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| **Havering Virtual School Education Strategy** |
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| **2019/2020** |

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**Introduction & Overview**

The role of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) is one of only a few statutory roles required of a local authority. Connected to this role is the current statutory guidance in relation to the duty of a virtual school to promote the educational attainment of looked after children, ‘*Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children, statutory guidance for local authorities’* (February 2018). This guidance states that the VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the Authority’s looked after children, including those placed out-of-authority. For previously looked-after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible.

The Virtual School underwent a change of structure in February 2018, moving from the Education Inclusion Service into Children’s Social Care. The role of the Head Teacher has also been expanded to act as Head of Service for Youth Services and Participation, and Youth Offending.

The current structure is as follows.

Assistant Director Children’s Social Care

Virtual School Head Teacher, Head of Youth Services and Participation, and Youth Offending

Youth Services & Participation Team

KS4 & KS5 Officer

LAC Education Coordinator 0.8

VS Administrator & PEP Coordinator 0.83

Participation Officer

Youth Offending

PEP Champion- commissioned role

Attendance and Behaviour Officer 0.2

Assistant Virtual School Head Teacher

The Havering Virtual School ensures that statutory guidance is met by having in place:

* A maintained up-to-date school roll that gathers information about educational placements, attendance and educational progress
* A system for ensuring that head teachers and designated teachers in schools are fully aware of children in their schools who are looked after
* A training and support strategy that enables designated teachers, social workers, carers and IROs to understand their role in the development and actions related to Personal Education Plans and the outcomes of our looked after children
* A Personal Education Plan (PEP) system that ensures every child has one and that they are up-to-date, effective and of high quality, focusing on educational outcomes

**Pupil Premium Spend**

Funds are allocated to the Virtual School by way of the Pupil Premium for looked after children. This money is the responsibility of the Virtual School head teacher (VSH) to allocate as they see fit but with the end result of supporting educational outcomes for CLA pupils. This additional funding is largely distributed to schools to support the educational outcomes of looked after children who are pupils within their school. At present the Pupil Premium for looked after children amounts to £2300 of additional Government funding. The VSH introduced a new system for allocation of the Pupil Premium in summer term 2016 whereby Havering schools are allocated £500 per term in relation to any CLA pupil attending their school on completion and submission of a satisfactory PEP. Schools may also request up to a further £1000pa to support the education of CLA pupils where there may be more complex support needs.

The allocation of the CLA Pupil Premium monies is not an exact science as funding is based on the number of CLA pupils in the Borough on a given census date. It is therefore important to ensure that funding is available for pupils who become looked after following this census date. In addition, some money is held centrally to fund motivational/aspirational initiatives that will support/promote better educational outcomes for CLA pupils. This includes activities such as study skills and booster sessions, letter box reading scheme, additional careers guidance, mentoring and motivational programmes.

**PEPs**

The PEP is a key document for CLA pupils in relation to tracking their education progress and ensuring appropriate and timely additional support is put in place where required. The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the child’s progress towards education targets is monitored. In 2016/17 Havering Virtual School adopted the new ePEP format to support better tracking of CLA pupil progress.

The Virtual School team quality assures and liaises with schools/designated teachers and social care in this respect. Training is provided for designated teachers and social workers so that they are aware of how to complete an effective PEP. This training includes support from a Virtual School PEP Champion, who has been employed on a consultancy basis to support designated teachers. On-going support and training is offered on a regular basis around the use of the ePEP for Designated Teachers and Social Care.

**Attendance and exclusions**

Havering Virtual School commissions Welfare Call to monitor and report on the daily attendance and exclusion of CLA pupils. This information is provided to the designated Attendance and Behaviour Officer who follows up on information to support improving attendance. Work to support the engagement of CLA pupils also includes liaison with the Alternative Provision Commissioner and Vulnerable Children’s Coordinator who advise and support on educational engagement for CLA pupils who are struggling with mainstream education. Data are collated and reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel and Children’s Services Improvement Board.

**Care Leavers**

Havering Virtual School works in partnership with Children’s Services officers and post 16 providers in the borough to support the positive engagement of care leavers. A working group has been set up with post 16 providers to continue to develop the educational experiences and outcomes of Havering’s care leavers.

The Virtual School leads on the regular monitoring and reviewing of data on Havering CLA NEET in collaboration with Children’s Services and the careers service to support care leavers to access further/higher education, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

The role of the Virtual School’s KS4 and post 16 EET Officer is to support the KS4 cohort with post 16 progression and NEET reduction and to work with the NEET cohort to reduce this. There is also a focus on promoting on improving the quality of post 16 PEPs, seeking higher education opportunities, raising aspiration and engaging with the post 16 cohort.

**Virtual School Annual Report and Quality Improvement Plan**

The Virtual School Head Teacher produces an Annual Report which provides data and commentary on key areas such as attendance, exclusions, attainment, PEP compliance, pupil voice and care leaver destinations. The report assesses also how well support systems are working to ensure better educational outcomes for looked after pupils. This then links to the Virtual School Quality Improvement Plan, which sets out priorities/key actions for the following year.

**Virtual School interventions**

At the point that children are taken into care, school/college and Social Worker complete an initial PEP and this records the current educational progress or circumstances of the child/young person. The Virtual School attend fortnightly CLA placement panel meetings with Children’s Services officers and has the responsibility to source appropriate education provision, where this is not already in place. Wherever possible, placements are sourced with schools that are either good or outstanding. Where schools refuse to accept children looked after, this can be escalated to the Virtual School Head Teacher to consider directing an admissions authority to accept a pupil.

The Havering Virtual School will monitor the educational progress of children looked after via the ePEP and regular communication with schools. Additional funding can be provided to schools to help with any barriers to learning that children face. The Virtual School monitors the quality of PEPs submitted and will challenge/support schools as necessary. Training and support is offered to ensure that Designated Teachers fulfil their roles effectively in line with up to date government policy and guidance. A PEP champion, who is herself a Designated Teacher and a school governor, has been commissioned to provide additional support to schools on an individual basis to continue to raise the standard of PEPs and the PEP process in order to directly impact on the progress and attainment of children and young people.

Training and information is also provided throughout the academic year to school governors, members of SLT in schools, foster carers and post 16 providers to ensure that stakeholders and partners are kept up to date with their duties and expectations to promote and support the educational attainment of CLA.

In addition to the interventions and support put in place in educational provisions for CLA, the Virtual School have a programme of events and activities throughout the year to promote aspiration and educational progress. The aim of the events are to engage children and young people with the Virtual School in order to provide personalised opportunities and support to encourage and foster educational achievement.

**Virtual School Governance**

The Virtual School reports regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel. In addition, the Virtual School Head teacher sits on the Children’s Services Improvement Board and reports as requested.

There will be explorations to re-establish a purposeful and effective governance group to support Havering Virtual School, and further hold it accountable for the effectiveness of its work. The purpose of the group will be to both challenge and support the VSH in relation to promoting and monitoring the educational progress and attainment of CLA pupils.

**Pupil Voice**

The Virtual School receives feedback from Mind Of My Own. Mind of My Own is directly linked to the Virtual School for any concerns in regard to education. Concerns are swiftly followed up and discussed with the appropriate designated school teacher and/or social worker.

Feedback from participants of the events organised by the Virtual School is gathered in order to develop and shape the service to ensure it is directly in line with the children and young people.

**Work with other Virtual Schools**

The Havering Virtual School is an active member of the National Association of Virtual School Head Teachers and the VSH attends the East London and Pan London VSH network. This aids joint working with other virtual schools, especially in relation to supporting virtual schools that place pupils within the borough and in seeking support from other virtual schools where Havering pupils are placed with carers outside Havering.