

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report 2023-2024
Meeting date	17 March 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report serves to provide a detailed overview of the activities and impact of the BCP Virtual School during the academic year 2023-24. The Virtual School operates on behalf of the Local Authority (LA), collaborating with partners to advocate for Children in Care (CIC) in education and ensuring positive and aspirational educational outcomes.</p> <p>The report outlines the future priorities and development plans for the BCP Virtual School, aiming to improve outcomes and support for a positive transition to adulthood for all Care Experienced young people.</p> <p>The report is based on the LA held pupil information and results from schools. At the time of publishing, there is no comparative national data available for the academic year 2023-24. Comparative data will be available upon its publication in April 2025. By conducting comparative analysis throughout the year, we aim to identify areas where the Virtual School has significant impact and areas where improvement is needed in relation to national benchmarks. This information will guide our efforts in providing the best possible support for children in care, aligning with broader educational standards.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>The successes of the young people in care and Care Leavers, the work undertaken by the Virtual School and the priorities for the next academic year are to be noted by the Committee.</p>
Reason for recommendations	Update of the work undertaken by the Virtual School during the academic year 2023-24.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Richard Burton Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley, Director for Children's Services
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For information

Background

1. The Children and Families act 2014 mandates local authorities in England to designate at least one individual to fulfil the responsibility of promoting the educational achievement of Children in Care. The appointed Virtual School Head is required to be an officer employed by the local authority. The Virtual School Head assumes the lead role in ensuring the establishment of effective arrangements to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Children in Care including those placed outside the home authority's boundaries.
2. The educational specialists within the Virtual School collaborate with partners to champion the educational achievement of Children in Care to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) regardless of their location and educational setting. The Virtual School's responsibilities extend to offering advice and guidance to parents and professionals regarding Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) including those under Special Guardianship Orders (SGO), adopted or subject to child arrangement orders. Since September 2021, the duties of the Virtual School Head have been expanded to strategically promote the education of children who have had a social worker encompassing Children in Need (CIN) and those subject Child Protection (CP) plans. From September 2024 this has extended to all children in Kinship care.
3. In collaboration with early years settings, schools, post-16 colleges and social care leaders, the Virtual School team concentrates on fostering a culture of high aspirations for all children with a social worker. This involves both direct collaboration with education provisions for Children in Care and strategic engagement for children with a social worker and those in kinship care. The emphasis lies in enhancing the skill set of professionals working with this cohort, ensuring the presence of mechanisms for offering advice and support to narrow the attainment gap, promote school attendance, identify intervention needs and promote aspirational outcomes.

Options Appraisal

4. None.

Summary of financial implications

5. None.

Summary of legal implications

6. None.

Summary of human resources implications

7. None.

Summary of sustainability impact

8. None.

Summary of public health implications

9. None.

Summary of equality implications

10. None.

Background papers

None.

Appendices

1. Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2023-24.
2. Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2023-24 (Summary version for young people).