# Oxfordshire

# Service for Looked after Children and Care Leavers

# Annual Report

# 2013-14

The Oxfordshire service for Looked after Children and Care Leavers, 0-25, is a partner to all schools and settings, who challenge each other to be the most ambitious and aspirational corporate parents we can be

Like all good parents, we ensure we are all working together successfully to help children in care thrive

# Contents

**Summary**

**Main report**

Developments in the team, 2013-14

The Cohort

Attendance

Exclusions

Achievement

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4
- Post-16

Partnerships

Appendices

- Virtual School Improvement Plan 2013-15
- Virtual School Structure chart for 2013-14.

# Summary

There was a full cohort of 355 looked after children (LAC) in Oxfordshire.

## Key performance indicators, 2013-14

**At Key Stage 2**
- The proportion of those attaining level 4 or better in all 3 subjects has improved from 2013.

**At Key Stage 4**
- Attainment at 5A*-C including English and mathematics was 16% and has gone above the national average for LAC for the first time (using the best GCSE results)
- Those making expected progress in English have increased by 17 % points (ppt), remained the same in mathematics and in both subjects have increased by 12ppt
- The gap in attainment at 5A*-C including English and maths has reduced by 6ppt
- The percentage achieving one or more GCSE continues to improve.

## The main actions we took in 2013-14 that made an improvement

- The policy for allocating and using pupil premium plus (targeted funding for improving education outcomes for LAC) was agreed and implemented
- Oxfordshire County Council policy to reduce fixed term exclusions for LAC was implemented, causing a reduction exclusions
- Regular attendance scrutiny meetings resulted in a reduction in overall absence by 0.8ppt
- A more proactive approach to tuition early in key stage 4 contributed to the increase in students' achievement
- An Early Years personal education plan (PEP) was implemented before it was statutory
- The Orientation and Induction programme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, continues to take young people entering Oxfordshire and give them cultural, language and wellbeing support in order to enable them to successfully access a school or college place
- Senior staff attend first PEP writing meetings in new schools and when a young person is new into care, significantly improving the quality of them, reaching 95% satisfactory in May.

## The main actions we will take in 2014-15

**Oxfordshire aims to be the most fostering friendly county in the country**

By working more effectively in partnership with schools, with foster carers and listening to the young person, we want to:

- Develop understanding of what it means to be a Corporate Parent among **all** school staff
- Develop a more flexible curriculum recognising the delayed attainment of a number of Looked after Children (LAC)
- Improve the quality of personal education plans (PEPs) so that they meet the learning needs of the young people so that all LAC making good or better progress
- Improve access to good quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), raise student aspiration and improve further education and employment opportunities
- Embed the Oxfordshire behaviour framework to avoid fixed term exclusions, especially out of county exclusions, and reduce persistent absence
- Support foster carers and those newly recruited to fostering concerning learning at home
- Reduce the attainment gaps between LAC and all children in the context of a cohort with increasing special educational needs, through a focus on literacy.

# Main Report

This report acts as a review and evaluation of the education and attainment of Looked after Children (LAC) in Oxfordshire for the academic year 2013-14.

The key priorities of the service are to improve the life chances of Children in Care and Care Leavers in Oxfordshire by ensuring all children, for whom the Local Authority acts as corporate parent, have the highest quality education tailored to their needs.

**Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers – June 2014**
**Key Judgement 2 -** The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

- Children and young people attend school or other educational provision and they learn. Accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support where it is needed, help them to make good progress in their learning and development wherever they live. They receive the same support from their carers as they would from a good parent. The attainment gap between them and their peers is narrowing. The local authority maintains accurate and up-to-date information about how looked after children are progressing at school and takes urgent and individual action when they are not achieving well. All looked after children and young people attend a good school.

- Children and young people who do not attend school have access to 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress. Urgent action to protect children is taken where they are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces.

After inspection and as a consequence of the amalgamation of RAISE (16-25) team into the Virtual School and its incorporation into the Team for Vulnerable Learners,  the service for Looked after Children and Care Leavers will be more able to realise its mission to enable LAC from 0 – 25 to thrive.



Aaron Miles, year 11 2014, elected as North Oxfordshire Member of Youth Parliament.
He also appeared on BBC South Today talking about the positive impact of care on his life.

# Developments in the team and key events, 2013-14

In the academic year 2013-14 the Virtual School underwent a number of **significant changes**:

- ➤ **September 2013** - the team merged with the RAISE (16-25 team) to expand the team's responsibility to 0-25
- ➤ **September 2013** – Appointment made on a one year contract to Education, Employment and Training Co-ordinator to lead the 16-25 part of the team
- ➤ **September 2013** – Intervention Manager appointed with responsibility for out of county students and daily attendance reporting.
- ➤ **September 2013** – LAC performance lead appointed to develop and embed data systems in the Virtual School
- ➤ **September 2013** – One of two Education, Employment and Training (EET) support workers went on maternity leave and were not immediately replaced.
- ➤ **October 2014** – EET support worker joined the team on a temporary contract
- ➤ **November 2013** – staff informed there would be a restructure.
- ➤ **December 2013** – Member of admin staff left
- ➤ **January 2014** – Senior team begin researching strategies for managing the new Pupil Premium Plus from April 2014
- ➤ **February 2014** – One member of staff went on long term sick leave
- ➤ **February 2014** – Primary/SENCO lead handed notice in for the end of August.
- ➤ **March 2014** – New EET support worker left for a permanent contract
- ➤ **March 2014** – Team begin to prepare for the new SEND reforms
- ➤ **Pupil Premium Plus introduced and new statutory guidance for Designated Teachers released**
- ➤ **April 2014** – Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services for 4 weeks. **Outcome good**.
- ➤ **May 2014** - Another member of staff went on long term sick leave.
- ➤ **June 2014** – Restructure for Vulnerable Learners' Service consultation document released.



**Through this year the priorities have been:**

- To improve attendance
- To continue to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans ensuring they have a positive impact on the progress the children and young people
- To raise the number of students achieving 5+ C grade GCSE grades including English and Mathematics
- To merge the RAISE (16-25) team into the Virtual school to improve the numbers in Education, Employment and Training.

Year 11 LAC student's GCSE Practical Food and Nutrition exam graded B

# Cohort, 2013-14

The service for Looked after Children (Virtual School) works with all who are in or have been in care. This population does change throughout the year and different groups are reported on, see definitions below.

**Reported cohort numbers for each year by gender**

National Curriculum Year

Male (86)
Female (64)
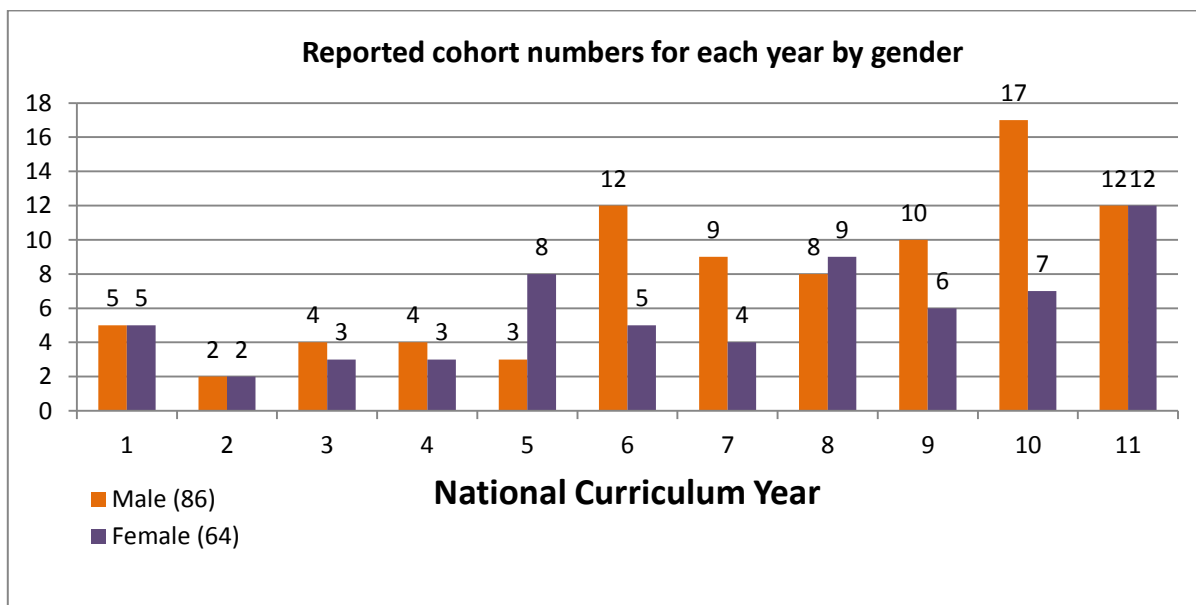
The reported cohort comprised 56 pupils in Primary and 94 pupils in Secondary.

From the beginning of April to the end of the academic year, the full Year 10 cohort grew from 47 to 61.

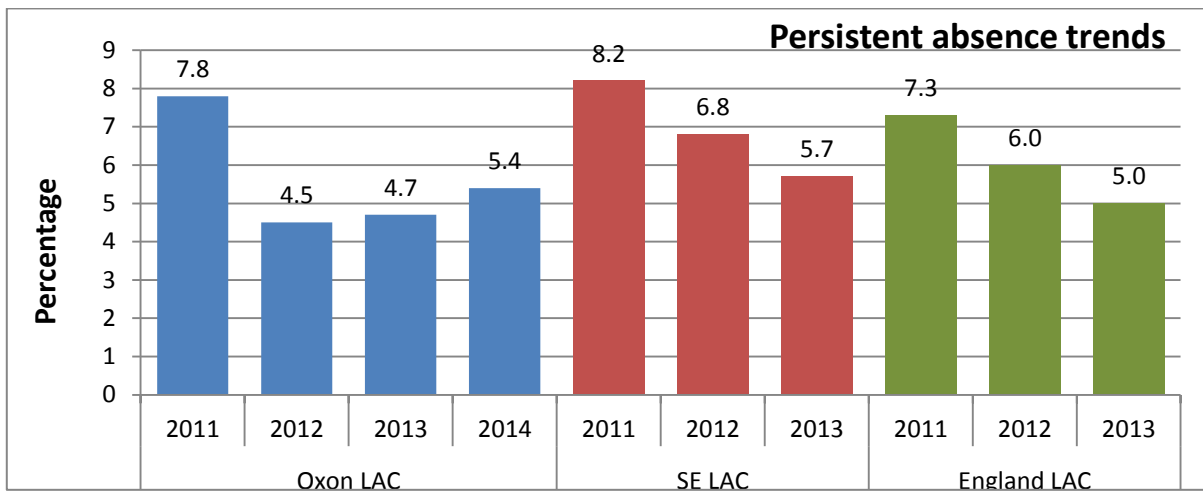## Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

**Percentages of pupils with any SEN status 2013/14**

National Curriculum Year
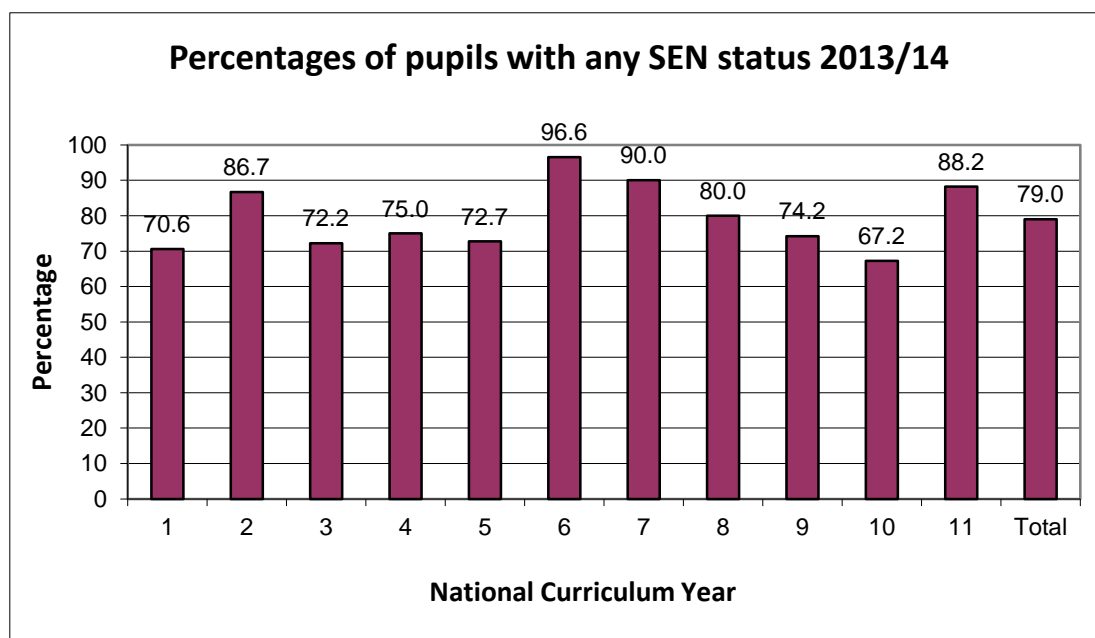
## Cohort definitions and numbers:
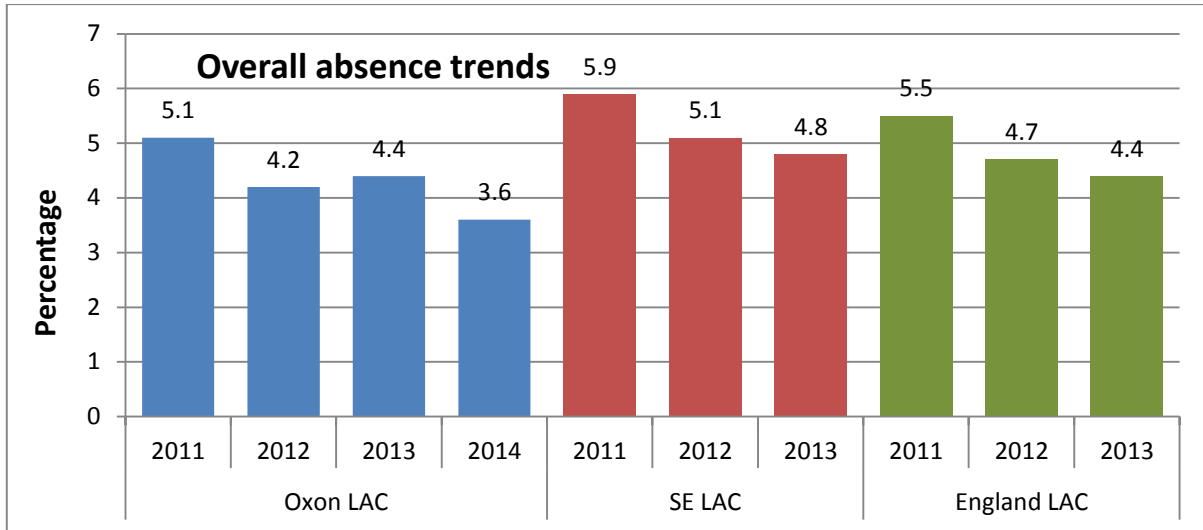
**The reported cohort**. 150 pupils, who were continuously in care for at least 12 months at 31<sup>st</sup> March, attending maintained schools and non-maintained special schools and academies. This is used for reporting by the DfE.

**The in-care cohort**. 312 pupils, who were in care at the end of year.

**Full cohort.** 355 pupils have been in care at some point in the academic year.

## Attendance

**Overall absence trends**

| Oxon LAC | | | | SE LAC | | | England LAC | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| 5.1 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 3.6 | 5.9 | 5.1 | 4.8 | 5.5 | 4.7 | 4.4 |

**Persistent absence trends**

| Oxon LAC | | | | SE LAC | | | England LAC | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| 7.8 | 4.5 | 4.7 | 5.4 | 8.2 | 6.8 | 5.7 | 7.3 | 6.0 | 5.0 |

**Attendance for LAC is the responsibility of the team for Looked after Children (Virtual School)**

- Trends in attendance for LAC in Oxfordshire show an improvement
- Overall absence reduced by 0.8ppt to 3.6%, although persistent absence increased slightly by 0.6ppt to 5.4%.
- Data shows that those not in care for a solid year between April 1st and March 31st have significantly greater levels of overall and persistent absence. This suggests care is a protective factor.

**What we are doing to improve**

- Attendance is gathered daily for all pupils by an external company, Welfare Call
- Absence is questioned, schools challenged and patterns are assessed to find improvements
- Senior LAC team staff monitor attendance and refer cases to key workers and/or partners who devise intervention. This role was new at the start of 2013.
- Senior LA staff assess LAC attendance and devise strategies in partnership to overcome issues.
- From September 2013, social workers must ask permission of the Virtual School Headteacher and Corporate Parenting Manager to take any holiday in term time. This is only exceptionally granted.

**What we will do to improve further**

- Develop stronger systems to analysis of the trends in persistent absence
- Develop more challenge between the Corporate Parenting Manager and the Vulnerable Learners Manager to remove systemic barriers to good attendance
- Generate a bigger list of alternative provision particularly more options for young people who are at a high level of risk.
- Continue to develop schools' understanding of the need for relevant, flexible and challenging curriculum for Looked after Children.

## Exclusions

Oxfordshire has a policy of zero tolerance on permanent exclusions and works with schools when children are on the edge of being excluded.

As a consequence no Looked after Child has been permanently excluded in Oxfordshire for 6 years.

**Fixed term Exclusions**
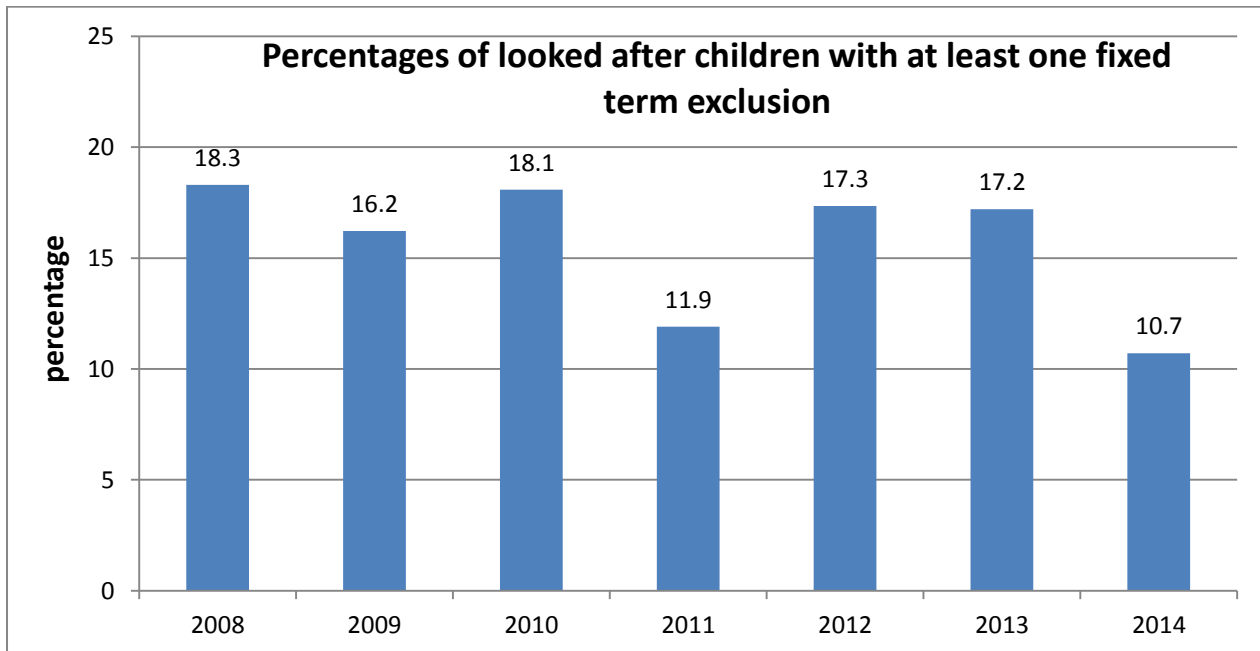


The Exclusions rate reduced significantly in 2013/14 and is now at the lowest for six years. The exclusion rate for out-of-county pupils (16.7%) was almost twice as high as that for pupil's in-county (8.8%). Nationally, fixed term exclusions are decreasing.

In line with the national data, exclusions increase significantly from year 9 onwards. The higher numbers in year 10 compared to year 11, suggest schools may be more willing to explore alternatives in year 11 to avoid pupils missing learning in an exam year.

Looked after Children continue to have significantly higher exclusion rates than other children.

**What we are doing to improve**

- A fixed term exclusion protocol was introduced in September 2013, which had been developed with Designated Teachers
- Best practice visit arranged for senior Oxfordshire school staff visit to a non-excluding school
- Challenges by senior Virtual School staff when pupils are excluded
- Therapeutic academic intervention through the charity One –Eighty support engagement and develop strategies with school and the pupil following the exclusion.

**What we will do to improve further**

- Target schools where exclusion has led to placement breakdown
- Develop a culture which keeps our riskiest and most vulnerable within county
- Explore opportunities to develop the understanding of Corporate Parenthood with Headteachers.
- Work with all county teams that work with school leadership to also challenge exclusions and raise awareness of the impact on LAC
- Develop the Caremark to share good practice with all schools along with the Young Carers' Team.
- Develop PEPs and good practice, especially by developing a post focussing on schools causing concern out of county.

## Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

There were 12 pupils identified as LAC in the full cohort assessed using the foundation stage profile. 1 had no data. 8 had been in care less than a year.

From this assessment, 2 achieved a good level of development (GLD). The areas of specific weakness relate to literacy, communication and language development.

# Key Stage 1

As a consequence of local authority policy, children coming into care in KS1 or in the early years move quickly to adoption. The Local Authority received a letter of congratulation by Steve McCabe, Shadow Minister for Children and Families, for this good practice.

**Cohort**

3 girls, 1 boy [All were educated in Oxfordshire.] All 4 were identified as in need of SEN (3 at School Action Plus, 1 at School Action)

**Attainment at level 2\***

| % | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oxon LAC 2014 (4 pupils) | 75 | 75 | 75 |
| England LAC (2013) | 61 | 71 | 79 |

- Attainment broadly matches that of all LAC nationally in all three subjects.

**What we are doing to improve**

- All children who are not making progress in line with expectation are offered additional individual interventions through a Pupil Education Plan (PEP). Where additional tuition is needed sessional tutors are provided.
- A therapeutic, academic intervention is bought in for pupils needing reintegration or engagement support.

**What we will do to improve further**

- Continue to ensure all schools and early years settings effectively write new PEPs to ensure they plan well to support and sustain learning development through KS1
- Develop partnerships with the Early Years team to ensure children's needs are identified early and specialist input is available to support progress into and through Key stage1
- Develop a document to monitor progress for early years, so there is timely and relevant intervention
- Develop early evidence-based literacy support programmes with the literacy team to ensure good progress in reading and writing in years 1 and 2.

In year 2, pupil Z was experiencing difficulties with his peer group. In order to build relationships and support him, a lunch time club was set up for him and other students using pupil premium. He also had poor motor skills and late in year 2, had a diagnosis of double vision.  Pupil Premium was also used to provide an i-pad with one-to-one teacher support to practice handwriting. At the end of year 1, his reading level was 1c, his writing was at P8 and his maths was 1b. To improve his reading, the school put in 2 one to one reading interventions and provided one-to-two support for literacy lessons. He also had 2 maths interventions and the school decided to move the male teacher he had built such a good relationship with in year 1, up to year 2 with him. He finished year 2 with a level 2c in reading, 2c in writing and 2 b in maths.

*These results are for those children who have been in care for 12 months or more between April 1st and March 31st as reported to the DfE.

# Key Stage 2

## Reported Cohort

18 pupils in the reported cohort: 13 boys, 5 girls; 11 educated in Oxfordshire and 7 out of County. 16 of the 18 (88.8%) have been identified as having a special educational need: 6 have statements, 7 school action plus, 3 school action.

Note: One pupil with a statement was working at P levels and another was disapplied.

## Achievement*

| | Pupils 2014 | 2013 | 2014 | National 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 4+** | | | | |
| Reading | 13 | 54.5 | 76 | 89 |
| Writing | 8 | 45.5 | 47 | 86 |
| Maths | 10 | 54.5 | 59 | 86 |
| R/W/M | 7 | 45.5 | 41 | 79 |
| EPSG | 8 | 25.0 | 47 | 77 |
| **Level 5+** | | | | |
| Reading | 3 | 18.2 | 6 | 22.2 |
| Writing | 1 | 0.0 | 5.6 | 33 |
| Maths | 1 | 0.0 | 5.6 | 42 |

| | Pupils 2014 | 2013 | 2014 | National 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Expected progress** | | | | |
| Reading | 15 | 90.9 | 83.3 | 91 |
| Writing | 15 | 100.0 | 83.3 | 93 |
| Maths | 13 | 90.9 | 72.2 | 89 |
| **Above expected progress** | | | | |
| Reading | 7 | 50.0 | 43.8 | 35 |
| Writing | 6 | 25.0 | 37.5 | 33 |
| Maths | 6 | 22.2 | 35.3 | 35 |

- The proportion of those gaining level 4 or better in all 3 subjects has declined slightly compared with 2013, but the data shows that several pupils attained level 4 in 1 or 2 subjects rather than all 3.
- Attainment of Level 4 has improved for each of the three subjects, particularly reading which shows an increase of 21 ppt. Attainment in writing and maths is broadly in line with national figures.

## What we are doing to improve

- All children who are not making progress in line with expectation are offered additional individual interventions through a Pupil Education Plan (PEP). Where additional tuition is needed sessional tutors are provided
- A therapeutic, academic intervention is bought in for pupils needing reintegration or engagement support
- Transition learning mentors liaise with schools to ensure year 5 and 6 pupils have support to achieve targets. Information is gained form destination schools and issues solved
- The transition learning mentor or the Primary lead attends all year 6 PEP meetings to support schools with any necessary interventions.

## What we will do to improve further

- Develop writing intervention with Primary Support Literacy consultants to address the increasing gap in attainment between Looked after Children and all children
- Explore evidence-based schemes for carers to support reading interventions with LAC
- Make links with the Primary Support Mathematics consultants in county to increase their knowledge and understanding of the needs of LAC and develop interventions with schools
- Through the Rees Centre and Bristol University mental health transition project, where they are auditing good practice around transition support, address gaps in transition support and develop plans.

Pupil A came into care in October 2013 when he was in year 6 and was placed with his maternal Grandparents. He was extremely distressed and felt the need to work out of lessons and frequently had altercations with peers. At the end of Key Stage 1, he had achieved a 3c in reading, 2a in writing and a 3c in maths, which indicated he should achieve level 5s in reading in maths and a level 4 in writing if he was to make expected progress.

When it became clear in terms 2 and 3 that he was making no progress, his plans were reviewed. He was brought to school 20 minutes early, so he could meet with a trusted teaching assistant to discuss thoughts and concerns about the day ahead. By January, he was leaving lessons less frequently and the school were able to start to look at his academic progress. The Virtual School transition learning mentor began to work with him in February 2013 focusing on writing. It became apparent through the work with his mentor that he was fixated on death and violence and had been able to watch inappropriate films prior to coming into care. A referral to the Attach team was made and they are now working with him around that.

During his morning conversations, he told his teaching assistant he wanted to be a pilot. A plan was made that if he worked hard and achieved his targets of a level 5 in reading and maths and a 4 in writing, he could have a flying lesson. He achieved level 5s in all three and has made a video explaining the support he had and how it helped him.

# Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

Reporting cohort: 31 students (12 boys, 19 girls) [22 were educated in county and 9 out of county]
Full cohort: 50 students, where over a third came into care in April 2013 or later. These proportions are similar to the cohort who completed year 11 in 2013.

Of the whole cohort taking exams in June 2104, 80% had SEND: school action 12.2%; school action plus 32.7%; statements 35.18%. Of the students with a statement, 32% had a primary need of BESD or MLD. These figures may under-report need: a number of learners starting in the care system late in their education have had poor attendance and/or were highly disengaged, so their needs were not adequately assessed.

## Headlines for the reported cohort

- Attainment at 5A\*-C including English and Mathematics was 16.1% (using the best result) and has gone above the national average for LAC for the first time ever.
- Those making expected progress in English have increased by 17ppt, remained the same in maths and those making expected progress in both English and Mathematics have increased by 12ppt.
- The gap in attainment at 5A\*-C including English and mathematics has reduced by 6ppt.
- Those proportion achieving one or more GCSEs continues to increase every year.

## Headlines for the full cohort

- Those students (19) who arrive later in care do not show up in published figures but disproportionately consume resources.
- Of those who arrive later in care none gained 5A\* to C inc EM and only 2 gained a grade C+ in Eng and maths. 4 made expected progress in English and 1 in mathematics
- Full cohort data shows 10% gained 5A\* to C inc EM

## Achievement (using the best GCSE)

| Key Stage 4, 2014 | Reported Cohort 2012-13 (35 pupils) | | Reported Cohort 2013-14 (31 pupils) | | National 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Students | % | Students | % | % |
| **Attainment** | | | | | |
| 5+ A\*-C inc English & Maths | 2 | 5.7 | **5** | **16.1** | 59.6 |
| 5+ A\*-C | 9 | 25.7 | 6 | 20.6 | 77.8 |
| The Basics GCSE C+ in E & M | 2 | 5.7 | 6 | 17.6 | - |
| 5+ A\*-G inc English & Maths | 21 | 60.0 | 12 | 38.7 | 92.7 |
| GCSE in English & Maths | 24 | 68.6 | 16 | 51.6 | - |
| 1 or more GCSEs | 30 | 85.7 | 29 | 93.5 | 99.3 |
| **Expected progress** | | | | | |
| English | 9 | 31.0 | 13 | 48.1 | 70.9 |
| Maths | 8 | 25.8 | 7 | 25.9 | 65.3 |
| English & Maths | 4 | 13.8 | 7 | 25.9 | - |
| **Met target threshold?** | 17 | 48.6 | 16 | 51.6 | - |
| **Above expected progress** | | | | | |
| English | 4 | 13.8 | 4 | 14.8 | 32 |
| Maths | 1 | 3.4 | 2 | 7.4 | 29 |
| English & Maths | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | - |
| **Met target threshold?** | 2 | 5.7 | 4 | 12.9 | - |

## What we are doing to improve

Students in year 11 are receiving a highly differentiated variety of support strategies in line with their PEPs, supported by the pupil premium plus and additional funding by their schools. The virtual school works hard to deliver a balance between challenging the school and acting with urgency to support the child. Interventions (which are also used for other age groups as appropriate) include:

- one-to-one tutoring in key subjects

- engagement packages from our partners One-eighty
- access for unaccompanied asylum seekers to the four week Orientation and Induction project commissioned from The Children's Society
- rewards and incentives
- providing learning mentors
- arts programmes delivered by ArtsXchange and CoPE accreditation managed by the virtual school and delivered by trained residential workers in Oxfordshire children's homes
- 'Extra-milers' event to support aspiration and revision for targeted learners at Oxford Brookes University
- attendance at and chairing of PEPs for those new into care/new school by senior VSLAC staff, and return to the chair the next PEP if school engagement needs challenge or support
- discussions between the Headteacher and Virtual Head where schools are not rapidly removing barrier to success
- referral to alternative provision or highly bespoke packages of provision where a student cannot access learning in their own school or are in need of a highly personalised learning environment
- additional support for EET beyond the independent information, advice and guidance provided by the school.

## What we will do to improve further

- Improve access to timely information, advice and guidance (IAG) for all students prior to year 11.
- Investigate value of peer mentoring scheme
- Continue to develop timeliness and quality of PEPs in order to fully support progress
- Continue to develop challenge conversations with partners to ensure year 11 pupils are in appropriate consistent provision where they are not excluded and not moved
- Work alongside the Placement Strategy Board to enhance interventions for those on the edge of care.

Student B achieved 3 C grades (including English and Maths), 2 B grades and 1 E grade.

She had come into care in year 8 in March 2011, having achieved expected levels in English and Maths at KS2. She experienced significant trauma prior to coming into care in year 8, with an adoption break down, which may explain the slow progress in key stage 3.

Following 4 exclusions from her school in year 9, various incidents of running away and a wish to build stronger links with her birth family, the Virtual School suggested and facilitated a move to a school near her birth family. A therapeutic and academic intervention programme was put in place through the charity One-Eighty, to support her transition to her new school. She thrived initially and was on course to achieve 5 A*-C including English and Maths for the majority of year 10. Towards the latter part of year 10, there was an issue around potential child sexual exploitation. At the same time, her relationship with her birth mother broke down and she reacted by refusing to engage with or trust anyone.
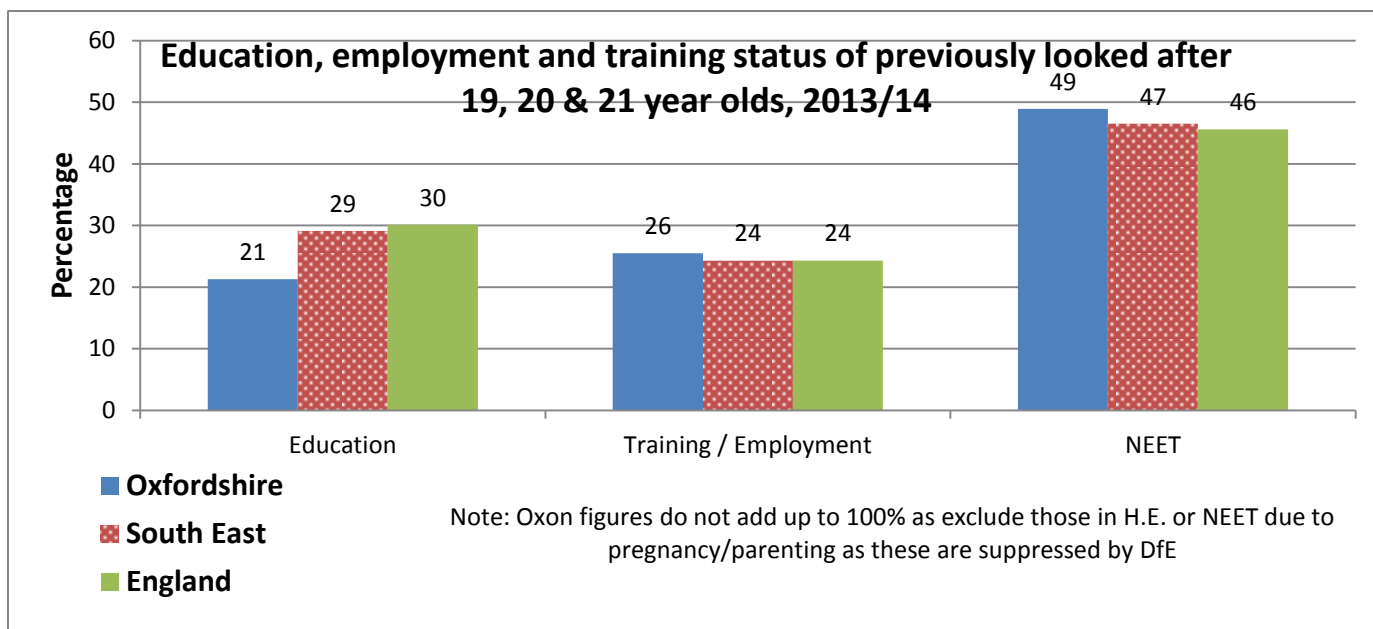
At the start of year 11, she received repeated fixed term exclusions, which only stopped following intervention from the Virtual School and the introduction of a county-wide fixed term exclusion policy for Looked after Children. The school began to explore alternatives to fixed term exclusion and although she continued to abscond and had periods of school refusal, she began to rebuild some relationships with staff. Her attendance dropped to 69% for the year just before she started her exams.

At this point, achieving 5 GCSEs of any grade was aspirational as she would have had to put in significant work to achieve any grade. In her May PEP, she decided she would accept all help offered, which had always been offered and this turn around in attitude led to an intensive period of one to one learning, gym membership and horse riding lessons as weekly reward when she attended school.

# Post-16

53 students were identified in the year 11 cohort as needing a plan for the September offer of education or training. By May, 72% had adequate plans in place for post-16 compared to 92% for all year 12s in Oxfordshire.

By May, there were 71 identified students in year 12 who had been in care. 69% were in education, employment or training. The DfE compares 19, 20 and 21 years olds. The numbers in Oxfordshire who are in education are low in comparison.



**Education, employment and training status of previously looked after 19, 20 & 21 year olds, 2013/14**

Note: Oxon figures do not add up to 100% as exclude those in H.E. or NEET due to pregnancy/parenting as these are suppressed by DfE

## Students entering Higher Education (passed a degree)

| age of entry | 2012/13 | 2013/14 |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | 5 (1) | 5 (1) |
| 19 | 12 (2) | 13 (4) |
| 20 | 9 (2) | 7 (4) |
| 21 | 5 (1) | 3 (1) |
| 22 | 4 (1) | 4 (1) |
| 23 | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **36 (7)** | **34 (11)** |

## What we are doing to improve

- At aged 19, national comparators consistently show Oxfordshire to be one of the higher performing authorities at this measure
- 2 EET support workers are currently focussed primarily on years 11 and 12
- Leaving care personal advisers (PAs) have recourse to VSLAC for advice, referral and signposting for older care leavers. This may involve accompanying a late entrant to university with mental health issues to a meeting with the student support team
- Many graduating students are still in touch with their corporate parent; they attend events and contribute to the development of our work. [One has been a member of VSLAC governing body, one is a social worker in a local academy, a previous chair of the Children in Care Council is a social worker in Newbury, on completing his MA another has recently provided music teaching in our cross-regional project]
- Care leavers receive support and advice through leaving care PAs, members of the 'SWEET' (Specialist Workers in Education, Employment and Training) team, including a full time post in the Prospect contract and at Oxford College (linked to support in Banbury College) and from VSLAC EET support workers
- For unaccompanied asylum seekers, assessed by the home office at age 16 and 17, the Children's Society are commissioned to provide a 4 week Orientation and Induction Programme.

## What we will do to improve further

Continue support and success towards Oxfordshire's target of 100% of year 12 participating in EET by

- Improving IAG through employing a qualified member of staff
- Building employability skills by developing schemes for all ages of children in care focusing on broadening knowledge and raising aspiration
- Strengthening retention rates in college by ensuring year 11s have good quality IAG to take the right course and staff in college hold timely and good quality plans
- Developing understanding of the duty of Corporate Parenthood in schools and develop capacity to meet the needs of those with delayed attainment
- Exploring opportunities to create bespoke provision for those hard to engage.
- Developing accurate and robust data systems to track and monitor progress and engagement in order to intervene earlier
- Developing apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities through developing a post-16 process parallel to a PEP.

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**Blog by year 10 young person on the impact of a good care placement on their education:**

Being in care has affected my education in a positive way

Since I've been in care, I have been in a foster home and a children's home but I am now currently settled in another foster home. As I've had the experience of being in a foster placement and a care home, I found that a foster placement was better for me because I feel more secure in a household living with a family than with other young children.

When I first went into care, school life was tricky to cope with because of all the emotions and thoughts I had. This could have been because I wasn't settled or I felt like I couldn't share my emotions with anyone and couldn't control them. It was stressful trying to keep up with school work and concentrating when I had other thoughts going around my head. I didn't want to think about school because it seemed to me at that time that school wasn't important anymore and I needed to focus on family matters instead. However, the placement I am settled in now has opened my eyes to show me that school does matter if I want to do something with my life.

Being in care has affected my education in a positive way because I went through a stage where I couldn't get my head around why it was important but when I got put in a settled placement I realised that if I wanted to be someone in the world I'd have to get my education. I realised this from the help of my foster carers who supported me and showed me what life really was. Through living with a different family I got taught that there's more than one way of dealing with things such as dealing with situations, emotions etc. This helped me cope and concentrate on my education.

Once my home life was settled, I figured out I wanted more out of myself. The people I thought were my friends were pulling me into bad situations. I took a step back and asked myself, are these people I really want as my friends? Will they always be in my life and help me when I need it? Then it came to me they can't be my friends if they want me to be in bad situations, they should want me to be doing well. I finally thought that if I wanted to do something I was the only person who could make that happen, it had to be my choice and my choice only. This led me to make the decision of moving schools at the beginning of year 10 where my GCSEs were just about to start. Although this wasn't an easy decision it had a positive outcome because I've made new friends who want to see me make something of myself and help me achieve what I want to. I am now getting higher predicted grades and achieving more than I thought I was capable of.

I would urge teachers to have a supporting attitude to encourage and show looked after children that you think they're doing well. I feel if a teacher is in a happy mood and smiling when teaching I tend to get along with them better because it makes me feel like you've walked into a happier place and can leave behind whatever is going on outside the classroom.

**Partnership work**

### Personal Education Plans

Virtual School staff model quality PEPs by attending, chairing and writing first PEPs and PEPs in new schools. The PEP toolkit has advice for social workers, schools and foster carers.

The PEP timeliness was 95% in statute in May. This did not meet the DfE requirement. The quality of PEPs has improved consistently, with 84% rated green in 2014 from 38% in 2010.

### Designated Teachers (DTs) and Staff in Colleges.

The rolling programme of induction for new DTs was well attended. DT were offered at least 2 networking events including using outside speakers and focussed on national and local developments for Looked After Children. DTs lead some agenda items.

There are 8 Designated Teacher lead practitioners in the county, 3 in secondary schools, 3 in primary, 1 in a Pupil Referral Unit and 1 in a special school. All contribute to training, the newsletter and are available to their colleagues for advice and support.

### Social Care

Regular meetings are held with the Corporate Parenting Manager, Deputy Director of Children's Services and Virtual School senior staff to explore barriers to attendance and plan strategies to remove them. Monthly Children in Care Education Panels are held with Virtual School, social care, SEN and educational psychology staff to discuss difficult cases and plan to overcome issues. Induction sessions for new social workers are in the training programme and social workers are invited to all Designated teacher meetings and network sessions. A social worker is always involved with the appointment of new Virtual School staff.

Monthly education liaison meetings are also held by a senior member of staff in the two children's homes in Oxfordshire. These have resulted in developing a strategy where children's home staff allowed and supported tuition in the homes where necessary, created an education noticeboard, trained in CoPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) and enrichment/aspirational activities.

### Research and Development

The team leader for LAC undertook a sabbatical for a day a week for 6 months from July 2014 to December 2014 with the Rees Centre at Oxford University. The centre conducts international research into the impact of care. The sabbatical aims to develop evidence –based practice in schools, build sustainable relationships with all relevant partners in Oxfordshire and build a means of practitioners informing future research**.**

### Orientation and Induction Programme

Set up in 2010 for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who were not getting a school place quickly enough and also needed some support adapting to the changes in culture. The final cycle in the academic year 2013/14 had 14 students, 3 of which moved to another county, the other 11 all moved to schools or college within 2 days of finishing the programme and the overall attendance was 90%

### Foster Carers

Foster carer training is currently run by Virtual School staff but is not well attended. Foster carers contribute to newsletters and strong relationships with some mean they know about the Virtual School and seek advice and support as necessary.

### Children in Care Council

Members of the children in care council are involved with the appointment of Virtual School staff. Council members have been involved in Designated Training.

They are consulted on all major policies around education and recent feedback has indicated they still feel a better understanding of the role of the Designated Teacher is required.

The Virtual School was involved in organising and attended the Children in Care Spring Ball in March 2014.

**What we will do to improve further**

- Involve pupil voice in all development and marketing activity
- Review and develop more effective ways of quality assuring and formatively feeding back on PEPs to improve the quality
- Develop lead practitioners for colleges and Early Years settings
- Expand the Caremark to all phases as it is currently only for Secondary Schools
- Increase attendance of social workers at training to increase understanding of risk and protective factors around education
- Under the leadership of the Early Intervention Service, develop a multi-agency approach to more effective post-16 education and training pathways and provision for care leavers
- Build links with Oxfordshire Teaching School Alliance to increase opportunities for staff in the Virtual School and use Virtual School staff in training
- Support foster carers in supporting learning at home through evidence-based interventions
- Recognise and celebrate good practice by foster carers by appointing carer education champions to support other foster carers in good practice
- Consult council on how carers can better support their education at home.

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**Takeover Day 21 November 2014**

Takeover Day gives children and young people the chance to work with adults for the day and be involved in decision making. Children benefit from the opportunity to experience the world of work and make their voices heard, while adults and organisations gain a fresh perspective on what they do.

Hollie, who chairs the Oxfordshire County Children in Care Council, came to work with the Rees Centre team and successfully took over the role of Communications Officer.

*"I took part in Takeover Day at the Rees Centre. I had a brilliant time, I found out a lot of things I never knew before. I interviewed a lady who is working with the health assessments for children in care, and am really looking forward to working with her in the near future. I put a presentation together about what I do with "I took part in Takeover Day at the Rees Centre. I had a brilliant time, I found out a lot of things I never knew before. I interviewed a lady who is working with the health assessments for children in care, and am really looking forward to working with her in the near future. I put a presentation together about what I do with Children In care Council and what we are. I really enjoyed taking part in Takeover Day and would love to go back to the Rees Centre in the future".* Hollie Messenger, Chair of Children in Care Council, Oxfordshire.

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**Example of an opportunity for a Young Person to go to Oxford University**

**VIP+, a charity**

In 2013, the Virtual School in partnership with the Hospital School and the Pupil Referral Unit, Meadowbrook, set up a charity called VIP+. Since then they have commissioned summer activities based around bush craft, performing arts, art work and celebrating success, and are now expanding to offer activities throughout all school holidays. They also run bespoke activities and have recently offered all young people in Oxfordshire's children's homes the opportunity to take part in a programme run by ArtsXchange to engage the young people in the arts. They visited museums, the theatre, made music, created pieces of art.

The charity are going from strength to strength and will advertise for a co-ordinator to increase their capacity to reach more young people.

For more information visit http://www.vipplus.org.uk/

**Young Leaders' Festival**

Seven 14 to 17 year olds took part in this festival over the summer of 2014. They spent 5 days on a farm in Kent taking part in leadership activities, developing wellbeing, learning strategies to support emotional pain and hearing motivational speakers.