

	<p align="center">Brent Corporate Parenting Committee</p> <p align="center">13th October 2021</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Head of Inclusion and Virtual School Headteacher</p>
<p>Brent Virtual School Annual Report Academic Years 2019/20 and 2020/21</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2019/20 and 2020/21
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Sharon Buckby Head of Inclusion and Headteacher, Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Sharon.buckby@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Michaela Richards Deputy Head Brent Virtual School Michaela.richards@brent.gov.uk</p>

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Brent Virtual School (BVS) and the educational outcomes of Brent Council's Looked after children (LAC) for the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21. This combined report covers the two academic years that have spanned the Covid-19 pandemic. It reflects on the achievements of looked after children during this period and identifies areas in need of development that

have arisen for this group of young people as a consequence of their experiences of education during the pandemic.

- 1.2 The report also provides a summary of activity that has had positive impact on the outcomes for looked after children and identifies a set of priorities for the 2021/22 academic year. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, and includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2021, (“eligible cohort”).

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Corporate Parenting Committee notes the contents of this report and approves the strategic priorities for 2021/22 outlined in paragraph 3.4.

3. **Summary**

- 3.1 The Brent Virtual School (BVS) is the key statutory service for ensuring the best possible outcomes for the education of looked after children. The BVS leads on education to ensure that all professionals within a team around the child work together in the best interests of the pupil or student. The service provides intervention from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of KS5, supporting social workers, foster carers and placement providers to ensure an effective transition into leaving care services.

- 3.2 At the core of the work of the BVS is the aspiration to ensure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to learn effectively and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they are able to make informed choices about their futures from a range of options. This range will be at its widest when children succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school.

3.3 **The key themes that have emerged when reviewing BVS activity during these two academic years include:**

- a) The value of delivering Personal Education Plans online, maximising multidisciplinary participation and the focus on quality and impact. To enhance these arrangements there is a need to strengthen the lead role of the social worker and school in the delivery of PEPs.
- b) The success in delivering a wide range of online booster classes and enrichment provision, combined with targeted onsite residential or therapeutic interventions to support the raising of aspirations and participation. With this it is clear that successful outcomes are more likely to be achieved by focusing on young people’s interests to maintain positive engagement and learning outcomes.
- c) The multidisciplinary focus on persistent absenteeism and the holistic systemic planning for children.

- d) The number of young people entering care in adolescence with unmet or unidentified SEND needs has identified the extent to which there continues to be a significant minority of pupils whose full learning needs are not identified at an early enough point.
- 3.4 The BVS has reflected on the activity, progress and areas for continued development during the 19/20 and 20/21 academic years and, subject to Corporate Parenting Committee approval, intends to focus on the following priorities in 2021/22:
- a) To ensure there is mandatory PEP training for social workers. This is especially important with the introduction of a new PEP electronic system. To deliver online surgeries for designated teachers on improving the quality of PEPs and the use of the Pupil Premium to raise aspirations, targeting schools and settings where additional support has been identified.
 - b) Continued provision of an enrichment curriculum both on line and onsite, drawing in expertise as required and rooting this in the interests of individual children.
 - c) Review multidisciplinary support to ensure effective earlier identification of SEND needs in tandem with the new guidance for Virtual Schools in supporting the educational outcomes for all children with a social worker. This also links to the introduction of a graduated approach within Brent schools to help identify and meet pupils' additional needs at the earliest possible point.
 - d) Increased direct work by the advisory teachers and life coaches in school and colleges where young people are experiencing particular challenges to remain positively engaged.

Related documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker>

Report sign-off:

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