

Bury Virtual School

Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher, 2021 - 2022



Artwork produced by some of Bury's children in care at a Virtual School Art workshop, October 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the work of Bury Virtual School in the academic year 2021-22. It establishes the scope of the work undertaken by the Virtual School in relation to its statutory role to promote the education of Bury's looked-after children and previously looked-after children (PLAC). In line with their preferences, looked-after children will be referred to throughout the report as Children who are Looked After (CLA).

Foreword

I write this report having completed my first year in post as Bury's new, permanent Virtual School Headteacher. My hope is that this report gives insight into the wider work of the Virtual School in addition to our statutory role. Our core focus is to promote the educational progress and attainment of Bury's CLA by working with their schools, social workers and carers to improve attendance, reduce exclusion and improve attainment and ensure that the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) allocated to us by the Department for Education is spent for the purpose of promoting their education. However, we see our role as being bigger than this; as corporate parents, we want to ensure our children have the best opportunities available to their non-looked-after peers. Therefore we also ensure we have activities organised in every school holiday to promote their education and wellbeing, provide them with books to read for pleasure at home and ensure that they have the opportunity to visit Higher Education institutions to promote educational aspiration. We also work hard to promote greater understanding of the needs of children who have experienced significant trauma with the professionals who support them. We have increased our training offer this year and set out our vision to make Bury's schools trauma-informed in their approach. Feedback has been extremely positive and we look forward to taking this further in 2022 – 23.

This has been a challenging year for children and schools alike, as it saw the return of external exams such as GCSE and A levels for the first time since 2019, and externally marked KS2 tests – all while schools were still experiencing the effects of Covid-19 in terms of both staff and pupil absence. The Virtual School ensured bespoke support was in place for all our children who were at key transition points and sat external tests and exams this year.

Bury was subject to a full Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in October 2021. Although the Inspection found Children's Services to be Inadequate overall, the experience and progress of children in care and Care Leavers was designated as Requires Improvement. The feedback for the Virtual School stated that *"the new virtual headteacher (VHT) has a clear focus on promoting the achievement and well-being of all children and young people in care. The experienced virtual school team is quick to respond to the needs of children, carers and the schools or provisions they attend. The VHT has quickly identified priorities to improve the quality of personal education plans (PEPs) and the use of pupil premium to enhance children's achievements. Almost all children have a PEP, although the quality is inconsistent, which means that the impact they have on children's education and achievement is variable"*.

We have taken this feedback as our key focus for improvement this year and have improved our PEP document, with greater focus on the voice of the child and more detailed target-setting. This has been combined with training for all stakeholders in effective PEP reviews. PEPs have seen a hybrid model this year, with some happening virtually and some face-to-face; in all cases, we are guided by the preferences of our children. Our compliance rates have increased substantially following the implementation of increased monitoring processes and almost all our children now have an up-to-date PEP in place. We have a QA model in

place which was praised by Ofsted but we recognise there is work to do to improve PEP quality overall and ensure consistency, and to that end we have recruited a PEP Officer who will provide individual QA to all PEPs. This is a new role for the Virtual School.

Our team has also expanded with the arrival of our Post-16 EET Lead in November 2021 and our SEND Lead in September 2022. Both new team members are making a significant impact in their roles, supporting some of our most vulnerable CLA; those on the edge of adulthood and independence and those with complex needs who may require special school provision. As I write, we have recently appointed our Lead for Children with a Social Worker who will oversee the extended duties of the Virtual School. 2022 – 23 will also see the Virtual School commissioning its own Speech and Language Therapy, as our therapist starts in post in January 2023, and increasing our partnership working with our LA educational psychologists.

I am really excited for the increased support for our children that our expanded team is bringing to Bury and looking forward to the challenges ahead in 2022 – 23.

Gemma Parkes
Bury Virtual School Headteacher

Glossary of terms used in this Report

CLA: Child who is Looked After; a child with a Care Order in place and for whom Bury Local Authority is the corporate parent

PLAC: a Previously Looked-After Child who is no longer in care as a result of adoption, a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order

EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan

PEP: Personal Education Plan. All CLA must have a PEP in place and it must be reviewed at least three times per year (once per term) with the child's social worker, school and carer present

PPG: the Pupil Premium Grant. This is external funding allocated to the Virtual School Headteacher by the Department for Education, to be spent to promote the education of CLA

CSC: Children's Social Care

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

EET: Education, Employment or Training

NEET: a young person who is Not in Education, Employment or Training

VSH: the Virtual School Headteacher

EYFS: the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception year in school)

KS: Key Stage

SALT: Speech and Language Therapy/Therapist

Introduction

The Virtual School team in Bury are committed to supporting the best educational outcomes for looked after and previously looked after children. We do this by offering a range of services to schools, social workers, IROs, carers/parents and other professionals. The scope of our work includes:

- ensuring that statutory guidelines are followed by schools and the Local Authority in relation to the education of looked after (and previously looked after children) in terms of admissions, exclusions, Personal Education Plans, Designated Teacher roles and multi-agency working
- ensuring that professionals, particularly designated teachers in schools and social workers have relevant and appropriate knowledge and understanding of education processes relating to looked after children via training, advice and consultation
- working in close partnership with Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure compliance and avoid drift and delay
- oversight and management of the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) process
- advice on PEP targets and suitable interventions
- scrutiny of the Premium Plus Grant (PPG) which is awarded to schools to support the educational outcomes of their cohort of children in care
- providing consultation, advice and training around issues such as admissions, exclusions, progress, attainment, transition, the PEP process and good practice around a school's use of PPG to schools, social workers, carers and other professionals
- supporting social workers and other professionals at meetings with schools and helping them to navigate complex educational issues, including cross-local authority protocols
- supporting social workers to apply for statutory assessment for an EHCP
- supporting social workers and schools to identify individualised placements in alternative/specialist education settings where these are appropriate to the needs of the young person
- close monitoring of attendance and exclusion rates and prompt intervention where concerns are identified
- monitoring of academic attainment and progress of the cohort; support and challenge to schools where underperformance is identified, and appropriate interventions put in place
- training for designated teachers and staff relating to education and emotional health and wellbeing of looked after children, e.g. attachment and trauma
- casework, with the Virtual School advisory teachers, post-16 EET Lead, SEND Lead and our Learning Mentor advocating for individual children and their education
- support and challenge to Headteachers and Designated Teachers to ensure compliance with their statutory responsibilities
- advice to young people, families and schools on how to support previously looked after children

Principles of Corporate Parenting

The 2018 guidance on 'Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children' encourages local authorities to have a strong ethos of corporate parenting, engendering a sense of vision and responsibility towards children in care and care leavers and making this a priority for everyone in the Council. The VSH works closely with the Corporate Parenting Officer for the Council and governance of the school is via the Corporate Parenting Board, where the VSH provides a regular update, and the Virtual School's own Governing Body. Together we work with social workers and other key partners to apply the seven corporate parenting principles (as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017) in relation to supporting our children in care and care leavers.

In particular, the Virtual School seeks to ensure the following principles are central to our work:

- Promoting high aspirations and seeking to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people
- For children and young people to be safe and to have stability in their homes, lives, relationships and education

Statutory Duties of the Virtual School Headteacher and how they are met in Bury

Duty 1: To maintain an up-to-date roll of Looked After Children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress

The Virtual School uses the Liquid Logic (LCS) database where details of every CLA's educational placement is recorded. From this, we can run comprehensive reports to accurately monitor our cohort. We have increased the detail in the Virtual School school roll in 2021-22 so that we have a very comprehensive record for every child of their attendance, attainment, SEND status, PPG spend and ongoing concerns. This information is also recorded in their PEPs and stored on LCS.

The Virtual School has commissioned Looked After Call to provide details of the attendance, and any exclusions, for our children in care. We also have support from the Education Welfare service to provide additional capacity to support children with attendance concerns. Looked After Call also provides termly attainment and progress data.

Our post-16 EET Lead maintains an up-to-date database of our 16- and 17-year-old CLA with information about their education, employment or training and current levels of engagement.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Work with the LA Data and Intelligence Lead to improve the LCS reporting system so that more detailed reports can be pulled from PEPs
- Work with the LA Systems and Intelligence Manager to ensure that LCS has accurate information about CLA's SEND status

Duty 2: To ensure sufficient information about a child's mental health, SEND or disability is available to their education setting so that appropriate support can be provided:

Strong relationships are established with our schools, in particular with the Designated Teacher, Special Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) and other key professionals in each school. In the case of any planned move to a new school or setting, Virtual School involvement is sought regarding the suitability of any proposed settings and we assist Social Care colleagues in liaising with all stakeholders.

For those CLA whose needs are identified through an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), a representative from the VS, SEND Team or Connexions will always endeavour to attend the PEP meeting at the point of the EHCP Annual Review.

There is a good working relationship with SEND and Social Care colleagues with clear lines of communication in relation to children with SEND.

We now have a Virtual School SEND Lead who started in post in September 2022 to oversee the education of our CLA with EHCPs. Creation and recruitment to this post was a key priority last year.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Refine PEP process to allow SEND data to be included on the Virtual School cohort report which can be run from LCS
- Use NEXUS and other analytical tools to analyse educational outcomes in relation to SEND

Duty 3: To inform Headteachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked after by Bury:

The Virtual School has access to the Bury Social Care Case Management System and receives alerts for children new to care; one of the Virtual School Advisory Teachers then liaises with the child's school and social worker to organise the first PEP meeting.

The Virtual School team endeavour to attend all new into care PEP meetings.

In 2021 – 22, the Virtual School took over responsibility for delegating the school section of the PEP document to schools. This is a technical element of the LCS system and previously was done by social workers. At times there was delay in social workers ensuring timely delegation to schools so the Virtual School taking over responsibility for this has improved efficiency and ensured schools have the document well in advance of the meeting in order to be able to supply detailed information.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Further training for Social Workers on the importance of a timely PEP being in place for the child

Duty 4: To ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP:

This has been a huge focus for the Virtual School this year and a full training package has been developed for all stakeholders (see the later section on Training in the report).

A QA process was embedded for PEPs with regular feedback provided to SW team managers. This was praised by Ofsted during the ILACS inspection in November 2021.

We have now recruited a PEP Officer who started in post in September 2022. This was a priority identified last year in order to expand our QA capacity so that all PEPs receive quality assurance and appropriate action is taken.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Further training for DTs, SENCOs and other professionals who work with CLA regarding quality PEPs and target setting
- Further training for social workers and carers throughout the year
- Training for school governors

Duty 5: To avoid drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive, multi-agency co-operation. Where this requires negotiation with other authorities, this should be completed in a timely manner and with the best interest of the child as paramount:

This is a key focus for the Virtual School in 2022 – 23 due to the number of CLA with complex needs in our cohort.

The Virtual School holds a weekly Caseload meeting which focuses on any children without a school place or where there are concerns regarding placement instability, attendance or exclusion.

The VSH liaises with the LA Admissions manager regarding the placement of children new to area.

The VSH attends the weekly Vulnerable Tracking group which is a multi-agency meeting including senior leaders from CSC, Attendance and the SEND team in order to work collaboratively to find children appropriate education provision as soon as possible. The Virtual School SEND Lead also has a weekly meeting with the SEND Team Manager to specifically focus on any CLA without a school place.

The VSH is part of the North West network of Virtual School Heads and benefits from the close collaboration and support it provides.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- CLA school moves protocol to be embedded
- Analysis of number of school moves experienced by Bury CLA and comparison with regional neighbours
- Effective use of tuition to support CLA whilst a school place is found, should this be necessary
- Establishment of a monthly Panel with senior LA colleagues including the Director of Education and Director of Social Care Practice, to ensure greater oversight of CLA who are not in full-time education in line with our duties as Corporate Parents

Duty 6: To ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes and that all Looked After Children, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP:

PEP Quality Assurance was a key focus this year with feedback provided to team managers. The PEP document was improved and a new PEP document was launched in September 2022 with greater emphasis on the voice of the child and on effective target-setting. The links between Pupil Premium Grant spend & PEP Targets are scrutinised by the Virtual School team. Schools are now required to cost their funding requests on PEPs to ensure the money is spent effectively for the benefit of the child.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- All PEPs to be Quality Assured by the Virtual School PEP Officer using specific criteria developed by the VSH
- Improvements to compliance rates for PEPs for children new into care
- Fortnightly reporting of PEP compliance rates to be reported to CSC service managers

Duty 7: To ensure the educational achievement of children looked after by Bury is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibility for promoting their welfare:

The PEP Quality Assurance process is now established. There is an established Corporate Parenting Board in Bury which the VSH is a member of. The VSH also provides input to the LA's Corporate Parenting Week, providing training for wider LA professionals. We have established the Virtual School Governing Board.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- The VSH is a member of the Social Care Wider and Extended Management Team, Legal Gateway Panel, Educational Leadership Team and Education Access Board. Virtual School team members also sit on the Fostering, Adoption and Permanence Panels.
- The VSH is a member of the Bury Association of Secondary Heads (BASH) and attends Primary Head briefings.
- Further development of the work of the Virtual School Governing Board
- Establishment of an Education Panel to scrutinise the educational support in place for CLA, with members of Education and CSC services in attendance.
- The Virtual School to work with colleagues in Corporate Core and HR to expand the work experience, Apprenticeship and training offer to CLA and Care Leavers.

Duty 8: To report regularly on the attainment of children in care through the Authority's corporate parenting structures:

The VSH Annual Report is a standing agenda item at the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB). The VSH has regular supervision with the strategic lead for Corporate Parenting and is line managed by the Director of Education and Skills.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- VSH to report termly to the Virtual School Governing Board
- Increased reporting of educational attainment for the cohort to the LA Children's Senior Leadership Team

Duty 9: For previously Looked After Children, to respond to parental requests for advice and information; from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision; and to make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools:

The VSH responds to requests for information and advice to parents and colleagues working in adoption services. Support is provided in relation to requests from the Admissions team to place previously looked after children (PLAC) in a suitable education setting.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- The development of the Bury Virtual School website as part of the Bury Directory, with a range of advice and support for parents, carers, social workers and schools

Summary of key work/impact of Bury Virtual School in 2021 - 22

- The Virtual School roll has been updated to be much more comprehensive and now includes data about attainment, progress and attendance.
- SEND register for the Virtual School now in place.
- Close partnership working with our key stakeholders including social workers, schools and foster carers throughout the year.
- The Virtual School has provided support and in several cases completed and submitted EHCP requests for assessment, resulting in Plans being issued and the needs of children being met in appropriate provision.
- ePEP in place for EYFS through to post-16. We have improved the document and in September 2022 an updated version was released, with more detailed target-setting and greater emphasis on the voice of the child.
- PEP compliance monitoring resulted in demonstrable improvements in PEP completion, with overall completion rates of 96%.
- Weekly attendance tracking in place for all statutory school age children and all concerning absences followed up.
- No permanent exclusion for any Bury CLA and a reduction in persistent absence rates.
- Termly tracking of attainment data and progress for all children is in place.
- The team has expanded, with recruitment of our Post-16 EET Lead (November 2021), SEND Lead (September 2022) and PEP Officer (September 2022).
- Outcomes at KS4 provisionally show that 32% of our Year 11s passed their Maths and English GCSEs. We have a provisional Progress 8 score which is significantly higher than the regional and national score for CLA (see attainment information).
- Our "Aim Higher" programme to encourage our children to aspire to higher education was launched, encompassing visits to HE institutions and use of the Success4Life and Barclays LifeSkills programmes. The VS worked with the Barclays LifeSkills mentors to provide training on trauma and attachment to help them understand the vulnerabilities of our cohort.
- Involvement in the monthly EET forum, a multi-agency partnership approach which focuses on young people who are NEET and encourages them into EET; the VS post-16 EET lead attends the monthly meetings.
- A full training package is in place for our key stakeholders: schools, foster carers and social workers, with frequent sessions throughout the year.

- All the Virtual School team and colleagues from 18 Bury schools have completed the 11-day Diploma in Trauma and Mental Health-informed Schools and Communities offered by Trauma-Informed Schools UK. We are funding the Diploma again this year for another 20 Bury schools.
- All CLA who needed laptops for school use were provided with them.
- Additional National Tuition Programme (NTP) funding from the DfE fully spent to provide additional tuition support for CLA.
- Expanded use of the Letterbox Club literacy programme offered by the charity Booktrust.
- Termly newsletters for carers and schools developed and shared with Virtual School updates, advice and support.
- Enrichment activities offered to CLA in all school holiday periods.
- Bespoke transition support for Year 6 and Year 11 CLA.

Bury Virtual School Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Embed improved QA of PEPs now that our recently appointed PEP Officer is in post.
- Improve the reports we can generate from our PEPs to enable easier and more nuanced manipulation of data.
- Implement a multi-agency meeting with colleagues from Children’s Social Care, SEND and School Improvement to review CLA who are not in full-time education and avoid drift and delay in securing appropriate educational provision.
- We have recently commissioned a dedicated Speech and Language Therapist to work with our CLA and are looking forward to the increased support this will provide our cohort.
- Work with Bury schools with above-average rates of suspension to offer further training, support and review of their policies.
- We are enrolled on the DfE’s pilot of post-16 Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding and will be allocating funding to this cohort to support their education, employment and training.
- Work with colleagues in Children’s Social Care to set aspirational targets for attendance within PEPs.
- Develop the Virtual School page on the Bury Directory.

Virtual School Team information

Virtual School Headteacher	Gemma Parkes
Virtual School Advisory Teacher and PEP co-ordinator	Sarah Metcalfe
Virtual School Advisory Teacher	Karen Riazzi
Virtual School post-16 EET Lead	Marion Duzgun
Virtual School SEND Lead	Joanne Foster
Virtual School Learning Mentor	Deborah Vine
Virtual School PEP Officer	Jamila Shahzad

The Virtual School has been part of a wider restructure of Children’s Services in 2022 and now sits within the Education service. The Virtual School Headteacher reports directly to the Director of Education and sits on the Education Leadership Team as well as the wider Children’s Senior Leadership Team.

The team will be expanded in 2022 – 23 with the recruitment of two new posts to oversee the extension to our duties to promote the education of all children with a social worker.

The Virtual School Cohort as of September 2022

Pupil numbers by type of school	Number of pupils	Percentage of cohort
CLA in mainstream	180	80%
CLA in special schools	44	20%
CLA accessing Alternative Provision while on roll in school	17	8%
CLA in schools attached to residential placements	6	3%

Our numbers of children have remained stable since last year with a slight increase in the size of the primary cohort.

Pupil numbers by year group as of September 2022

Primary Phase	
Year group	Number of pupils
Reception	17
Year 1	11
Year 2	9
Year 3	11
Year 4	21
Year 5	15
Year 6	21
Total	104
Secondary Phase	
Year 7	16
Year 8	20
Year 9	27
Year 10	22
Year 11	35
Total	120
Total Statutory School Age	224
Post-16 Phase	
Year 12	37
Year 13 (includes care leavers aged 18+)	38
Total	75
Total all key stages	299

Pupils by sex (statutory school age)

Key Stage	Boys	Girls
EYFS (Reception)	11	6
Key Stage 1	15	5
Key Stage 2	35	32
Key Stage 3	31	32
Key Stage 4	28	29

Total	120	124
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Location of Schools (statutory school age)

Pupils attending a school in Bury	120 (54%)
Pupils attending a school out of Bury	104 (46%)

As can be seen above, almost half of our children attend a school which is outside Bury. This is an increase since last year, when 40% of our children attended a school outside the LA. This presents additional challenges to the Virtual School. We have a close working relationship with our Bury schools and teams in the LA such as the SEN and Admissions teams, which is hard to replicate with other LAs, particularly those further afield (for context, 17 of our children attend schools in locations which are a significant distance from Bury, such as Scotland, Wales and London). SEN and Fair Access processes in other LAs can vary significantly and it is harder to establish close working relationships with the Designated Teachers in those schools. Children attend schools outside Bury either as result of being placed there or because they require a special school and the SEND team must consult with schools outside Bury for reasons of capacity or to meet the needs of the child.

Ofsted School Ratings

It is expected that CLA should attend schools that are judged "good" or "outstanding" by Ofsted.

Ofsted ratings of schools with Bury CLA on roll, as of October 2022

Ofsted School Rating	Number of children	Percentage of cohort
Outstanding	24	11%
Good	112	50%
Requires Improvement	21	9%
Inadequate	1	0.4%
No data available	61	27%

Schools with no data available have recently gone through academy conversion. This makes them legally a new school which does not yet have an Ofsted rating until it is inspected for the first time in its new status. Overall, of those schools with an Ofsted rating, 86% of our children attend a school which is Good or Outstanding and 14% attend a school which is rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate. Only one child currently attends an Inadequate school.

When a child comes into care who is already on roll at a school rated less than Good, it is often inappropriate to simply move their school placement based on the current Ofsted rating. It is often vital to ensure continuity of school at a time of huge disruption in their family lives. At other times, a child is on roll at a school previously rated Good which is downgraded following a new inspection. This is the case for the child currently on roll at an Inadequate school. The Virtual School is working closely with the school and attending all PEP meetings for this child to ensure all appropriate support is in place. Last year 3 children were on roll at schools rated Inadequate, so the picture has slightly improved.

Where a request is made for a child to attend a school currently rated Requires Improvement, the Virtual School will discuss the request with the child's social worker and carer to ensure

the rationale for the request is appropriate; the Virtual School will review the Ofsted report to understand the nature of concerns about the school and a member of the team will contact the school to liaise with key staff regarding the educational provision that would be made to support the individual child.

The Virtual School Headteacher attends the weekly Children's Social Care Placement Panel and ensures that school is considered and proactively managed where a placement move is necessary, highlighting that where possible, children should remain at their current school.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Ensure Virtual School PEP attendance for CLA placed in schools rated RI or below
- Ensure appropriate training is in place for Designated Teachers in RI schools
- Develop a VS policy for monitoring of CLA placed in schools rated RI or below
- Ensure VS representation at Y6 PEPs and that secondary school Ofsted ratings are discussed as part of the meeting

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children in care and previously looked-after children are significantly more likely to have Special Educational Needs than their peers, and of those, there will be a higher proportion with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The Virtual School continues to work with all partners to ensure that individual needs are appropriately identified and addressed, and where necessary requests for statutory assessments are made. More recently, there have been a number of cases of children becoming looked-after where Special Educational Needs have not been identified or supported, which has impacted on engagement and attendance in education. In such cases the Virtual School team have supported colleagues in Children's Social Care and have made parental requests for EHCPs for a number of CLA.

Challenges still remain regarding our cohort of CLA with EHCPs. When they move out of borough, their EHCP transfers with them (under the "belonging regulations" for CLA) which can cause delays while the transfer is complete; liaising with other SEN teams with variable response rates can create further delays to find appropriate school places for our children. When this happens, we work to provide tuition or appropriate Alternative Provision to meet the needs of the child while a school place is found. A shortage of appropriate places in special schools is a challenge nationally.

The appointment of our SEND Lead who commenced in post in September 2022 is a significant development for the Virtual School. She has a weekly meeting with the Bury SEN Team Manager to review the status of our CLA with EHCPs who are waiting for a school place and to escalate any experiencing delay. She is also providing additional training and support to our schools, social workers and carers on all aspects of SEND, and is providing Quality Assurance of the provision in place for our children. She is currently completing a Level 7 qualification which will qualify her to conduct psychometric testing with our children. This will support requests for EHCP assessment, reduce the demand for educational psychology input as she will be able to carry out many of the same assessments, and enable her to assess our children in KS4 to establish if they are entitled to Access Arrangements for their exams.

Identified SEND status of CLA as of October 2022

As can be seen in the data below, the percentages of the cohort with identified SEND increase with age. This is to be expected as schools learn the needs of children and increasingly have evidence that they need support which is additional support to or different from their peers in order to access the curriculum or make progress, which is the definition of a child having SEND according to the SEND Code of Practice 2015. We would expect that further children in the EYFS and KS1 in particular will be identified as having SEND this year. We also find that children new into care may have unidentified SEND which will also result in numbers changing throughout the year.

SEND Status	EHCP	SEN K Support	Total with SEND	No identified SEND
Total number of children	91 (32% of school-age CLA cohort)	63 (28% of school-age CLA cohort)	153 (60% of school-age CLA cohort)	90 (40% of school-age CLA cohort)
EYFS (Reception)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	2 (12%)	15 (88%)
Key Stage 1	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
Key Stage 2	24 (35%)	15 (22%)	39 (57%)	29 (43%)
Key Stage 3	18 (29%)	22 (32%)	40 (63%)	23 (37%)
Key Stage 4	26 (46%)	22 (39%)	48 (84%)	9 (16%)
Key Stage 5	18			

Identified SEND needs of CLA as of October 2022

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Speech, Communication and Language Need (SLCN)	Physical or Sensory need	Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	Other difficulty
109 (71%)	4 (3%)	17 (11%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	19 (12%)	2 (1%)

As can be seen above, Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties far outweigh the other categories of need for our children. This reflects their experiences of trauma and attachment difficulties. However, many CLA also experience speech and language delays as a result of their life experiences prior to coming into care and the number of our children with this as their recognised main area of need is probably not reflective of the actual needs of the cohort. We have successfully been able to commission a dedicated Speech and Language Therapist to work with our cohort and she will be starting in post from January 2023. Her first actions will be to screen our secondary-aged children to assess if any have unidentified speech, communication and language needs, and she will then be working with the children, their schools and carers to implement appropriate interventions and support.

We have also been allocated dedicated time from our LA Educational Psychologists this year. This will be used in two ways: providing training for schools to support the needs of our children and also offering advice and assessment for individual children.

Priorities for 2022 – 23:

- Work with mainstream settings to identify and support young people with SLCN and SEMH at the earliest opportunity

- Support schools and social workers to apply for EHCPs without delay where SEND is identified
- Virtual School SEND Lead to develop and run training for CSC colleagues/carers in SEND processes
- Challenge and support for schools around the graduated response to identifying and meeting SEND; working with other LA services to challenge and support this

CLA School Attendance 2021-22

The following data may appear differently in DfE publications as it includes all CLA, including those who came into care for a brief period of time during the academic year.

The Virtual School commissions IRIS Looked After Call to collect daily attendance and exclusion data for all our CLA, both in and out of borough. This data is analysed weekly and all children whose attendance drops below 90% are investigated and appropriate action taken. Exclusions are monitored on a daily basis and always challenged with the school involved.

School attendance, both nationally and locally, continued to be affected by Covid-19 in 2021-22. It is therefore difficult to compare data meaningfully to previous years. However, it is encouraging to see that, while still a significant concern, our rates of Persistent Absence from school decreased last year.

Locally generated data for 2021-22 shows the overall attendance of Bury CLA as 88.17%. This figure is subject to change when reported by the DfE as only the qualifying cohort will be reported.

Attendance 2021-22	All children	*Qualifying pupils
Primary attendance	93.78%	94.28%
Secondary attendance	83.41%	86.39%
Children with SEN (primary and secondary)	84.98%	86.44%
Overall attendance: all key stages	88.17%	89.78%

**Qualifying pupils: those who were looked-after for 12 months or more as of 31.03.22*

Attendance of CLA in mainstream and non-mainstream settings

	Mainstream	Non-mainstream
2017 - 2018	96.7%	89.8%
2018 - 2019	94.5%	91.4%
2019 to end March 2020	95.1%	90.1%
2020 - 2021	89.7%	76.9%
2021 - 2022	91.8%	80.6%

Attendance by Year Group, 2021-22

Year group	Attendance
Reception	91.2%

EYFS attendance	91.2%
Year 1	94.61%
Year 2	90.75%
Key Stage 1 attendance	92.66%
Year 3	95.11%
Year 4	94.93%
Year 5	92.67%
Year 6	94.53%
Key Stage 2 attendance	94.27%
Year 7	92.54%
Year 8	89.47%
Year 9	84.42%
Key Stage 3 attendance	88.74%
Year 10	85.90%
Year 11	68.95%
Key Stage 4 attendance	77.83%

Year 9 was a year group of concern, but the data is skewed by three young people who were severely absent from school. These three are all currently receiving intensive support from the Virtual School now that they have moved into Year 10 to support improved attendance.

Pupils with 100% attendance

2017-2018	15%
2018-2019	7.4%
2019-2020	21.1%
2020-2021	11.2%
2021-2022	8.2%

Persistent Absence (PA)

Persistent absence is defined as school attendance below 90%. Ofsted have now introduced an additional category, that of severe persistent absence (attendance at 50% or below).

Ofsted data shows that persistent absence for all children nationally was 23.5% in the autumn term 2021, a six-year high. Rates of severe persistent absence (attendance of 50% and below) were 2.1% in Autumn 2021 for secondary schools nationally and 1.4% for all children.

Bury's CLA persistent absence rate in the autumn term 2021 was 20% of our qualifying cohort. We do not yet have national CLA data to compare this to. We saw an increase in non-qualifying persistent absence, which reflects a number of children who came into care with patterns of school non-attendance which were already very concerning prior to them coming into care. It is pleasing to see that our numbers of qualifying children who were persistently absent reduced compared to last year; the Virtual School worked closely with the social workers, carers and schools for these children to support them to access education, in some cases securing EHCPs and places in specialist settings which could meet their need and where their attendance therefore improved.

Year	Non-Qualifying PAs	*Qualifying PAs
2017-2018	16.7%	13.8%
2018-2019	10.1% (23 pupils)	9.7% (22 pupils)
2019-2020	3.2% (6 pupils)	12.1% (23 pupils)
2020-2021	4% (9 pupils)	37.1% (83 pupils)
2021-2022	10.5% (28 pupils)	19.5% (52 pupils)

**Qualifying pupils: those who were looked-after for 12 months or more as of 31.03.22*

Analysis in 2022 showed that 40% of our persistently absent children were placed with parents or relatives/friends (43% of the qualifying cohort) and 23% were in a residential home. Only 12% of the persistently absent children were in a long-term foster placement and of these, only three had attendance below 80% in school. The Virtual School and Children's Social Care need to work closely together to improve our rates of persistent absence from school as there is a strong correlation with placement type and school attendance.

Analysis also showed that 65% of children who were persistently absent in 2022 had SEND (73% of the qualifying cohort who were persistently absent). In some cases, delay in finding appropriate provision following successful EHCP application caused children to become persistently absent from school. The LA SEN team and Virtual School work to put tuition and appropriate Alternative Provision in place where there are delays in finding a school which can meet the needs of our children, but capacity of special schools to provide sufficient provision – particularly within Bury itself – is an ongoing concern.

Work done to address persistent absence in 2021 – 22

- Training provided to social workers and carers on the importance of good school attendance and the impact on attainment and progress of poor attendance
- Our Learning Mentor completed focused intervention with young people who were persistently absent to understand the reasons for school refusal and to work to overcome these barriers
- Use of the Bury EBSA Pathway (emotionally-based school avoidance)
- Use of PPG to commission mentoring, tuition and appropriate Alternative Provision for children where there was a delay in finding an appropriate school place
- Weekly reviews of attendance in Virtual School caseload meetings to identify children whose attendance dropped below 90%, followed up by meetings with schools/social workers/carers
- All pupils with attendance below 90% had review meetings with key stakeholders at least every four weeks
- Use of commissioned educational psychology time to work with children and carers where this was a concern

Priorities for 2022 - 23:

- Close partnership working with the SEN team to work to reduce drift and delay in finding a school place for children with EHCPs
- Establishment of a monthly panel to review CLA with persistent absence, to include Director of Education and senior CSC colleagues
- Continuation of training for social workers and carers

Exclusions 2021- 2022

Permanent Exclusions	0
Number of CLA with suspensions: all children	36 (9 primary, 27 secondary) – 13.5% of cohort
Number of CLA with suspensions: qualifying cohort	26 (6 primary, 20 secondary) – 9.7% of cohort
Number of days of suspension	156
Average number of days lost per suspended pupil	4.3

It is pleasing to see that no Bury CLA was permanently excluded in 2021 – 22. The Virtual School worked closely with the schools of seven children who were at risk of permanent exclusion and successfully avoided this as an outcome for all of them.

The Virtual School worked closely with schools where children received suspensions. We attended emergency annual reviews, wrote requests for statutory EHCP assessment, set up Alternative Provision while school moves were implemented, secured places at special schools and used PPG funding to pay for interventions such as educational psychology assessments and tuition. We have also rolled out the Trauma-Informed Schools UK Diploma in Trauma and Mental Health-Informed Schools and Communities in Bury. So far 18 schools have completed the Diploma with a further 20 to undertake the qualification this year. This is a preventative approach to exclusion by equipping schools with knowledge and practical skills to work with children who display challenging behaviour arising as a result of experience of trauma.

Priorities for 2022 – 23:

- Focus on proactive prevention of exclusions, using information in the PEP and maintaining good relationships with schools
- Prompt identification of exclusions using Looked After Call data
- Embedding of the Virtual School Exclusion Protocol
- All schools issuing suspensions to be contacted by a member of the VS team to ensure the length of the exclusion is minimal and that work is provided from day one of the exclusion
- All schools with Bury CLA offered training in trauma-informed settings, provided by TISUK and funded by the Virtual School
- Targeted use of PPG funding to support mental health and interventions to improve engagement with school
- VS to support with EHCP applications where this is appropriate
- Develop provision and support offer for Educational Psychologist and Speech and Language Therapist to support development and practice, identification and preventative work.
- Continue working closely with inclusion services and wider education partners
- Continued work with schools and partners to be trauma informed in their practice
- Use exclusion data to identify cases for discussion at monthly multi-agency meetings

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The updated guidance 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children' was published in February 2018. This statutory guidance emphasises the importance of PEPs as an integral part of the Care Plan of all looked after children. The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looks after the child and the school that they attend. Guidance states that PEPs must be updated on a termly basis for all children from pre-school to the age of 18.

The role of the Virtual School Headteacher is to ensure that effective systems are in place so that:

- social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their roles and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP
- up-to-date, effective and high-quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are in place for all CLA, wherever they are placed
- PEPs are initiated within 10 working days and held within 20 school days in order to inform the first review meeting (held at 28 days), and thereafter reviewed termly.

In 2021 – 22, the Virtual School had PEP compliance as a key priority which is reflected in the completion rates below. We now include Nursery-aged PEPs in our reporting figures (the 2020 – 21 data provided is for statutory school age only); the school-age PEP coverage saw that almost all children had their PEP reviewed each term.

PEP Completion Rates 2021 - 22

Autumn term 2020: 63%	Spring term 2021: 87%	Summer term 2021: 92%
Autumn term 2021: 96% (school age 98%)	Spring term 2022: 95% (school age 99%)	Summer term 2022: 96% (school age 98%)

Quality Assurance ratings of PEPs (dip-sample process)

Date	Quality Assurance rating of the PEP				Total
	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	
September 2021	1	14	8	1	24 sampled, 6 moderated
November 2021	0	3	3	2	8 sampled, 5 moderated
January 2022	2	8	14	0	24 sampled, 3 moderated
March 2022	1	5	15	8	29 sampled, 6 moderated
May 2022	0	4	9	4	17 sampled, 7 moderated
June 2022	2	3	8	2	15 sampled, 5 moderated
Total	6 (5% of sampled PEPs)	37 (32%)	57 (49%)	17 (15%)	117

Where PEPs were identified as Inadequate or Requires Improvement, this was addressed with the school and social worker and appropriate support offered. The PEP document has been updated for September 2022 and includes more focus on the voice of the child, more detailed breakdown of targets as well as space to review previous targets, in order to improve quality of target-setting and review. Our PEP Officer is new in post and will be providing QA to every PEP, in addition to the dip-sample process. This is a significant improvement for our PEP oversight and will ensure all our children have a high-quality PEP in place.

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Training for social workers and carers in the importance of the PEP process and the need for timely PEPs
- Weekly monitoring and reporting of PEP completion rates and prompt intervention where delays are identified
- Improvements to QA process to ensure feedback is given to schools following each PEP

Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PPG) 2021 – 22

The purpose of PPG funding is to improve educational attainment of CLA and close the gap between them and their peers.

The Conditions of Grant for Pupil Premium state that funding for CLA should be managed by the Virtual School Head. This means that Bury Virtual School is responsible for monitoring the use of this funding and ensuring that the money makes a real difference to the individual children looked after by Bury Local Authority. PPG for CLA cannot be carried forward into a new financial year and must be spent before the end of March or returned to the Department for Education. Therefore, this budget requires careful management.

As set out in the Virtual School PPG Policy, the majority of Pupil Premium funding has been made available to schools to meet the specific needs of individual children in line with the targets in their Personal Education Plan. Specific needs might be additional tuition, music lessons, participation in a school residential trip or they might need access to the support of a Teaching Assistant. Funding which is devolved to schools should provide “over and above” their standard offer to all children.

The PPG guidance suggests that “it may be appropriate to pool some pupil premium for activities to benefit the authority’s looked after children more holistically” and Bury Virtual School continues to pool resources in order to offer our CLA enhanced services, such as laptops, enrichment such as holiday activities and resources to support literacy and reading for pleasure. Some of our pooled funding also pays for the additional support required by some of our CLA with complex needs, such as Alternative Provision and 1:1 mentoring, and for our wider training offer to schools.

In 2021 – 2022 the Virtual School maintained the allocation to all schools with Bury CLA of up to £1500 per pupil, allocated in amounts of up to £500 per term. This did not include children who attended specialist or independent schools as the local authority are already funding high cost educational provision relevant to their individual needs, so they therefore do not receive additional PPG funding. Schools are required to account for the use and impact of PPG via the PEP. Following amendments to the PPG Policy, funding is only released on receipt of a good quality PEP, completed within expected timescales with clear details of use and impact of PPG funding linked to identified needs and subsequent interventions. Schools must cost the required interventions and they must be linked to the child’s targets.

In 2022 – 23, some of our pooled funding will be used towards staffing costs for the Virtual School and the provision of dedicated SALT services. We have increased the amount which schools can request per term to £600 to reflect the increased costs schools are facing.

Allocation of PPG funding 2021 – 22

Spend	Percentage of allocation
Allocated to schools following PEPs	58.7%
Tuition and Alternative Provision directly referred by Virtual School	6.2%
Laptops and IT resources	2.5%
Training for schools and carers	8.7%
Literacy resources and books	3.8%
Mentoring	1.8%
IRIS Looked After Call attendance collection system	6.1%
Central staffing costs	11.5%
Holiday activities	0.3%

Examples of Pupil Premium Plus spend by schools, 2021 -22

- Posts specifically to work with looked after children e.g. CLA Mentor/Co-ordinator
- Speech and Language input
- 1:1 tuition
- Small group interventions around SEMH
- Resources to support literacy/numeracy/fine motor skills
- Play/Lego Therapies
- Counselling
- Nurture intervention
- Breakfast/After-school Clubs
- IT equipment
- Revision Guides
- Alternative provision
- Funding for individual educational resources
- Mentoring

2022 Attainment Data

The provisional data in this report is not validated and therefore may differ from validated data when this is published. National cohort data will be available in Autumn 2022 and CLA cohort data will be available in Spring 2023.

Early Years

There were 11 CLA on Bury Virtual School’s roll who completed Reception this year. 5 out of the 11 (45%) achieved a GLD (Good Level of Development) using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). 3 of the 6 children who did not achieve GLD have already been identified as having Special Educational Needs, one with an EHCP. The other three are receiving additional intervention and may be designated as having SEND this year.

Bury CLA 2019	Bury CLA 2022 (all)	Bury CLA 2022 (qualifying cohort)	All CLA nationally 2019	All CLA nationally 2022 (provisional)	NW CLA 2022 (provisional)
25%	45%	43%	48%	40%	42%

Contextual Data

	% of total cohort	% of identified cohort reaching expected standard
% of children who were looked-after for over 12 months as of 31.03.22 (qualifying cohort)	82%	36% of all Bury CLA; 44% of qualifying cohort
% summer-born	27%	0%
School move within the academic year	27%	18%
% with an EHCP	9%	0%
% with SEN support	27%	9%
% placed with parents	9%	0%
% foster placement with relative or friend	45%	18%
% placement move within the academic year	18%	18%

Priorities for 2022 – 23:

- Work more closely with Nurseries to offer training and support in understanding the needs of our cohort
- Instigate the PEP process at an earlier age (from 2 years if children are attending childcare)
- Virtual School to continue to attend the North West Early Years Virtual School network meetings to share good practice
- Work with our Speech and Language Therapist to offer additional support to the cohort once in post
- Continue to enrol our 0-5 children on The Imagination Library book club to promote early literacy and reading for pleasure

Phonics Screening Check

Pupils in Year 1 take a phonics screening check to identify children who need additional phonics support. Data from NOVA Nexus below shows that Bury CLA rates of children who are working at the expected standard are above national and regional CLA.

Working at expected standard: Bury CLA	Working at expected standard: CLA National	Working at expected standard: NW CLA
75%	60%	63%

Key Stage One attainment

Children in Year 2 are assessed by their teachers in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science. They are assessed at working at pre-key stage, working towards the expected standard, working at the expected standard or working at greater depth for the expected standard.

All CLA nationally and regionally saw a drop in outcomes from 2019 to 2022, but Bury CLA are below both regional and national in this measure. Bury Virtual School had 11 children on roll in Year 2 in 2021-22. Only one child achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths in 2022. Of the ten who didn't, six have identified SEN (four with an EHCP, 2 at SEN (K) support level). These children were all assessed using the PK (pre-Key Stage) assessment framework.

All of the other four children either had a school move during the academic year or a placement move, or in one case both. They therefore experienced higher than usual levels of disruption which may have impacted on their academic progress. The Virtual School is working closely with the schools, social workers and carers of these children to ensure they have the support in school that they need to close the gaps between them and their peers. However, only two children in the cohort were reported by their schools to be making less than expected progress.

Cohort	Reading: working at the expected standard	Writing: working at the expected standard	Maths: working at the expected standard	All subjects (Reading, writing, Maths)
Bury CLA 2022 (all)	9%	9%	9%	9%
Bury CLA 2022 (qualifying cohort)	20%	20%	20%	20%
Bury CLA 2019	40%	40%	20%	20%
All CLA 2019	51%	42%	50%	37%
All CLA 2022	44%	33%	43%	29%
NW CLA 2022	47%	34%	45%	30%

Contextual data for Key Stage One

	% of total cohort	% of identified cohort reaching expected standard
% of children who were looked-after for over 12 months as of 31.03.22 (qualifying cohort)	45%	20% of qualifying cohort; 9% of all Bury CLA
Persistent Absence (less than 90% attendance)	18%	0%

School move within the academic year	45%	0%
Achieved individual progress (from previous key stage)	82% (100% of the qualifying cohort)	20% of qualifying cohort
% with an EHCP	36%	0%
% with SEN support	18%	0%
% placed with parents	9%	9%
% foster placement with relative or friend	18%	0%
% placement move in academic year	64%	0%

Attainment at Key Stage 2

Pupils in Year 6 are assessed in Reading and Maths via externally-marked tests, with an optional externally-marked Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test. Their Writing is assessed via teacher assessment. 2022 was the first year of using external tests since 2019. Pupils are assessed as working towards the expected standard, working at the expected standard or working at greater depth. Some children with SEND are not entered for the tests.

We had 16 CLA in Year 6 in 2021-22. Of these, four were on roll at special schools and were not entered for the KS2 tests due to having significant SEND. 7 of the 16 children overall have EHCPs and a further 3 children are at SEND support level, so overall 63% of the children have identified SEND, which should be factored into the number reaching the expected standard overall. Of the 16 children, only 2 did not make expected progress in Year 6 relative to their individual starting-point.

Two children did not achieve the expected standard and currently do not have identified SEND. Both of these children are receiving additional tuition paid for via PPG.

All the Year 6 cohort received additional transition support as they prepared to move to secondary school. The Virtual School Learning Mentor attended their PEPs and did additional visits to children in or near to Bury. She has also completed additional transition visits in the Autumn term at their new secondary schools.

Bury CLA have significantly improved since 2019 in reading, as can be seen below, and shown smaller improvements in writing and Maths.

	Reading: working at the expected standard	Writing: working at the expected standard	Maths: working at the expected standard	All subjects (Reading, Writing, Maths)
2022: all Bury CLA	44%	44%	37.5%	31.2%
2022: Bury CLA qualifying cohort	38%	46%	31%	31%
2019 Bury CLA	11%	44%	33%	11%
2019 CLA National	48%	50%	51%	36%

2022 CLA National	52%	43%	45%	32%
2022 NW CLA	57%	44%	46%	33%

Contextual Data for Key Stage Two

	% of total cohort	% of identified cohort reaching expected standard
% of children who were looked-after for over 12 months as of 31.03.22 (qualifying cohort)	81%	31% of qualifying cohort; 25% of all Bury CLA
Persistent Absence (less than 90% attendance)	12.5%	6.25%
School move within the academic year	12.5%	0%
Achieved individual progress (from previous key stage)	88%	36%
% with an EHCP	44%	6.25%
% with SEN support	19%	0%
% placed with parents	6.25%	0%
% foster placement with relative or friend	6.25%	6.25%
% placement move in academic year	25%	6.25%

Attainment at Key Stage Four

2022 saw the return to externally-assessed, formal GCSE exams, for the first time since 2019. It is important to note that results from 2022 should not be compared to previous years, as stated by Ofsted in September 2022: *"Inspectors will use 2022 outcomes cautiously and 2021/22 data will only be used to inform discussion with the schools about pupil outcomes. No schools will be marked down on the basis of the 2021/22 data alone."*

2019 data is included for reference purposes but should be considered in the context of the statement above.

There were 32 CLA in Year 11 overall in 2022. Of these, 24 were entered for GCSEs. 7 others were entered for Functional Skills and one, who has complex needs, is working towards Entry Level qualifications now in Year 12.

18 of the young people (56%) were accessing mainstream school. 21 young people accessed tuition commissioned by the Virtual School and funded via PPG. This was 66% of the cohort overall and 88% of those who sat GCSEs; 2 of the remaining 3 young people did not wish to have additional tuition and one came into care too late for it to be offered.

There were 25 CLA who had been looked-after for 12 months or more as of 31.03.22, and are therefore the qualifying cohort who are reported on nationally. Of the qualifying cohort, 17 were entered for GCSEs. The other seven young people are referenced above.

Of the qualifying cohort who were entered for GCSEs:

47% passed English and Maths at grades 9-4.

24% passed English and Maths at grades 9-5.

41% passed 5 or more GCSEs at grades 9-4 including English and Maths.

Overall Outcomes

Progress 8: provisional information from NCER

Attainment 8 is a measure of how well pupils have achieved in their GCSE results. Pupils' highest scores across eight subjects are added, with English and Maths double weighted. Progress 8 is a measure of how those achievements compare with other children in England who started secondary school at the same level. It establishes whether all pupils made expected, better or lower than expected progress relative to their starting point.

Provisional figures indicate that Bury CLA made significantly better progress than all CLA nationally and North West CLA.

	Average Attainment 8 score	Average Progress 8 score	English: average att. score	English: average prog. score	Maths: average att. score	Maths: average prog. score
NCER National (all CLA)	26.2	-1.03	5.9	-1.12	5.2	-0.80
North West CLA	26.2	-1.10	5.9	-1.20	5.1	-0.94
Bury (all schools)	46.3	-0.28	10.1	-0.17	8.8	-0.35
Bury CLA	28.7	-0.53	6.0	-0.84	5.4	-0.30

Attainment information

	% grade 9-4 in English	% grade 9-4 in Maths	% grade 9-4 in English and Maths	% 5 or more GCSEs grade 9-4 including English and Maths
2022 Bury: all CLA	44%	28%	28%	22%
2022 Bury: qualifying cohort	44%	32%	32%	28%
2019 Bury	Not available	Not available	21%	Not available
2019 CLA national	Not available	Not available	18%	Not available

	% grade 9-5 in English	% grade 9-5 in Maths	% grade 9-5 in English and Maths
2022 Bury: all CLA	25%	22%	12.5%

2022 Bury: qualifying cohort	19%	25%	16%
2019 Bury	33%	7%	7%
2019 CLA national	23%	14%	10%

Contextual information for Key Stage Four outcomes

	% of total cohort	% of identified cohort achieving grade 9-4 in English and Maths
% of children who were looked-after for over 12 months as of 31.03.22 (qualifying cohort)	78%	32% of qualifying cohort; 25% of all CLA
Persistent Absence (less than 90% attendance)	59% overall; 48% of qualifying cohort	9%
School move within the academic year	19%	9%
% with an EHCP	41% overall; 48% of qualifying cohort	4% of qualifying cohort; 3% of all CLA
% with SEN support	19% overall; 20% of qualifying cohort	8% of qualifying cohort; 6% of all CLA
% placed with parents	3%	0%
% foster placement with relative or friend	22%	6.25%
% residential care placement	28%	3%
% placement move in academic year	34%	6.25%

We had several CLA with individual high grades, including:

Two young people achieved grade 6 for English
 Two achieved grade 6 for Maths
 Three achieved grade 6 in Art
 One achieved grade 6 in Science
 One achieved grade 6 in PE
 One achieved grade 6 in Geography
 Two achieved grade 6 and another grade 8 in RE
 One achieved grade 8 in Music
 One achieved grade 8 in Drama

Number of young people with one or more grade 6 or above: 7 (28% of qualifying cohort)
 Number of young people with one or more grade 8 or above: 3 (12%)

Arrangements for collecting other data

In addition to collection of external data, attainment and progress data is collected three times per year (once per term) for all Bury CLA from Reception – Year 11. Currently the Virtual School commissions IRIS Looked After Call to collect this data. However, this data is also reported on PEPs, and we are currently improving our PEP reporting system so that going forward this data can be pulled from termly completed PEPs and we will not need to request it twice from schools.

Following data collection, the Virtual School team reviews all data and uses it to prioritise children for intervention and for Virtual School attendance at PEP reviews.

Post-16 Provision

In November 2021, our Post-16 EET Lead started in post. Her role is to work with our CLA aged 16 and 17 who have left school. She supports them onto an appropriate pathway and then provides ongoing support to help them to maintain their EET status.

The figures below are subject to change and provide a snapshot from October 2022.

Year 12: 37 young people

EET: 30 young people (81%)

- 25 young people (68%) are currently on roll at a 6th Form or FE College. Courses include A levels, Foundation Construction, BTECs, ESOL and Professional Cookery, amongst others.
- 2 young people (5%) are on roll at accredited Training Providers and working towards Foundation qualifications.
- 2 young people (5%) are in employment
- 1 young person (2.7%) is in custody

7 young people (19%) are Not in Employment, Education or Training. Of these:

- 3 young people are due to start placements in college or on training courses
- 1 young person has applied to join the Army
- 1 young person has found employment – waiting for confirmation
- 1 young person is new into care and moving towards being ready to engage in EET following substantial disruption

Destinations of Young People who did not pass Maths and/or English GCSE, 2022

24 young people (including the non-qualifying cohort and those new into care) did not pass Maths and/or English GCSE at grade 4 in 2022. Of these:

18 are EET as per the list above

6 are NEET and being supported as per the list above

Year 13: 38 young people

EET: 25 young people (66%)

- 17 young people (45%) are currently on roll at a 6th form or FE College. Courses include A levels, Foundation courses in subjects such as Animal Care and Construction and ESOL.
- 5 young people (13%) are enrolled on courses with accredited Training Providers

- 2 young people (5%) are in employment
- 1 young person (2.6%) is in custody

13 young people (34%) are Not in Employment, Education or Training. Of these:

- 2 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children who are newly arrived in the UK and will be enrolled on an appropriate ESOL course in college
- 2 have complex SEND and are being supported by the Virtual School and SEND team
- 4 wish to enrol in training courses or find employment and are being supported by the Virtual School to achieve this
- 1 is due to start on a training course
- 1 has complex mental health needs and cannot currently access EET opportunities
- 1 is having tuition funded by the Virtual School in order to prepare for a college course
- 2 are in difficult personal circumstances and being supported by Children’s Social Care and the Virtual School

Priorities for 2022 – 23

- Recruitment of an 18 – 25 EET Lead to replicate the work of the Post-16 EET Lead with the Care Leaver cohort
- Continued monitoring of the Year 12 and 13 cohort and their access and engagement in education, employment or training
- Monthly meetings with colleges to review the engagement and progress of the cohort
- Encourage as many Year 12/13 students to attend their PEPs as possible

The Virtual School is successfully enrolled on a pilot for post-16 PPG funding. We have been allocated a small amount of money to use specifically to support the education, employment and training of our 16- and 17-year-olds. We will be using this funding to provide bespoke support to our young people. We already have several enrolled on tuition to prepare them for their GCSE resits, which is something we have not previously been able to fund for the cohort so is a really encouraging development.

“Very impressed with Marion, our college liaison worker.”

Bury Foster Carer survey feedback, September 2022

Care Leavers (age 18-25) status and destinations

It is harder to monitor the destinations of our Care Leavers once they turn 18. Of 145 Care Leavers, we have the following information:

Total number: 145

Total in Education, Employment or Training: 73 (50.3%)

Attending FE College or equivalent	17	11.7%
Attending University or Higher Education	14	9.7%
Apprenticeship or Training	3	2.1%
In Employment or Training other than Apprenticeship	39	26.9%

Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) due to illness/disability	16	11.03%
NEET due to pregnancy or parenting	7	4.8%
NEET due to other circumstances	33	22.8%
Not known	6	4.1%



Film poster designed by a Year 12 Bury CLA enrolled on a Design course at college; the Virtual School funded a place on the college's summer school programme for the student prior to the course commencing

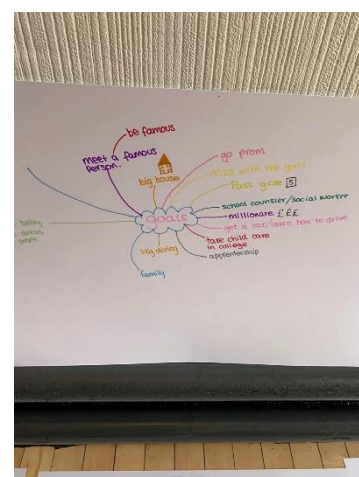
Aim Higher Programme

In 2021 – 22, the Virtual School further expanded its provision to promote educational aspiration amongst the CLA cohort. Nationally, 2019 data showed that just 6% of Care Leavers go on to Higher Education at the age of 18. We want to show our Bury CLA that university is as much an option for them as it is for their peers who are not care-experienced. There are three main elements of our Aim Higher provision:

1. Academic Support: ensuring that all our CLA have access to additional education support to help them reach the required grades for university if this is an appropriate pathway for them, such as 1:1 tuition support for their GCSEs.

2. Engagement with national and regional CLA-specific programmes: because increasing the number of Care Leavers who progress to Higher Education is a national priority, a number of institutions now run schemes to proactively engage CLA from younger ages to promote better understanding of HE. Bury Virtual School is proactive in working with these providers and promoting them to our cohort. Three schemes we have been involved with are below.

- **Success4Life:** this is a scheme offered by an increasing number of UK universities. It is a structured 8-week programme for CLA in Year 8 and Year 9 which engages CLA in weekly activities at university to help them learn more about university life, offer academic and pastoral support and help them to learn new skills. Seven of our CLA enrolled on Success4Life at Bolton University this year and feedback was really positive. We will be working with Bolton to offer Success4Life to our cohort again this year.
- **Barclays LifeSkills:** this is a scheme for young people in Year 8 and Year 9 which matches them with a mentor from Barclays bank. They develop the young people’s key employability skills, such as CV writing and job applications, interviews and resilience. We proactively promoted this with our CLA cohort and offered places to all CLA in appropriate year groups in Bury schools. The VSH and Learning Mentor worked with the Barclays mentors to offer training in trauma and the needs of our cohort and then went to their final session, where we were able to see them taking part in mock interviews and discussing their future plans with their mentors. It was fantastic to see our young people talking so enthusiastically about their future plans.
- **First Star Scholars:** this is a scheme which has run successfully in the South of England for some time and is now expanding to Northern areas. CLA in Year 9 are invited to a week-long residential each summer at Sussex University and then receive ongoing mentoring and academic support until they finish Year 13. We enrolled one young person on the programme in 2021 - 22 and would like to expand this further in 2022 - 23.



Photos of Bury CLAs’ mind-maps of their future aspirations completed as part of the Barclays LifeSkills programme, 2022

3. Visits to Higher Education institutions: our post-16 EET Lead and Learning Mentor ran several visits to Bolton University this year with some of our cohort from Year 11 and Year

12. The young people met key members of staff at the university and had a tour of the facilities. The visits were extremely popular with our young people and we plan to offer them to all CLA for whom university is an appropriate pathway.



“I’ve had the best day. Now I know it’s possible for me to go to university. I’ve always worried that I have no money but I now know it is possible. Thank you so much for taking me!” Year 11 feedback following a university visit with the VS team, March 2022

Photo from a Virtual School tour of Bolton University, March 2022

Training Offer

The Virtual School expanded its training offer in 2021 – 22 to our key stakeholders: schools, social workers and foster carers.

Schools

We held Designated Teacher Forums every term, each with a different CPD focus including attachment and trauma training, effective PEP planning and understanding Children’s Social Care. The latter session was delivered by two of the Safeguarding Team Managers and was very warmly received. Feedback from a recent Designated Teacher Forum showed that 100% of delegates felt the training met their expectations and 89% felt it exceeded them.

We commissioned training from Trauma-Informed Schools UK (TISUK) this year to support Bury schools in understanding the needs of all children who have experienced trauma and/or attachment difficulties, not just CLA. In November 2021 we hosted an online three-hour CPD session presented by TISUK which was attended by over 90 professionals from both our Bury and out-of-borough schools. Feedback was incredibly positive and we are offering the session again in November 2022; so far, over 80 delegates have booked a place on the training.

We also offered Bury schools a funded place on the TISUK Diploma in Trauma and Mental-Health Informed Schools and Communities. Delegates from 18 Bury schools as well as the Virtual School team enrolled on the Diploma, which provides both extensive theory and practice in supporting children who have experienced trauma. We are offering the Diploma again this year and targeting our Bury secondary schools with the goal that all will have a

“It’s been outstanding. The best CPD I have ever done. I’ve learnt so much and it’s already had a huge impact on the work I do with our children in school. Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to make such a difference!” Feedback from a TISUK Diploma delegate, September 2022

member of staff with the qualification working to support their pupils.

The Virtual School also delivered whole-school training in eleven Bury schools, focusing on trauma and attachment.

Social Workers

The VSH has developed a bespoke three-hour training programme for Bury's social workers, "Support with all things educational". Topics covered include understanding school attainment measures, the importance of good attendance, understanding SEND and EHCP systems, effective PEPs and evidence-based interventions for children with a social worker. The programme is offered to all CSC teams at regular intervals throughout the year.

"Just wanted to say thank you for the training....it was really helpful and I wish it would have been available when I was a new social worker. It would have massively helped with CiN/CP and LAC meetings. I went into PEP meetings blind....there's so many things I would have changed had I known the info I know now." Feedback from a Social Worker following completion of VS training, August 2022

Foster Carers

Foster carers were offered a regular programme of sessions run by the Virtual School team, each themed around a particular aspect of education, such as SEND or applying for Higher Education. We also offered funded training from the charity Beanstalk on supporting reading for pleasure with children, following feedback from our ILACS inspection that promoting literacy with carers is crucial. Unfortunately, uptake from carers for most sessions was poor. The VSH has surveyed carers in September 2022 to get their views on what would encourage better participation in training events; ensuring our carers understand education systems and processes is essential, so following the end of the survey window we will work with them to encourage better participation in 2022 – 23.

Transition Support

Children who have experienced trauma and disrupted attachment often find transitions harder than their peers. The Virtual School recognises this and a key role of our Learning Mentor is to provide additional support to our children at key transition points.

Year 6 – 7

Transition for our Year 6 CLA began early in the school year when we applied for their secondary school place and ensured they all had a suitable school offer. Seven of our Year 6 CLA had EHCPs and it was particularly vital that these children had a suitable school offer in place that could meet their needs.

A Virtual School representative attended all PEP meetings for the Year 6 cohort. The Learning Mentor held additional meetings with Designated Teachers and the children, visiting them in school where possible. Tutors were assigned to children who needed additional support to make progress. All year 6 children received a bespoke resource pack from the Virtual School at the end of their time in primary school. The brightly coloured bag (contents shown below) was personalised with their initial and contained a range of resources to support their transition, including Maths and English KS3 study guides, a copy of Marcus Rashford's book *You Are A Champion*, stationery and other items. They also received a bespoke Transition Booklet for their key adult in primary school to complete with them. This helped the children

prepare for transition and alerted professionals to any worries or anxieties, which were addressed by work completed with the child.



Children were encouraged to visit their secondary schools to familiarise themselves with the building, which helps them to be able to cope better with the changes ahead when they start high school. The transition work offered to individual children helped them to look forward to starting secondary school and alleviate any worries during the summer break.

The Virtual School ensured that children were offered a place at summer school if offered by the receiving school. We also offered our Year 6 children a funded place on the transition summer camp offered by the charity Bright Futures.

This term, our Learning Mentor has continued to support our Year 7s as they settle into their new schools. Attendance this half term has been excellent for the year group, with only 2 children having attendance below 90%. Of these two, one was on a holiday at the start of term and the other found the transition to secondary difficult, but intensive support from our Learning Mentor including daily visits mean the child has been supported to attend daily and attendance is steadily approaching 90%.

The Bright Star Camp offered in August was great for confidence building.”
Bury Foster Carer Survey feedback, September 2022

Year 11- 12

All our Year 11 CLA received bespoke support from the Virtual School this year. All their PEPs were prioritised for attendance and many had more frequent PEPs than the statutory requirement, particularly where there were concerns regarding persistent absence or poor engagement with school. All were offered additional tuition to support their preparation for their KS4 pathways, whether GCSEs or Functional Skills. One young person was not able to attend school at all due to complex mental health difficulties. The Virtual School put substantial tuition in place for the young person in placement which enabled them to successfully work towards Functional Skills qualifications.

All CLA were offered additional revision materials and laptops if these were needed and our Learning Mentor provided support regarding revision skills. She provided ongoing support throughout Year 11 and visited CLA regularly in school where additional support needs were identified.

The Post-16 EET Lead attended PEPs for the cohort and ensured all had appropriate college or training applications in place. She and the Learning Mentor took some young people on visits to HE institutions (see Aim Higher information). She worked hard to form positive relationships with the cohort and has continued to support them into Year 12.

All our Year 11s received an Amazon voucher and congratulatory postcard from the Virtual School at the end of the summer term.

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP)

In 2021 – 22, the Virtual School received £47 205 of funding from the Department for Education specifically to be used for School-Led Tuition for our CLA as part of the national Covid-19 Recovery Programme. This funding was fully utilised to pay for additional tutoring for our children who wished to access it. Schools could request funding directly to pay their own tutors or the Virtual School referred children to appropriate tuition agencies who were official NTP Providers.

“Thank you so much for the tuition this year. It made such a difference and A wouldn’t have passed his GCSEs without it.”

Foster Carer feedback on GCSE Results Day 2022

Literacy Support

We recognise the importance of our children becoming fluent readers and the positive impact this has on their life chances. To promote a love of reading for pleasure, our 0-5 children are enrolled in Dolly Parton’s The Imagination Library, a scheme where they receive a book every month posted to their home. Our Reception – Year 8 children this year were enrolled in The Letterbox Club provided by the charity BookTrust. This is an evidence-based programme designed specifically to engage disadvantaged children in reading. Every month for six months they receive a parcel posted to their homes containing an age-appropriate book and literacy and numeracy resources, as well as an additional hardback book as a Christmas present. The image below shows some of the books given to our children this year.



Teens and Toddlers

In 2021 – 22, the Virtual School supported 5 of our CLA to take part in Power2’s Teens and Toddlers programme. This is a nationally recognised and evidence-based programme which supports vulnerable young people who are disengaged with school by increasing their self-

esteem and supporting them to learn new skills and take on additional responsibility. In the 16-week programme, they learn about child development and health and safety and then are placed in a nursery school for a half-day each week, mentoring a young child and supporting their learning. At the end of the programme they achieve a Level 1 qualification. All the CLA who took part showed increased engagement with school following the programme, evidenced by improved attendance and reduced negative behaviour incidents. Following the success of Teens and Toddlers, the Virtual School will be providing it again as an intervention in 2022 – 23.

Holiday Activity Programme

The Virtual School expanded our holiday provision this year to offer trips, educational experiences and cultural experiences during every school holiday period. This year's activities included two Art workshops with a qualified Art teacher for our primary-aged children, trips to the cinema, bowling, LaserQuest, indoor Ski slopes and Total Ninja for our secondary-aged cohort, and a theatre trip. We also funded places on schemes offered by local FE providers, such as the Animal Academy course offered by Hopwood Hall College and the FutureWorks summer school. One of our CLA who has just finished Year 11 took part in the FutureWorks programme and enjoyed it so much he is now enrolled on a Gaming Design programme at the institution.



Artwork completed by one of our children at a holiday Art Workshop

The Governing Board of the Virtual School

In 2021, the Virtual School Governing Body was convened and the agreed purpose to provide strategic leadership and accountability. It has three key functions:

- Holding the Headteacher to account for the statutory functions of the Virtual School
- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Overseeing the financial performance and making sure money is well spent

In addition, the governing body will promote the local co-operative commitment to improve the educational achievement, enjoyment and life chances of Bury's children in care through effective partnership working.

The Governing Body aims to meet each term, but a meeting did not take place in the summer term 2022 due to the Council elections meaning a delay in electing a new Chair. A new Chair is now in post and the first meeting in 2022 is scheduled for December. The Board will meet each term to review aspects of the Virtual School's work in relation to its statutory duties.

Extension to role of the Virtual School

The Virtual School now has a non-statutory role to provide appropriate advice, guidance and support to schools and social care colleagues for children with a social worker. This is in addition to our statutory work with looked after children and previously looked after children. We completed initial scoping work in 2021 – 22 to understand the size and needs of the cohort, focusing on school attendance, exclusions and SEND information. We advertised two new posts in October 2022 to support these new duties and have successfully appointed one, our Lead for Children with a Social Worker, with the recruitment process for an Inclusion Adviser currently ongoing. Our newly appointed Lead for Children with a Social Worker will be responsible for working with the VSH to develop Bury's strategic vision and processes for the new duties, to ensure that our vulnerable children who may be on the edge of care have appropriate educational support in place.

North West VSH Network

The VSH continues to attend the termly North West Virtual School Headteachers' Network and is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads. The Network is extremely supportive and allows for effective cross-Authority working and collaboration.

Appendix: Case Studies

Please note that all names have been changed.

1. Sam, Y11

Sam had a change in his foster placement in Year 11 which meant that he had to move school. We always seek to avoid this where possible, but it is particularly problematic in KS4 so effective Virtual School support was crucial to ensure that Sam's GCSEs were not impacted by the move.

The Virtual School supported Sam by funding online tuition while he moved placement and while we worked to get him on roll at a new school. We provided a laptop for him to access this.

The Virtual School Learning Mentor did home visits and kept in touch via phone while Sam was between schools.

Once on roll in his new school, online tuition continued to ensure Sam had ongoing additional support. This remained in place up to the end of his GCSE exams.

The Virtual School Post-16 EET Lead supported Sam with advice about FE courses and helped him with his college application and interview.

Sam expressed an interest in Music Technology so the Virtual School funded a place on the FutureWorks summer programme where he gained practical experience in this area.

Sam went on to achieve fantastic GCSE results and made better than expected progress overall, with a positive Progress 8 score.

Sam is now excelling on his Music Technology course at college. The Virtual School has part-funded a MacBook Pro for him to use for his studies and has arranged to take him on a 1:1 bespoke visit to Salford University to explore his HE options in his chosen field.

2. Ryan, Year 3

Ryan has complex SEND and an EHCP. The Virtual School supported his carers to seek out a Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder assessment and encouraged his school to undertake training in supporting children with FASD. Despite this, Ryan's needs were very complex and mainstream ultimately couldn't meet his needs.

The Virtual School worked with Ryan's carers to update his EHCP and ensure it reflected his needs. We secured appropriate, nurturing Alternative Provision for Ryan while the SEN team consulted with special schools. We liaised with SEN and worked with them to secure Ryan a place in a local special school.

The Virtual School accompanied Ryan and his carers on visits to his new school and worked on a transition timetable and programme with them. Ryan needed a long transition into his new school so this took place over a term. During this time the Virtual School had monthly meetings and reviews with carers and school to ensure Ryan had the right support, and that his carers were supported too. There were difficulties at times while Ryan adjusted to his new school but all parties worked together to resolve them.

Ryan is now doing really well at his new school and has recently had a really positive Annual Review.

3. Thomas, Y11

Thomas was on roll at an out-of-borough school but challenging behaviour meant he was at serious risk of permanent exclusion in Year 11. Thomas wanted to achieve his GCSEs but was struggling in the busy school environment. Time was of the essence as there were only four months to go before his final exams.

The Virtual School went to the school to intervene and prevent permanent exclusion. We arranged for him to attend to a smaller school in Bury which meets the needs of young people who find mainstream school environments difficult.

The Virtual School put additional tuition in place for Thomas. In particular, we supported subjects which were not part of the curriculum at his new school in order for him to still be able to take those exams. We provided him with a laptop to help with his studies and additional revision guides and materials.

The Virtual School Learning mentor supported Thomas to complete his coursework in the Easter holidays and liaised with his school to ensure all his work was submitted on time. The Virtual School Head also provided additional English tuition in the holidays. The Learning Mentor continued to support Thomas in his new school, doing regular mentoring sessions with him and the school's therapy dog.

The Virtual School Post-16 EET Lead supported Thomas with his post-16 options and college application, and took him on a visit to Bolton University with our Learning Mentor.

Thomas passed a range of GCSEs and is now successfully enrolled on a college course. He aspires to be a social worker in the future. The Post-16 EET Lead continues to support him in college to ensure he is happy and engaging in his studies.