



Virtual School Annual Report 2024-25

‘No decision about me without me’

Owner:	Cherie Sears, Virtual School Headteacher
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Summary:

This annual report summarises activity of the virtual school for the last academic year including:

- The performance of the Virtual School in respect of Key Performance Indicators.
- The achievements and attainment of children looked after by Slough.
- Other Services offered by Slough Virtual School.
- Next steps for Virtual School.

Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving

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Welcome!

We are excited to share the Slough Children First Virtual School report for the 2024-2025 academic year. There are so many things to celebrate and on the following page are just a few of the highlights. This is followed by more information and data pertinent to the everyday activities and statutory duties of Virtual School, alongside key performance data.

We are very proud of our young people and would be delighted to discuss practice further. You are welcome to make contact, ask questions or give feedback. Our contact details can be found at the end of the report.

Executive summary/highlights of 2024/25

- We're proud to share that, for the third year in a row, PEP (Personal Education Plan) completion is **100%**, with every young person in our care having a PEP every term.
- As part of our commitment to our 'no decision about you without you', seeing our young people and where they learn is a priority. With this in mind, **all PEPs are scheduled to be face to face** to ensure we not only hear the voice of our children and young people, but are also assured of the quality of provision.
- We have reviewed **100%** of EHCPs (Education, Health & Care Plans) for children and young people in our care and made sure that their Annual Review happens in a timely manner and the child or young persons has advocacy.
- **Over 97%** of the children and young people in our care attend a Good or Outstanding school or education provision. Virtual School make regular checks on the quality of provision through termly visits and Ofsted monitoring.
- Our children continue to work hard and **we are proud to celebrate examination results**. Our Year 6 SATs outcomes for the children in our care once again exceeded their national and regional peers, our GCSE results were above expected trajectory and exceeded that of their regional peers and we had great results amongst our key stage 5 and graduates. There has been lots to celebrate this year as our children and young people worked hard to achieve results relevant to them.
- Avoiding the cliff edge at the end of GCSEs has been a priority this year and I can confirm that **100% of Key Stage 4 care experienced young adults received** support through a **comprehensive transition programme of IAG and Careers Guidance**, with 97% having an agreed destination for the new academic year.
- **Transitioning into adulthood is also a priority**, and in their last year of formal education at KS5, all young people are offered further careers guidance and are transitioned to our new 18+ Virtual School Lead for Education, Employment and Training (EET). As a result of the intervention's success, we have seen an increase in the **number of young people economically active in excess of both statistical and national neighbours** and will now deliver a permanent EET offer for all young people 18-25.
- In the new academic year (2025/26), we are proud to be supporting **19 care experienced young adults to attend university**. The Virtual School offers bursaries, information and support, advice and guidance as well as a termly 'check ins' to ensure they get the very best out of their time.
- For our **schools** and other education provisions we offer **bespoke individual support, advice and guidance** alongside a **comprehensive training package** that affords the team around any 'child known to Social Care' the grounding required to ensure all our young people are given the best possible educational opportunities.
- We work closely with Slough Borough Council colleagues to ensure that there is a **Virtual School representative on all education reflection and decision-making panels** so that our children and young people are appropriately represented.
- All PEPs go through our **rigorous Quality Assurance process** that not only gives us an indication of training gaps and development opportunities, but allows for internal monitoring and reporting and highlight opportunities to capture good practice.
- This year we have affirmed the priority of '**the voice of the child**' when considering the best possible education provision, giving opportunities for them to be part of the decision making and feedback on what is going well and what needs improving. We believe there should be '**no decision about you without you**' for each of our children and this forms part of both our practice and now our quality assurance programme as a regular key performance indicator.

There is so much to celebrate, so please take the time to read on and hear in more detail on how the Virtual School supports our young people to be successful in education.

Welcome to the Slough Virtual School 2024/25 annual report

It's been another great year for the young people of Slough, and we are proud to have played a part of their education journey. Throughout this report you will find highlights of the academic year as well as comprehensive practice and progress data, examples of practice from the child's perspective and next steps for Slough Virtual School as we move into the new academic year.



Under the statutory guidance of the DfE, the Virtual School Head has responsibility for the education of a number of phenomenal Slough children. These children and young people may have come to us as 'children in our care', 'care experienced young adults' or have a social care plan such as 'Child in Need' (CIN) or 'Child Protection' (CP). We also support the engagement of young people who are working with the youth justice team, as well as delivering the statutory NEET service for over 5,200 young people in Slough aged 16-18 with their next steps in education. This report gives an oversight of the services and relevant key performance outcomes.

How we're ensuring a quality service



It's important that we continually reflect on service delivery and ensure all our young people have access to the best possible education opportunities. The Virtual School complies with the statutory guidance [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children](#). This includes ensuring that every young person in our care in statutory education has a review every term, this is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan).



As part of practice, we routinely quality assure PEPs. We want to be sure that they are timely, comprehensive and that Targets are SMART. We quality assure the content, offer feedback to all parties and where necessary, deliver additional training to safeguard quality of service.

The QA process is carried out by peers, managers and the Virtual School Head. This year we also sought a peer review by NAVSH (National Association of Virtual School Heads) to make sure we're getting it right for our children. Their response was overwhelmingly positive.

In the academic year 2024-25 we're proud to share our PEP returns as follows:

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
100%	100%	100%

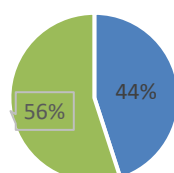
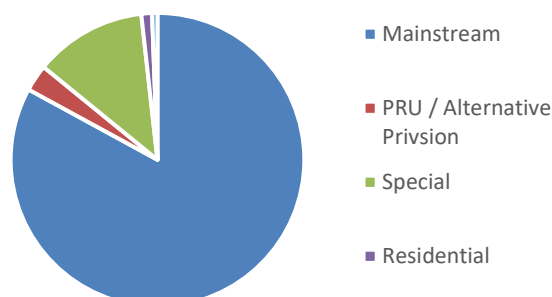
Every young person in our care has had a PEP for every academic term in 2024/25, even those not in formal education. On these rare occasions we have completed an 'informal' PEP. The Informal PEP has just as much value as our academic PEP, but these focus more on how we're supporting the young person to get back into education and what the team around the child is doing to support them in the meantime. Also, we use informal PEPs to check in on progress in between formal PEPs. This helps ensure everyone has a clear idea of what the plan is and what we can all do to help if education or placement is unstable.

Over 96% of young people looked after by Slough have face to face PEP meetings in the summer term. We listened to our young people when they told us how they wanted their PEPs to go, visiting them in school or at a place that works for them. They are at the heart of the decision making and we strive to ensure that **'no decision about education should be made about you, without you'**.

As well as statutory PEPs, we also look at the type of school our children and young people attend and the quality of the provision according to Ofsted. Below you will see the data for this academic year.

What type of schools do Slough children in our care attend?

Slough Virtual School are keen to ensure we deliver education that meets the particular needs of the individual. **We place young people in a school that can help bring out the best in them** and of course, we will listen to their thoughts and feelings. The diagram beside shows what type of schools our young people attend.



■ In Slough ■ Outside of Slough

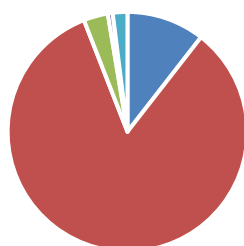
How many are educated outside of Slough?

Sometimes it is necessary to find a home outside of Slough. This is not a barrier to accessing support as **Virtual School attend all PEPs in person regardless of location**, and work with the residing local authority to ensure our children have access to all services available locally.

How good are the schools and provisions?

It's vital that our schools and education provisions can afford our young people the best possible opportunities for success. One of our measures is the school's overall Ofsted grading. At the end of the academic year 2024/25, more than **95% of them were in schools or colleges graded good or outstanding** and only 1 considered inadequate.

■ Outstanding
■ Good
■ Requires Improvement
■ Inadequate
■ Yet to be inspected



	Number	%
Outstanding	18	10%
Good	144	85%
Requires Improvement	6	3%
Inadequate	1	<1%
'Yet to be' or 'otherwise' inspected	1	<1%

There are a small number of young people attending a school which is currently graded 'Requires Improvement', 'inadequate' or 'Yet to be Inspected'. We have a very close relationship with all our schools, but especially these ones. We want to ensure that despite any Ofsted inspection outcomes, their outcomes are not impacted. We will only consider a change of school if deemed absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the young person. To mitigate, however, we may visit more regularly, hold additional PEP Meetings, check in with other professionals and generally keep a close eye. Just because a school has a judgement, does not necessarily mean that judgement will have a direct impact on learning.

Furthermore, we don't rely solely on Ofsted gradings, as this is only a snapshot in time. The Virtual School team continually monitor and review the quality of education through regular visits and we will challenge when things are not quite right. We have great schools both locally and nationally, supporting our children and young people and prioritising their education and wellbeing.



Collaborations – How are we supporting others to support our children and young people?

It's important that we work closely with those that support learning. This doesn't just mean working with teachers, we also work alongside a number of professionals to ensure education is high on the agenda, for example...

Education training for social workers

Virtual School offers education training for social workers and other colleagues at Slough Children First. These sessions cover a number of subjects such as 'setting PEP targets', 'understanding special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)' and 'education readiness'.

As well as Virtual School delivering the training, we have engaged specialist training from the SCF Social Work Academy, mental health services and our local Alternative Provision colleagues. We have covered subjects such as 'Language that Cares' and 'Emotionally Based School Refusal', 'Executive Functioning' and the 'PACE Trauma Informed Approach'. We review our training offer regularly to ensure our social workers have the best possible knowledge to support learning.

We also offer one to one assistance to any Slough Children First professional who has education questions, making sure they're fully supported and feel confident to advocate.

Training for teachers and education leaders

As part of our training offer, we provide an all-day event designed for Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads with focus areas such as:

- Setting appropriate targets and making the best of the PEP
- Understanding the impact of Trauma on Learning
- Avoiding conflict
- Statutory Responsibilities in relation to children with a social worker
- Supporting transition
- Improving and maintaining attendance

As well as the training days, we offer ad-hoc training throughout the academic year. This coming year we have subjects such as PACE, Executive Functioning and 'knowing me, knowing you'. We have delivered on bespoke training requests and intervened when things aren't going as well as we would like. We make personal visits, support extra interventions and fund specific training to ensure that a young person's specific needs can be met (for example, specialist training in autism).

Finally, this year we are extending our offer to ensure that our designated teachers and safeguarding leads have a safe 'space to talk', supported by the Virtual School and our EP service, allowing them to explore challenges and support each other in this vital role.

Education training for carers

It's really important that our carers feel able to confidently work alongside our children and young people, advocating on their behalf. We work with our Slough Independent Fostering Agency colleagues to offer sessions around:

- Supporting learning at home
- Understanding assessment
- Admissions and attendance
- Understanding special educational needs and seeking support
- How to support if things get tricky – suspensions & exclusions

We also offer training for individual carers on specialist subjects and support for homes where children may be living with other young people in our care.

Supporting children and young people in education generally

Although we have a statutory obligation to review education termly, the service does not stop there. We know that things change and our children may need support outside of the PEP timetable. This is not



an issue. Each young person in our care has their own highly qualified Education Champion keeping an eye on progress throughout the year, not just at the PEP. If there is a challenge, we make sure we are available to support.

Each of our Education Champions have a 'this is me' card that they give their children, it lists their contact information and a little bit of insight into who they are, ensuring our young people know us and know how to contact us.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

Some young people require more support than a school can give in the budget they receive. If this is the case, the school may apply for additional funding or an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan). The EHCP is a statutory document which sets out needs and how the school and other partners should meet those needs. It includes medical needs and also the social worker's role in helping our young people stay safe and able to achieve. It may also include things like physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. Once issued, EHCPs are reviewed annually (over five and six-monthly if under 5). The view of the child or young person, as well as parents and carers, are sought for each review.



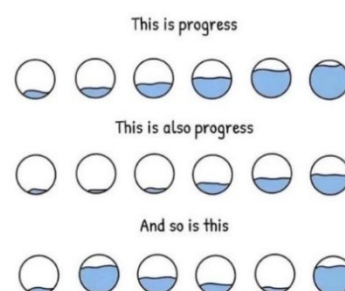
This year, **89 of our young people received some sort of SEN report (51% of the cohort) and 54 had an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)**. This is around 32% of our school age cohort. Nationally, the figure is much lower, but it's not unusual for the percentage to be higher in Virtual Schools as we look after young people that have disabilities as well as those in our care for other reasons.

Between August 2024 and August 2025 we made sure that **100% of EHC plans were reviewed within time scales and the child's voice was heard**.

How are our children and young people progressing? ‘Assessments’

The Virtual School constantly monitors progress, normally through the PEP process. It is an important indicator as to how our young people are developing and tells us if things aren't quite right or something needs to change.

As well as the Virtual School monitoring progress, the government sets out statutory testing throughout their education. The next few pages indicate how our children and young people achieved at each stage of statutory examinations.



Statutory assessment/exam ‘reportable cohorts’

The DfE require reporting on all children ‘looked after’ that have been in our care for more than 12 months on the date of the first exam; this is known as the statutory ‘reportable cohort’. Virtual School choose to report on the whole cohort as well as determining those in care over 1 year. We use a combination of partners to support reporting such as NCER/Nexus and DfE Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIIT), alongside our data returns. We celebrate that our cohort is diverse with differing characteristics. Not all find education easy and some have challenges. Some of the cohort this year were new to care and some new to the country (UASC), others may have experienced health crisis or other challenges, we therefore contextualise our outcomes and remind the reader that cohorts are small and this can distort the data outcome when considering %.

Our university cohort



Virtual School are proud to have supported **14 Care Experienced young adults in higher education** in the academic year 24/25. 12 studying at Bachelor level, 1 studying at Masters and another following a medical doctorate pathway. All continue to receive signposting, advice and guidance from Virtual School, as well as financial support and career development. Next academic year we anticipate a further 7 young people.

Key stage 5

The cohort of 53 was very diverse this year in a number of ways. 70% of young people in this age group had some form of additional needs, including 20% holding EHCPs, 30% requiring additional support in learning and a further 42% ‘new to the country’ with English not as their first language (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children UASC). **4 of our young people took the traditional A Level pathway this year and all intend to go to university!** Others in this cohort have been successful in different ways, such as apprenticeships and employment. **88% of the cohort of 2024/25 either continued in education or training or have taken employment.**

Not all our young adults remained in education or employment. For those not in education, employment or training (NEET), we continue to work hard to find a solution. We recognise some were not ready and others have medical needs or competing challenges. Virtual School have developed a new 18+ support programme for our young adults, ensuring they don't fall off the education, employment and training cliff edge. Working alongside our YPAs, we strive to ensure that they all have the chance to achieve economic independence.

Key Stage 4 – GCSE outcomes



The DfE released the provisional markers for Attainment 8 which has allowed us to compile an analysis on the data for our 2024/25 GCSE cohort. 'Progress 8' and 'Attainment 8' are national measures of progress, but this year we are unable to measure 'Progress 8' due to this cohort being part of the 'Covid years' where no Key Stage 2 data was available. Therefore, disappointingly, we are only able to deliver numeric outcomes rather than progress against a key measure, which does not accurately represent just how hard our young people have worked and how far they have come on their personal trajectory.

You will find a comprehensive breakdown of results in the appendices at the back of this report and below you will see our headlines.

Of the 11 reportable, 4 held EHCPs, 3 of which were in specialist provision taking bespoke pathways and a further 6 with SEND needs. 5 were UASC, new to the country with little English. 100% of the cohort had a destination for 16+.

If we analyse the data without UASC and those in specialist education provision we have 5 eligible from both mainstream and alternative provision/PRU. With such a small cohort the data can be easily biased and therefore we must look to context. However, the provisional data (*I have to put a caveat on the measurement data until the DfE publish formal CLA yard sticks in April 2025*) show the developing scores for GCSE as follows:

Provisional Attainment 8 for the reportable Slough cohort is 20.8

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8
NCER National (CLA pupils)	5230	100.0%	21.5
DfE Region - South East (CLA)	790	100.0%	20.1

You will see that the Attainment 8 scores nationally are 21.5 with South East region 20.1. Our young people across this small cohort achieved an average of 20.8* above regional average and just marginally below national. (**this is emerging data and therefore subject to change*).

EYFS and primary statutory data

Year 6 SATs indicated that **all of those in our care for a year or more (6/8) achieved either at or above what was predicted with 100% achieving at least expected in Reading and Maths**. 83% achieved at least expected in SpAG and in writing; 67% achieved the expected standard.

One young person in our care this year aspired to sit the entrance exam for an independent school. We agreed to support them, and they achieved great results in both the exam and their SATs. They were offered a full bursary including incidentals and successfully started in September.

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*		Avg. SS	READING			WRITING TA		GDS	Avg. SS	MATHS			Avg. SS	GPS		
			≥ Exp	High		< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	< Exp			≥ Exp	High	< Exp		≥ Exp	High	
NCER National (CLA)	520	100.0%	32.0%	1.0%	101.5	49.0%	49.0%	15.0%	41.0%	3.0%	99.3	53.0%	44.0%	6.0%	99.9	55.0%	44.0%	8.0%	
DfE Region - South East (CLA)	520	100.0%	31.0%	1.0%	101.5	49.0%	49.0%	15.0%	40.0%	3.0%	99.3	53.0%	44.0%	6.0%	99.9	55.0%	44.0%	8.0%	
Virtual School - Slough	8	100.0%	50.0%	0.0%	105.8	25.0%	75.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	107.7	25.0%	75.0%	12.5%	106.5	37.5%	62.5%	12.5%	

Further statutory data for primary is listed below:

Year & Assessment	Number in cohort	No.C&YP in care more than 1 year	Number of exempted C&YP	Number of "passes"	Number of Working Towards	So what?
Year 4 Times tables	13	11	4 1xnon-reporting 3x EHCP exemption	(No threshold) 2x 9/25 (EHCP) 2x 25/25 1x24/25 4x11-15		Children who achieved 24/25 & 25/25 now at expected/greater depth and offered tuition working towards 11+. (11/15) working at 'ARE' and receiving additional support where needed.
Year 2 SATs	6	3	1x EHCP 1 opted out 1x CME	Reading 1 Writing 0 Maths 1	Reading 3 Writing 4 Maths 3	Opted out child settling in to an adoptive placement and has tuition. One child (WTS in all) has EP report in preparation for EHCNA. Non-reporting CME child has school place and EP consult towards EHCNA, 1 child was very new into care and has EP report towards EHCNA.
Year 2 Phonics ("re-sit" of Year 1)	1	1	1	0	2	Reporting child increased score. The other child was new into care and scored 0 in Year 1
Year 1 Phonics	8	6	2 (1xCME -non reporting 1x EHCP reporting)	3	3 (2 reporting, 1 non-reporting)	1 reporting child missed by 2 marks - continues to work just below 'ARE' and received support for SEMH Both non-reporting children EP reports in preparation for potential EHCNAs

Year/ Assessment	CYP in cohort	Reporting CYP in care more than 1 year	Number of exempted CYP	Number of “passes”	Number of Working Towards	So what?
Reception EYFS GLD	5	5	0	3	2	One child has an EHCP and now in special provision. The 2nd child has made good progress since entering Year 1.

We are proud of all our young people and whilst statutory assessments and exams are important, we are reminded that measurement comes in all sorts of themes, especially for those who have additional needs. We are also mindful of the complexities of their care. Some may have experienced loss and others significant change. Our young people are striving to achieve in education despite their challenges and our PEPs give our children and those that support them a timely reminder of progress.

Other Virtual School Services

Slough Virtual School has a number of responsibilities, not only to those children and young people in our care. The team support the education of children with a social worker through our SiaSS offer, those Previously Looked After (PLA) in Kinship and SGO arrangements, and uniquely to Slough, the 18+ EET offer for care experienced young adults, the apprenticeship programme and monitoring of education, employment and training for the whole Slough cohort of 16-18 year olds. Below is a summary of our offer and outcomes.

SiaSS (*Safer in a Slough School*) supporting children with a social worker

As well as supporting the children in our care, Slough Virtual School also supports young people known to Social Care that may have a CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) Plan, as well as those known to the Early Help team. This is a relatively new service that the government is championing, as data indicates that young people with a social worker have some of the poorest academic outcomes nationally. With this in mind, it's really important that we work to change the narrative.

In Slough, we continue to develop a package of support for professionals that helps make sure that they secure and maintain the best possible education opportunities for all our young people. Some of the things we do include:

- Offering training and development to teachers, social workers, and other professionals
- An online and in person support service giving information, advice and guidance to those supporting our young people
- Representing children with a social worker at council meetings such as Fair Access Panel, Children Missing Education, and Keeping Children Safe in Education Panel, Legal Gateway, CAMHS/MHST and SEND to ensure that any young people known to us are advocated for and any services required from the meetings are managed
- Monitoring the Attendance and Suspension/Exclusion data of all children subject to a CIN or CP Plan, sharing this information with social workers and their managers and offering intervention to those in need of support
- Advocacy and other support for our children, their families and other professionals subject to challenges at school such as suspension or exclusion
- Working alongside partner services to ensure that if our young people are in crisis, we are able to get the support they need without unnecessary delay.

The service **supported 121 families and professionals this year** through the helpline, offering advice, guidance, signposting and reviews.

The service **delivered 11 Attendance Review Panels, averaging 10 young people per panel**, allowing an open forum for social workers to discuss 'sticky issues' around attendance, suspensions and exclusions.

The service **advocated for 9 families directly and represented 2 at risk of permanent exclusion**. We made representation to a Governing Body which ultimately **overturned a permanent exclusion**.

The service **reported attendance and exclusion data for all children with a CIN and CP plan every half term for the whole of the academic year** and ensured that data was noted on their file for further action by their supporting professionals.

The DfE has yet to establish KPIs (key performance indicators) in this area and data available is scarce. We are developing a data dashboard to support the development of this service but in the meantime, below is the most recent LAiT data pertinent to this cohort – you will note that the DfE does not measure Child Protection, but Children in Need only in this format:

Local Authority: ⓘ

Slough

×

▼

Topic:

Children in Need

×

▼

Indicator:

% session missed through overall absence

×

▼

Table

Download data

LA Number	LA and Regions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change from previous year
871	Slough	9.0	10.8	11.2	NA	13.4	16.6	16.9	16.4	-0.5
989	South East	11.2	11.8	12.1	NA	13.6	16.6	17.7	18.1	0.4
-	Statistical Neighbours	10.1	10.3	10.9	NA	12.7	14.5	16.7	16.3	-0.5
970	England	10.5	11.1	11.5	NA	13.6	16.3	17.4	17.8	0.4

Summary

LA Number	LA and Regions	Trend ⓘ	Change from previous year	Latest National Rank ⓘ	Quartile Banding
871	Slough	↓	-0.5	51	B

Quartile bands

A	B	C	D
12.3 to 16	16.1 to 17.9	18 to 19.8	19.9 to 29.2

Local Authority: ⓘ

Topic:

Indicator:

Slough

All Pupil Absence & Exclusions

CIN - % with at least one fixed period exclusion

Table

Download data

LA Number	LA and Regions	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change from previous year
871	Slough	6.14	8.81	7.92	10.86	8.81	5.04	11.24	9.99	-1.25
989	South East	9.40	9.85	10.00	10.71	9.49	8.84	11.57	13.45	1.88
-	Statistical Neighbours	7.94	7.98	7.74	8.38	8.05	8.08	10.37	12.53	2.16
970	England	8.87	9.40	9.48	10.24	8.89	8.65	11.82	13.62	1.80

Summary

Quartile bands

LA Number	LA and Regions	Trend ⓘ	Change from previous year	Latest National Rank ⓘ	Quartile Banding	A	B	C	D
871	Slough	↓	-1.25	18	A	0 to 11.49	11.5 to 13.78	13.79 to 16.02	16.03 to 31.06

This service can be accessed by the SiaSS Lead, Ewen Godfrey. His details, are at the end of the report.

Previously looked After Children (PLAC) and those in SGO and kinship care arrangements

The Virtual School has a responsibility to support the educational achievement of previously looked after children and those in SGO and kinship care arrangements in Slough. We offer advice, information and signposting to parents, guardians, schools, social care and any professionals working with the family. We also offer training and advocacy where need arises.

We have **attended 3 events** this year alongside social care to maximise exposure of the offer and ensure we are listed with the relevant social work practitioners as a supporting service.

This year we have **represented 17 families needing support** with admissions, SEND and sadly, suspensions and exclusions. We work to ensure our young people have access to education without challenge or judgement.

This service can be accessed through our SiaSS Team Lead, Ewen Godfrey.

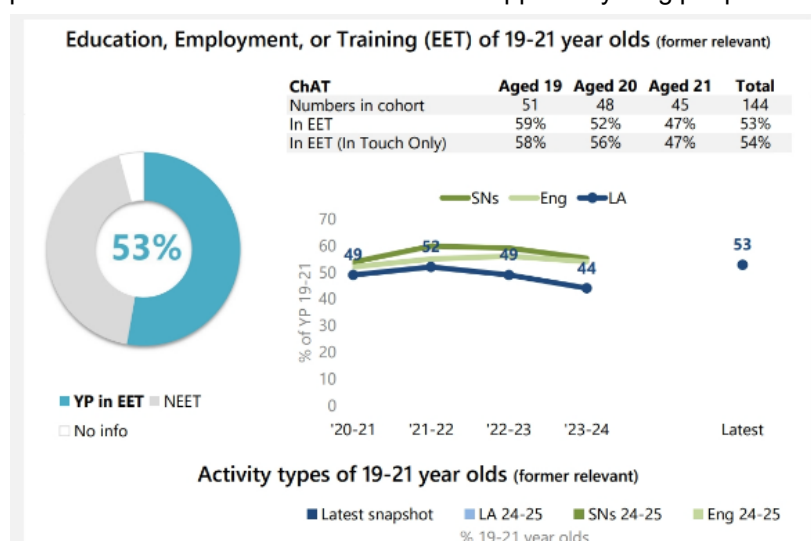
The Education, Employment & Training (EET) Team for care experienced young adults

Our Post 16 Education, Employment & Training team (EET) support our Care Experienced young adults with information, advice, support and guidance, regardless of their location, helping them navigate their next steps in education and future careers.

The team ensures that all care experienced young people aged between 16-18 continue to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), even if they are not in traditional education. They also seek out opportunities for those that may be feeling like they can't engage in EET right now to encourage those small steps in the right direction. Our team works with social workers, YPAs, SEND and other professionals to help support the pathway to adulthood and this year the team have supported a diverse cohort of 86 young people in the 16-18 cohort.

The service doesn't stop at 18 though; **this year we have offered advice and guidance to anyone 18 to 25 years old** who needs a little extra support. We have worked with YPAs to offer support to those who may be struggling to work out next steps, signposted and regularly updated the team with apprenticeship and relevant job opportunities. The team has offered direct support to young people with actions such as CV compilation, finding courses, signposting to organisations that can help with specific questions and ensuring they are receiving the right work or education entitlements.

The most recent data report indicates **an increase in education, employment and training from below regional, statistical and national gently rising above**. Virtual School intends to make this programme a permanent offer next academic year.



For further information, please contact Reem Ali, 16+ Lead for Care Experienced young adults.

Apprenticeships for care experienced young people

Virtual School is committed to all types of pathways for our young people, including Apprenticeships. In fact, we engage in this not only with external organisations but also within our own Virtual School Team and throughout Slough Children First.

This year Virtual School celebrated the completion of our third Care Experienced Apprenticeship programme with our young person going on to pursue a career in administration within Slough Children First. We are so very proud that she's chosen to stay within the 'family business' alongside our the second, who also works for the service.

We are excited to embark on a further Care Experienced apprenticeship in the Virtual School and we're not alone. Slough's Care Experienced Apprenticeship programme over 2024/25 has seen a further 3 young people successfully commencing the pathway.



Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council are looking to employ many more young people, giving them the opportunity to learn and flourish and reinforcing our commitment to our corporate family and 'growing your own'. If you are interested in further information, please contact Reem Ali, 16+ Lead for Care Experienced young adults or the YPA's in Thrive Team 2 and 3.

Education, Employment & Training for Post 16 Slough residents

As well as their support of Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people, the Virtual School team also have the statutory responsibility of reporting on destinations of **all** young people living in Slough moving through key stage 5 (age 16-18yrs), this is called the 'September Guarantee'. The 'September Guarantee' is a guarantee of an offer, made by the end of September and monitored throughout the academic year, of an appropriate place in post-16 education or training for every young person completing compulsory education. The September Guarantee is an offer of a place in one of the following:

- A school sixth form
- A college of further education
- Employment with training to at least level 2
- An apprenticeship

We monitor and support young people in education, employment and training throughout the year and the government measures our progress. The DfE Summer (June 2025) return NEET figures for Slough, the South East and England are listed below.

	Slough	Southeast	England
NEET	4.4%	3.7%	3.7%
Not known	2.0%	2.9%	1.7%
NEET + Not known	6.4%	6.6%	5.4%

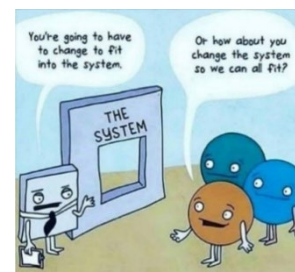
The 'Not Known' figure is a very important part of the data. These are the young people where we are not sure if they are currently in education, employment or training, this may be because they have moved out of area or not responding to our calls. Our team not only track our young people by the traditional phone and letter but also visit face to face to ensure no one is missed. You will note our **'Not Known' figure is lower than those regionally and only slightly higher than the national** as we are tireless in our pursuit of those young people.

Our NEET figures are higher than average, but there are some local issues that young people in Slough face including a limited range in the local offer for Key Stage 5. Additionally, data can be challenged due to us nearing the end of the academic year where colleges are reluctant to take new students, meaning they effectively become NEET until September. We must also recognise in this number that some are either unable to engage in Education, Employment or Training at this time, or perhaps choose not to. Again, the team work tirelessly to engage and encourage them, looking for packages outside of the norm and working intensively in one to one sessions building CVs and seeking opportunities. As further review of quality of practice, this year **we took part in council scrutiny to review the service and to look at areas for improvement**. The paper is due in cabinet in February 2026, however our education director is already looking at the learning and taking action.

You can reach our Post 16 Team through their lead, Selmah Chaudhary, who's details are available at the end of this report.

Suspensions and Exclusions

We are pleased to say that **there have been no permanent exclusions this year** for children in our care. However, we have experienced suspensions. We investigate each of these thoroughly and work with both the professionals and young people to minimise any repeat. Some of our young people experience crisis, especially during periods of change, such as new term, new class, new teacher and perhaps new home or social worker, all of which can have an impact on how they are feeling and our behaviour. We know that behaviour can be a tool for communication and whilst it's never favourable to have a suspension, it can be the evidence needed to consider what's going on and if necessary, change things or engage more support. For example, it may indicate that the school isn't quite the right fit, that they need some further help or perhaps it's time for an EHCP.



Below are the suspension figures for the 2024-25 academic year. You will notice trends around secondary increase over the academic year but these are contextualised and can be attributed to a small number of young people in crisis.

Autumn Term 2023	No Days	No Children	EHCP?
Primary	5	1	1
Secondary	12	4	0

Spring Term 2024	No Days	No Children	EHCP?
Primary	2 ↓	1 ↓	1 ↓
Secondary	15 ↑	4 =	2 ↑

Summer 2024	No Days	No Children	EHCP?
Primary	1 ↓	1 ↓	1 ↓
Secondary	25 ↑	6 ↑	2 =

Autumn can be tricky for some, particularly changing school, moving to college or settling into a new class. This can be overwhelming, especially for those with additional needs. There was a slight increase in the **spring** for secondary but this is attributed to one child in crisis who ended up having an early annual review for his EHCP. Primary data in the same period shows a reduction. In the **Summer term**, we see a further reduction in primary suspensions but a couple of our young people in secondary remained in challenge. 17 of the 25 days can be attributed to 2 young people, 1 struggling with mainstream other challenges around home, family contact and on the EHCNA path.

A reminder that all of our young people are supported to maintain their education and every incident of suspension investigated and followed up with reflective restorative practice amongst the professionals involved.

Practice Examples - You said, we did, what happened next?...

This section highlights some examples of what children and young people have told us, how we have listened and how this has helped them and their education life. They told us:

You said	We did	What happened next?
"I had to move school in a hurry and I miss my friends."	Sometimes it's not possible to arrange a goodbye before you leave but that's ok, we arranged for you to go back and visit some of your friends from your old school and have a proper 'goodbye'.	You enjoyed seeing old friends again, you even had a goodbye party! Your carer is going to help you keep in touch with your old friends and you are already making more friends at your new school.
You said	We did	What happened next?
"I'm struggling with French and it's stressing me out. I can't focus on the other subjects, I think I'm failing everything and I won't make it to college."	We worked with your school to look again at your timetable. Whilst we're always aspirational for you to have a wide range of qualifications, we must concentrate on supporting you to remain engaged in education whilst supporting your emotional wellbeing.	We looked again at your GCSE options and were able to negotiate a reshuffle. Now, instead of French you received extra support in Maths and English. This had a really positive impact on both your grades and your mental health and you're now happily engaged in your college course. Well done!
You said	We did	What happened next?
"I don't like PEPs, they take me away from lessons and I don't want to stand out"	- We hear you and want to ensure that you feel as comfortable as possible, this is your PEP after all. - We worked with you to find the best time to come and visit, as your PEP is important and so are your views.	- You have let us know what works for you and of course, we have done our best to put this in to place. At the end of every PEP, we look at your timetable with you and work out a plan for next time. - You happily attend your PEPs now and feel more comfortable to share your thoughts and feelings.

You said •I want to study geography at university and I'm loving the subject at GCSE. There's a geography trip coming up and I really want to go.	We did •We spoke to your carer, your social worker and the school and worked out a plan to ensure you made it onto the trip.	What happened next? •You went on your trip and had a ball! You're now studying Geography at A'Level and already looking at university courses for the future.
You said •I'm worried that if I don't get my English GCSE I won't get onto the college course I want.	We did •We arranged for a English Tutor.They worked out a plan to get you through your exam and increase your English confidence.	What happened next? •You have now passed your English exam and have started your college course. We're super proud of you and can't wait to see what the future holds!
You said •"I really love art but I don't currently take it as GCSE, can you help?"	We did •We funded a selection of art materials and spoke to your carer about having access to art equipment and a space to practice. •We spoke to your school about extending the curriculum to give you the opportunity of an Art GCSE.	What happened next? •Even though you've moved on to college now your old school continues to support you in your Art GCSE. •You've produced amazing art works, some of which we are proud to display in our offices and you are on course for a high pass.
You said •I don't want to sit and talk to the adults in my new school even though I know they want to help me settle in. I find it tricky.	We did •We talked to your school about some of your favourite things and worked out a plan to make you feel more comfortable. You love Lego, so we put a plan together which we hoped would work for everyone.	What happened next? •Although it's still early days, you are starting to settle in and talk to your trusted adults. Your 'Lego time' seems to now be the best time of the day and we are confident that having the space to talk will help you excel.
You said •I really want to get better at my science but I don't want a tutor. Can you help?	We did •We talked to you about how you learn best and arranged for you to have a laptop to access activities and learning videos and sourced accompanying books to support your learning.	What happened next? •You are enjoying this style of learning and we are starting to see an improvement in your Science outcomes. We have also shared this with school as a preferred learning style.

You said • I am new to the country and speak very little English. How am I going to manage?	We did • Before starting formal education we supplied a tablet with language apps. and then found a school that was able to support you in your own language whilst learning English. • We managed to find you a football team with your peers and supplied boots so you could join in.	What happened next? • You have settled in to school really well and have already started to join mainstream classes. You have made friends both inside and out of school and you actively took part in your PEP. You have applied to college and have been offered a place. Well done, we're really proud of you!
You said • I need equipment to complete my IT coursework at college. 	We did • We supplied you with a laptop and specialist software to support your course. We also explored a pathway in IT so that you can make plans for your future.	What happened next? • You have now started a degree in IT and we can't wait to see where this leads. Your 18+ champion is also looking for work experience and the future looks bright!
You said • I really love reading but am a bit fed up with the stuff in the library. 	We did • We sent you a special parcel in the post with books that you might like, especially mystery ones and also sent you a book voucher to encourage your choice and independence. This all forms part of our literacy programme 'Parcel in the Post'.	What happened next? • Your carer tells us you are really enjoying reading and can't wait to receive more books and vouchers. We will always explore your interests with you and make sure the books we send stretch your imagination and ability even further!
You said • I'm a bit shy but I really want to go to music class at lunchtimes as it looks cool.	We did • We arranged for a special music session for your year group so you were not singled out. We then arranged for you to be a helper in this group and in the club.	What happened next? • You really enjoyed the responsibility and it was a great way to get you discretely involved. • You are absolutely loving music now and have recently formed a band that has a place in 'battle of the bands' at your school and your confidence has sky rocketed!

Other great things going on in Virtual School

Whilst we are keen to ensure our young people have access to traditional education pathways, we also believe that education can come in a variety of ways and there are many learning opportunities that come from other experiences. With that in mind, here's some of the other ways that Virtual School is supporting our cohort.

Book parcels

Each young person in our care in Primary phase receives specially selected books to support both their learning and interests outside of school.



Those in our secondary and post 16 phase are also given the option to read for pleasure and receive Book Tokens that give the independence to purchase materials to ignite their reading passion. Alongside this, we support additional learning materials that help with your school work, such as SATs or GCSE revision books and equipment.



Activities packages

When our children tell us about their interests, where we can, we like to support and encourage that learning. For example, Virtual School has sent out Art packages for a number of young people as well as kit for other areas of interest such as engineering and sports.



We have also supported schools to purchase specific interest toys to share with our young people when they are engaging in one to one or planned interventions. We have funded equipment that allows our young people to be successful during break times and gives them opportunities to build and maintain positive relationships. Virtual School will always try to be creative in encouraging learning.



Transitions and new beginnings



Change can be tricky and we want to ensure all our young people are given the best possible endings and new beginnings. With that in mind, when they reach an important transition, such as leaving primary school, we support them with simple things like memory books where they can collect contact details and share memories of great times. We will also support by funding a final transition trip.

As well as happy endings, there's also new beginnings and for some, this can be tricky. We like to make sure they have the right equipment and stationery, laptops and books, as well as sending cards of encouragement and regular check ins through their dedicated education champion.



Aspirational adventures



We continue to work with Future Pathways to understand how higher education works and what it takes to get to university. There have been a number of opportunities for our young people to explore the pathway and learn key practical and social skills along the way.

We have arranged for some of our young people to visit universities and careers fairs and have scheduled special one to one careers guidance sessions, working alongside schools, to ensure that they are on the right pathway to follow their dreams.



Aspirations aren't exclusively for our teenagers. We have been working with some of our primary young people who are interested in Grammar School and Independent School.

They have had the opportunity to explore local Schools and we're supporting some of them with tuition in readiness for 11+ or other entrance exams. Each of them have an individual plan as part of their PEP and we will continue to support them wherever their results takes them.



Over the spring term there was an 'aspirations event' especially for our youngest children with the opportunity to think about their future through structured play and activities. This included dressing up and practical activities. A great time was had by all.



Summer fun!



Virtual School believe learning should always be fun and shouldn't stop at the end of term. This year our secondary team arranged some summer fun for our young people who were starting at new schools or experiencing another transition. It was a exciting, packed day with some phenomenal activities that were not only fun but also worked on courage, problem solving and working together. There were lots of new friends made and great stories to tell, especially the giant swing and climbing wall. It wasn't just the children getting involved, our social workers and the virtual school team were also getting stuck in. A great day that we hope to repeat again next year.

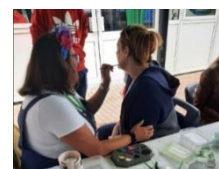
Slough celebration event

Slough Children First hosted its annual celebration event and what a great day we all had! The event took place in May 2025 here in Slough. There was masses to do and see. The activities included arts, dance, sports, face painting, story corner, disco, great food and so much more.



Families came in their masses and we had the opportunity to celebrate educational successes at our special awards ceremony.

The event was very much enjoyed and we can't wait to welcome you back again next year!



Virtual school plans for the future



The Virtual School runs on reflective practice and this year has been one of learning and development.

In the spring term Virtual School commissioned a **peer review from NAVSH** (National Association of Virtual School Heads) to look at practice and offer some 'even better ifs'. It was an overwhelming positive visit that allowed us to step up from the operational work and look

at the strategic opportunities. **They noted outstanding outcomes for children in our care, excellence in our caseload management/quality assurance and great practice for children with a social worker that colleagues went on to share nationally.** However, there is always room for improvement, and this included a focus on team structure supporting the leadership and working with partners to take more responsibility in practice, doing more 'with, not for'.

As we move into the new academic year we anticipate change. We have colleagues planning to retire and an opportunity to reflect on where we go next with the team. Over the winter and spring term we will be **looking at the structure of the team** and how we can better deliver a service and improve on our strategic oversight.

We plan to reflect on the 'service to the services' and how we can **support colleagues to be more confident in advocating for the education of the children in their care.** This will include development opportunities, peer support in practice, and embedding virtual school team members into our practice areas to capture opportunities as they arise. We intend to start this in the 18+ area and Youth Justice. Then, as we develop the 'children with a social worker' offer, look to **embed colleagues in social work teams.**

We want to do more work around **quality of service delivery**, this includes reflection time and peer QA checks on PEPs regularly scheduled throughout the academic year, giving us the assurance that we have continuity across the team, especially during a time of change and new staff.

We want to **look at our governance** and ensure that there is the appropriate scrutiny. We will consider 'link governors' that have a particular focus/responsibility and reflect on the agenda to allow more opportunities for conversation and challenge. We will consider timings and take the opportunity to review our current terms of reference.

We want to focus more on **extracurricular opportunities for our young people**, building on confidence, cultural capital and aspiration. This will include opportunities in collaboration with participation, experiences centred around career aspirations and events that work to support social and communication skills. All of this offers the opportunity for our young people to learn and grow, setting them apart from the crowd and readying them for adulthood.

And finally...

We want to thank our children and young people, our social workers, our carers, our education colleagues and the wider partnership that enable our young people to learn and thrive. 'It takes a village to raise a child' and partnership is a vital part of our children's success.

On the following page you will find the contact details of our team. Do please reach out if you would like to discuss the contents of our report or any aspect of our practice.

Cherie Sears – Virtual School Head

Contacting the Team...

Name	Title	Email	Telephone
Cherie Sears	Virtual School Head	Cherie.sears@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07710 153662
Danielle Thornton	Lead for the Education of Children in our Care	Danielle.thornton@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07787 697867
Tahira Bowkan	Primary Education Champion (Birth to Yr4)	Tahira.bowkan@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07834 740463
Kuldip Rayat-Jones	Secondary Education Champion	Kuldip.rayat-jones@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07500 106031
Reem Ali	16+ Education, Employment & Training Lead	Reem.ali@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07720 074451
Selmah Chaudhary	Education, Employment & Training Lead for Slough 16-18	Selmah.Chaudhary@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07808 647619
Harpal Keila	Post 16 EE&T Champion	Harpal.Keila@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07711 564136
Stephanie Burnett	Post 16 EE&T Champion	Stephanie.burnett@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07860 592914
TbC (VSH in absence)	SiaSS Lead	Cherie.sears@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07710 153662
Tina Coombe	SiaSS Assistant Lead	Tina.coombe@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk	07749 709890

Appendix A: Understanding GCSE data

The GCSE Attainment 8 score is the average measure of an individual student's progress across their 8 best performing subjects which fall into three 'Attainment 8 buckets'; if these 8 best subjects do not fall into the three designated buckets for 'English & Maths', 'Ebacc' or 'Other' subjects, the score will not be counted.

What's the difference between Progress 8 and Attainment 8?

The Attainment 8 score measures the achievement of an individual student across their eight best performing subjects. The Progress 8 score measures how well they've progressed since their time in secondary school compared to their peers who were at the same level as them at key stage two. Usually, the collective student Progress 8 scores will be used to determine the success of whole secondary schools based on how much progress all students have made. However, this year, due to Covid, we are unable to produce or report Progress 8 scores this year so will be measured on Attainment 8 scores only.

How do you calculate Attainment 8?

In order to calculate Attainment 8, the traditional GCSE grades are translated into numbers, where a grade 8 will represent the A/A* boundary, a 1 will represent a G and 4 will indicate a pass, the same as that of a C grade.. A 9 has been introduced to recognise truly outstanding work, fewer of these will be awarded than A*s have been historically.

When we consider the outcome for our young people we must consider this in context. How did they do compared to how we expected them to do. Attainment 8 is a numeric outcome based on the national expectation, not on the individual. Some of our young people may not have followed a traditional education path due to SEND needs or language challenges. Others may be experiencing other challenges that mean they are not on the best form at the time of the exams. Every one of our young people have their own narrative and are more than a number at one point in time.

Appendix B: GCSE Results – All students

[illegible]

Appendix C: Useful links to DfE information about our statutory responsibilities

Virtual School

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

New responsibilities – Children with a social worker

[£16 million to support young people with a social worker - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Virtual school head role extension to children with a social worker - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Post 16 Education, Employment & Training

[September Guarantee: education and training for young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Glossary

PEP	Personal Education Plan	A PEP (Personal Education Plan) is a document that sets down information about your education, your progress and targets to support your continued learning. There is also personal details that allow us to reflect on wider support that you may have in relation to your care status and of course, most importantly, your voice.
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan	An Education Health and Care Plan is a document that sets out what is needed to ensure you are as successful as you can possibly be in your education. It is formulated when you require extra support beyond what the school may be able to provide and it is regularly reviewed to ensure that you are able to access the learning environment and perhaps equipment that is right for you.
SMART Targets	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely Target	A SMART Target is one that everyone involved have had the opportunity to reflect on and ensure is 'fit for the purpose', especially you. The word SMART is an acronym for Specific (it needs to be clear to everyone), Achievable (you need to be able to have a reasonable chance of achieving the hoped outcome), Relevant (it must meet your needs or requirements and not be too general), Timely (not without timelines to ensure that it is reviewed regularly).
P8 or Progress 8	Progress 8	Progress 8 is the accountability measure that determines your progress across 8 subjects. This is a value added measure whereby your results will be compared to students who had the same prior attainment score at KS2.
A8 or Attainment 8	Attainment 8	The Attainment 8 score is the average measure of your progress across their 8 best performing subjects
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	UASC are children who are outside their country of origin to seek asylum in the United Kingdom. They have been separated from parents and relatives, and are not in the care of someone who is responsible for doing so.
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training	This acronym refers to a group of young people who are currently without education, employment or training to occupy them.
Not Known	'Not Known'	This refers to young people who we are unable to make contact with at present to establish whether they have education, employment or training.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	This acronym refers to an additional need for a person based around Social, Emotional and/or Mental Health challenges
Advocacy	Advocacy	Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes, and help you stand up for your rights. Someone who helps you in this way is called your advocate.
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	Someone to support you to understand your feelings and express them confidently in the presence of others.
FAP	Fair Access Protocol	Fair Access Protocol (FAP) is a mechanism developed by the Local Authority in partnership with all schools in its area. The aim is to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, are allocated a school place as quickly as possible.
Reportable Cohort	Reportable Cohort	The 'Reportable Cohort is a group of young people who we report on because they form part of a certain criteria such as age, identifying features or perhaps year group.

