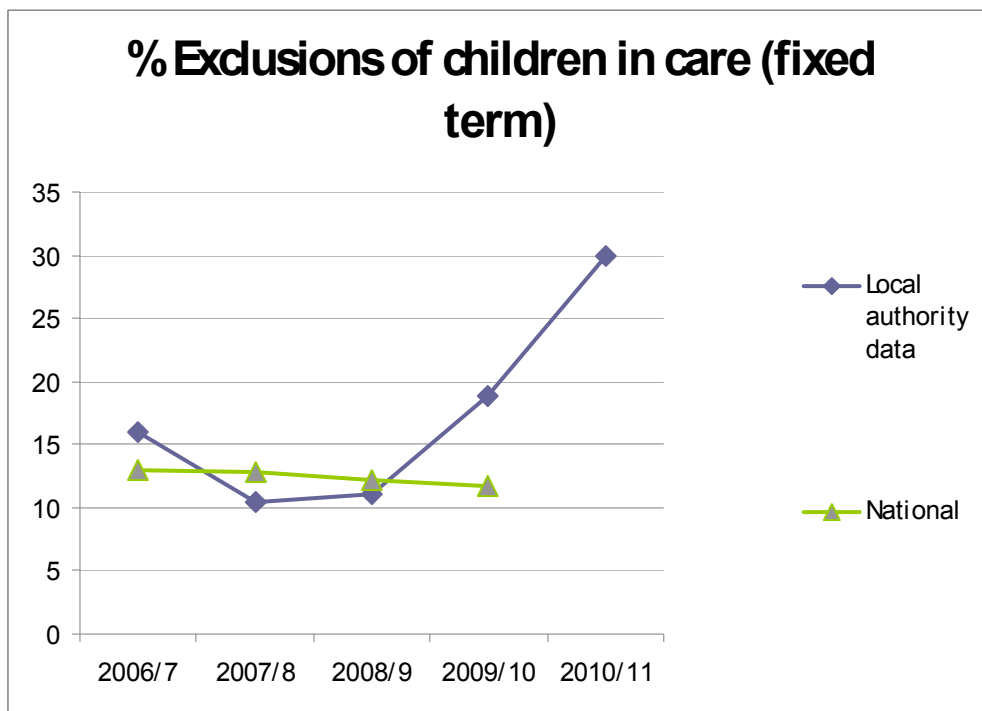
- the number of CLA in the Year 11 cohort, though relatively small, is increasing year on year

- the % of CLA gaining at least one GCSE examination (Grades A*-G) peaked in 2009; the two subsequent years show a decrease in numbers (2009 : 71% , 2011 : 59% , 2011 : 47%)
- part of this decrease may be as a result of year to year fluctuations; it may also be as a result of the increase in cohort size in this age group and a rise in numbers of pupils with defined Special Educational Needs.

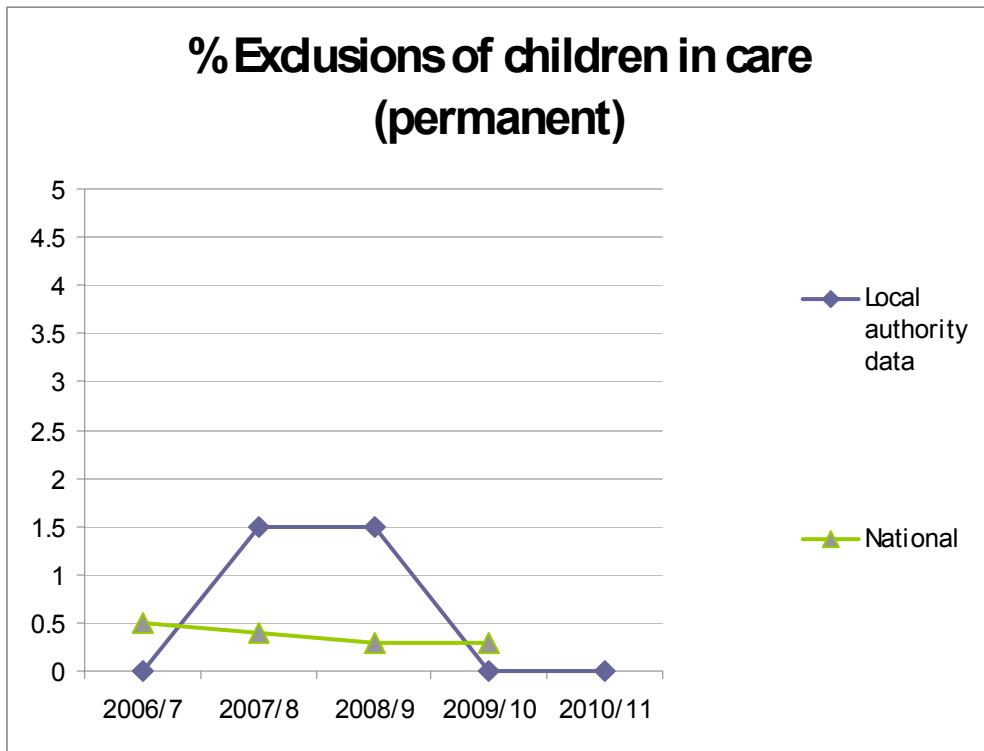
11. Other measures

The graphs below illustrate Harrow data, compared with national results and our statistical neighbours, for:

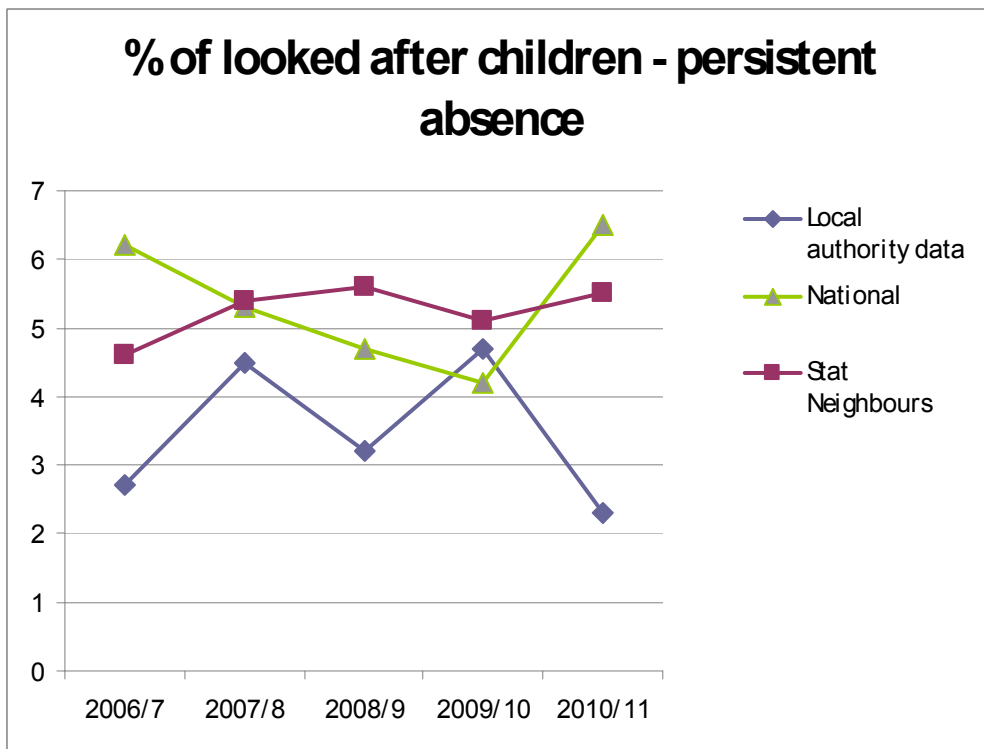
- Fixed term exclusions
- Permanent exclusions
- Persistent absence
- Overall absence of CLA for the same five academic years.

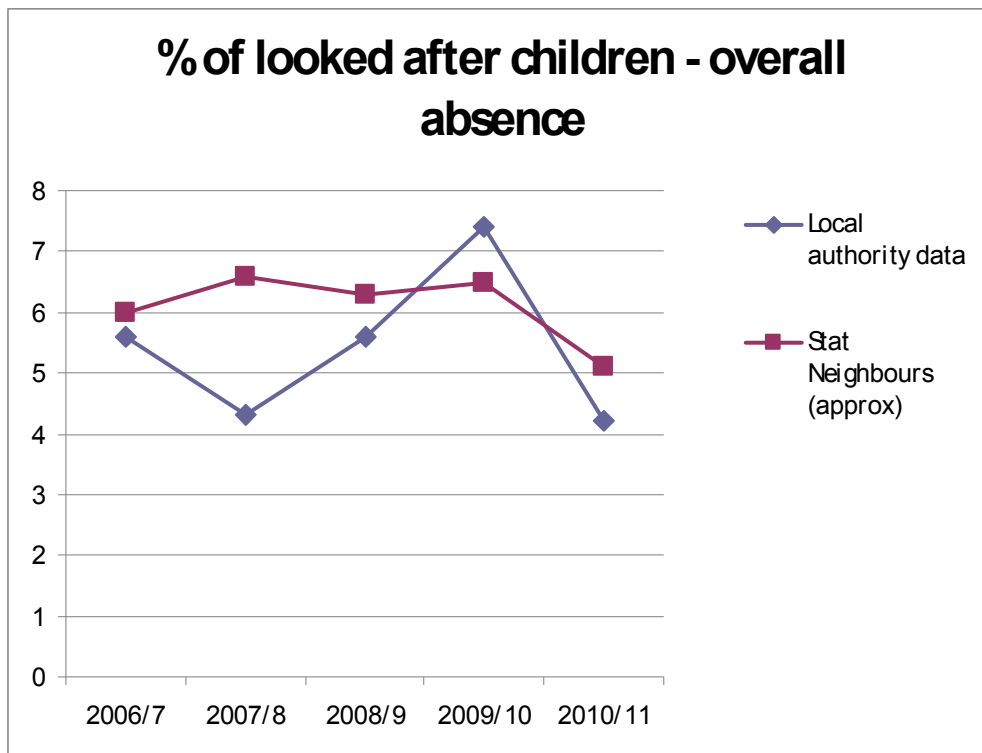


(National figures for 2010/11 not available)



(National figures for 2010/11 not available)





12. Comments – exclusion / absence data

This information has been discussed in detail elsewhere; points of note are:-

- Harrow's recent record regarding permanent exclusions is excellent and has now been maintained for two consecutive academic years
- Fixed term exclusions have risen; anecdotal evidence suggests that schools are using fixed term exclusions as a part of their discipline policy. They are also using fixed term exclusions in circumstances where other young people (i.e. not in care) might have been permanently excluded.
- Although there are fluctuations in the data from year to year Harrow generally outperforms statistical neighbours in both absence measures and national data on the persistent absence measure.

13. Conclusion

The report thus far highlights Harrow's past performance in relation to Children Looked After ; however, following the appointment of the current Virtual Head in late 2011 developments in several key areas are being undertaken , for example;

- Reviewing staff roles and responsibilities within the Virtual School
- Establishing a data set which will enable more focussed analysis of progress and achievement for both groups and individuals
- Using available funding to provide timely and targeted support for individual CLA

- Prompt intervention on behalf of individual pupils at risk of permanent exclusion
- Reviewing residential placements to ensure Harrow CLA are always placed in establishments rated 'good' or better in Ofsted inspections

This work was commented on positively by the Ofsted in the recent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children in Harrow (May 2012). The inspectors comments included:-

“Looked after children have good support for their education....”

“Good collaboration with school improvement services, strong leadership and clear management oversight has raised the profile of the virtual school, equips professionals for their roles well and provides young people with swift, flexible and focussed support that secures progress.....”

“Young people make good progress in their learning overall, they report very positively on the help they receive and they are proud of their achievements....”

These positive views, together with a Grade 2 (Good) judgement for the area of 'Enjoying and Achieving' indicate a level of confidence in Harrow's current approach to the education of its children looked after.

Financial Implications

No specific financial implications

Performance Issues

Performance issues are integral to this report.

Environmental Impact

None

Risk Management Implications

No specific implications

Equalities Implications

The actions described in this report aim to provide improved life chances for vulnerable children and young people. Harrow's support for CLA, including the virtual school, are offered regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability or any other characteristic.

Although the national performance indicators tend to focus on Key Stage results, the local authority is working to recognise more fully a wider variety of achievements by CLA.

Corporate Priorities

Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 10 th July 2012		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Catherine Halsall, Virtual Headteacher for Children Looked After
Tel : 020 8416 8122 e-mail : Catherine.Halsall@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None