

## CABINET – 20 APRIL 2010

### ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions received from the following Members:

#### 1. Question to Councillor Heathcoat from Councillor Goddard

“When does the Cabinet Member expect to receive the delayed business plan from the new Cogges Manor Farm Trust and how will its independently assessed viability be assured?”

#### Questions to Councillor Chapman from Councillor Godden

2. “The Virtual School (referred to at Item 7, para 5 bullet point 2 & para 9, 2nd bullet point from end) must now have been in existence for about five years, unless it was disbanded and restarted. It would be interesting to know how it has performed during that time, and how many pupils it has currently (school year 09-10)?”

#### Answer

- Specific support for Children Looked After began in 2003 with the appointment of one member of staff and has grown over time. The full Virtual School has been in operation for six terms with the appointment of a Head in September 2008.
- On 19 April 2010 there were 380 students on the school roll. Due to the nature of the Looked after population this is subject to significant in year fluctuation. For example 235 young people have entered and another 211 have exited care between March 2009 and 2010.
- The educational achievement remains a challenge at key stage 2 and 4 with attendance being an issue - we are currently performing around our statistical neighbour at key stage 4 average and below at key stage 2, although again this is subject to change.
- The **attendance** issues have been caused in part by lack of education provision and by late entries to care of young people with very troubled histories.
- There are a range of strategies in place to increase the amount of provision for CYP with special educational needs and training programmes in place for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers to support re-engagement and regular school attendance. Structural changes to the Virtual school and inclusion teams will also mean a more local focus on Children Looked After within areas which should also increase the support to CYP and their networks. .

- The cohorts are small between key stage 2 and 4. At key stage 2 varying between 11 and 16 and at Key stage 4 between 40 and 50 and therefore results as a percentage are subject to wide variation.
- In recent years (since 2005) the percentage of the cohort attaining 1 GCSE or GNVQ has been consistently high and in line with the national average. The exception to this being in 2008.
- 5A\*-G peaked in 2007 at 63% and 2009 it was 46% which represented an increase of 7% on 2008 figures
- In 2009, 5+ A\*-C improved by 5% from 10 to 15%, which is above the National average for 2008 and 5+ A\*-C including English and Maths by +3% from 5% - 8%. 15% represents only 7 children

3. "The number of voluntarily accommodated children seems high (annex 1, V2 under Legal status). Please can you tell me whether this is going up or down over time, or is steady state?"

### **Answer**

- The number of voluntarily accommodated children has risen by 8%, as a proportion of the total CLA, since 2007. This is lower than numbers for our statistical neighbours. Oxon's overall numbers of CLA/10,000 remains below our statistical neighbours
- The proportion of 16+ in care has increased with more CYP staying on in education and wanting to remain looked after for longer. This is in line with expectations of the 2008 CA and new case law, entitling homeless young people aged 16 and 17 to full accommodation and support.
- , Wherever possible the Local Authority tries to work in partnership with parents. We believe that wherever possible children are best placed within their own family environment. Where this is not possible we will seek to safeguard the welfare of children by voluntary agreement with parents or we will seek court agreement under care proceedings and then help these CYP exit the care system to permanent placements when ever possible.