

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

SHROPSHIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL



Introduction

1.0

This is the Annual Report for Shropshire Virtual School 2023-24. Our Virtual School team pride ourselves on developing a sense of 'belonging' with our young people and creating an education community for them where we can promote excellent opportunities and champion their achievements - and as part of the Corporate Parent we always take the approach of considering whether something is 'good enough for our own child'.

Our Virtual School also provides advice, information and training on education around children who are Previously Looked-After or supported through Kinship and we are strategic leaders for the cohort of Children with a Social Worker.

Context for our Virtual School

1.1

This has been a key academic year for the Virtual School with a new structure and a growing team. There have been national as well as local challenges such as with the increased regional attainment gaps, mental health/emotional well-being and a context of rising exclusions and suspensions.

There has been a +17% change in the numbers of looked after children from year -2 to 11 through this academic year. (Year -2 refers to two years before Reception). Numbers in Key Stage 5 have remained stable through the year since a +22% change in the previous year, mostly from rising numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASYP)

This increase in numbers of Looked After Children surpassed the predicted trajectory taken in early Spring 2024 and so this forecast data has been upwardly revised. This picture, alongside the realignment of the senior leadership team structure in Learning and Skills, necessitates a re-assessment of the staffing plan so the school can continue to support outcomes and achievements for children and young people.

Shropshire Virtual School has become more closely involved with our regional West Midlands VS Heads group. The Asst Heads chair some of the focus groups for the Deputies and we have had a stronger presence in the partnership, for example at the Conference in the summer term we arranged for NurtureUK to present the work we have led on in Shropshire. Some of our Participation arts and sports events have been created jointly with Telford VS through the WM Children in Care Foundation (which we are a trustee for) [Welcome to WMVS Children In Care Foundation | WMVS Children In Care Foundation \(wmvscicfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.wmvscicfoundation.org.uk)

The Head Teacher and Assistant Head also presented at the East Midlands VS Conference on our projects around Hearts and Minds, Emotion Coaching and Nurture – the feedback was very positive – ***“you both were absolutely fantastic and pitched it perfectly, not just the wealth of information and food for thought but also the way you presented it which was wonderful. The feedback was great, so many people said that it was really interesting to have a perspective from a Virtual School outside the Eastern region.”***



Shropshire Profile

1.2 Shropshire is a largely rural and landlocked county in the West Midlands. It borders multiple other LAs, including Wales. There are 151 schools across the local authority (LA): 127 primary phase schools, 19 secondary schools, 1 All-through school, 3 special schools and 1 Pupil Referral Unit.

Approximately a third of Shropshire primary schools are classed as small or very small. There currently 4 schools with less than 30 pupils and forecasts suggest that the number of schools in Shropshire with less than 30 pupils will increase. For September 2024, 53 out of 127 primary schools and 18 out of 19 secondary schools are academies. All 3 of Shropshire’s special schools are academies. 13 schools have had applications to become an academy approved.

Ofsted data published in August 2024 indicates that the percentage of good and better schools is:

	% of good or better (All schools)	% of good or better (Primary schools)	% of good or better (Secondary schools)
National	91%	91%	85%
West Midlands	89%	90%	86%
Shropshire	86%	89%	75%

(‘All school’ data also includes nursery schools of which there are 0 in Shropshire and Special schools).

1.3

At the end of August 2023 Shropshire Virtual School was supporting 652 Children who are Looked After from year -2 to 13 (the year in which they turn 18), this amounts to a +13% change in overall numbers.

Data overview: CLA Pupil data overview by Key Stage, August 2024

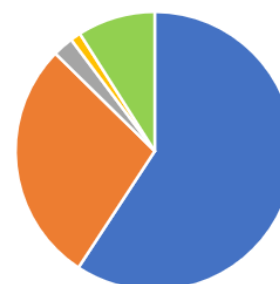
Month	EYFS	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	TOTAL No in STATUTORY SCHOOL YEARS	KS5	TOTAL of all CIC (yr-2 to 13)
End August 2023	101	69	129	118	77	423	158	652
August	106	85	159	135	94	508	156	735

1.4

Vulnerability data for CLA in the Statutory School Years and Early Years at the end of the academic year indicated that:

- A significant change through this last academic year has been the proportion of our children from year -2 to 11 with an **EHCP**, this has increased from 23% to **26%** of the cohort.
- Of particular note is the data indicating that there is significant growth in the number of CLA with an EHCP who are **living outside of Shropshire** and need an out of authority specialist school. These numbers have risen from 25 to 43 in 12 months and the situation for these young people often impacts heavily on swift access to education.
- There has been a +31% change in pupils in this age group attending LA specialist or independent schools, however even more of our pupils with an EHCP attend a mainstream setting than last year (42% compared to 33%).
- Through the year there were between 3-6 pupils attending a PRU in any month. The numbers attending an Out of Authority school increased from 153 to 191, which is a +25% change through the year.
- 59% are looked after under a Full Care Order (compared to 67% last academic year), 28% under an Interim Care Order (compared to 21% last year), 9% under Section 20 (compared to

Looked-After Legal Category



- 11.4% last year), 2.4% under a Placement Order (in line with last year) and 1.2% under Police Protection.
- 7 are UASYP.
- There has been an increase in the % of our children attending a school judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED from 72% to 86%

1.5

Vulnerability data for CLA in Key Stage 5 at the end of the academic year was:

- 29 (19%) have an EHCP - which is in line with the picture for the last academic year - and a further 15 have identified SEN.
- 40% are at a provider out of area, which is a decrease on last academic year (61%)
- 68 (44%) are UASYP, which is in line with the proportion last year.
- 103 young people (66%) live outside of Shropshire.

1.6

By the end of the academic year 2023-24 the Shropshire Virtual School team for the CLA workstream was made up of the Head Teacher and

- 1 Business Co-ordinator and 1 term time Administrator
- 2 Assistant Heads and 2 Education Advisors
- 1 Lead Attendance Officer and 1 Lead Post 16 Officer
- 1 Participation Officer
- 2 Education Advice and Support Officers (EASOs) – main focus being Key Stage 5 CLA.
- 1 EASO for PLAC (Previously Looked After Children)
- 0.6 FTE EASO for Children with a Social Worker and 7.9 FTE EASOs for CLA in years -2 to 11

1.7

The majority of postholders in the service work term time only but the new structure has enabled growth from previously only 3 members of staff working through the school holidays to 9, including the Head Teacher. This has supported a consistency of offer for our partners and children. One Education Advice and Support Officer colleague is supporting our new Extended Kinship Duties. In July the VS Head Teacher moved into a wider role in the LA, this includes Attendance and Admissions and so, along with the rise in numbers of CLA and new Extended Duties, some re-assessment of the staffing plan is needed.

Following a restructure in 2022-23 there was a phase of recruitment, followed by a CPD schedule in the first few weeks of September of 2023. This supported a co-production of the school's vision and values (see right). These align with the Shropshire Plan and aim to support our children and team to be able to "live their best life".

1.8

The Virtual School has a Governing Body that meets termly, it is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families Kirstie Hurst-Knight. Other members include a:

- Head Teacher
- Parent
- Member of the Virtual School team
- CLA Service Manager
- Principal School Improvement Advisor
- Associate Elected Member
- Looked-After Childrens Participation Worker.
- Early Years Governor



The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers

Educational Progress

1.9 The Attainment and Progress workstream is led by an Asst Head and fortnightly Pupil Progress Meetings were routine through the year with a focus on targeting intervention to support children in key year groups linked to performance indicators such as GCSEs, SATS, Good Level of Development. A termly report is produced for the Head Teacher - and this is discussed at Senior Leadership Meetings.

2.0 Summary of results for academic year 2023-24, data Source: Nexus. The results below are not yet validated and also the data is pending re-remarks so may change on verification in Spring 2025.

2.1

Good Level of Development (GLD) cohort size 30

% achieving a Good Level of Development	Summer 2024
CLA Shropshire SSD903	20%
CLA National	39%
CLA West Midlands	40%
CLA Statistical neighbours	50%

Please note due to EYFS reform data prior to 2022 is not comparative.

Phonics Screening Check

% achieving a Pass	Summer 2024
CLA Shropshire SSD903	44%
CLA National	61%
CLA West Midlands	59%

There was a 77% increase in pupils with an EHCP between Autumn and Summer terms for this group - and 41% of year R and year 1 pupils now have an EHCP. This indicates an exceptional profile with a significant level of special educational needs that has been identified for support. As a result of this cohort profile, the data on Nexus indicates that Shropshire CLA achieved below CLA regional and national averages this year. The national picture for results in GLD for all learners with SEND was that only 4% of all learners with an EHCP achieved GLD compared to nearly 6% last year. In Phonics, 78.4% of all learners nationally achieved the standard and 21.3% for those with an EHCP.

None of our pupils who have a complex and profound PEP were making expected progress in the autumn term, but by the end of the summer term 100% achieved expected progress across the 4 areas of need. One pupil CJL has made accelerated progress in 5 of the 7 areas of learning, she started the year emerging in all areas and has now achieved expected attainment in all areas.

2.2 Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) SSD903

Data from schools indicates that 33% of Shropshire CLA achieved a MTC score of 18 or more, this is in the context that 54% have identified SEN. National Results are released in November for comparison.

2.3 End of Key Stage 2 Results (SSD903)

Only 4% of the cohort were predicted in the autumn term to achieve the Expected Standard (EXS) in the Combined Measure (Reading, Writing and Maths). The cohort picture is 27.3% of this group have an EHCP with a further 3 pupils in ECHNA process during SATs and 7 more with identified SEN support. This meant that the Virtual School had to intensively focus on this group through Pupil Progress Meetings.



Indicator (cohort size 33)	Reading	Writing	Maths	Combined
% predicted as 'working at' Expected Standard or above at end of Autumn Term (PEP data)	26	19	11	4
% predicted as 'working at' Expected Standard or above at end of Summer Term (PEP data)	39	27	21	18
Unverified outcome of SATs (Nexus) – % achieved Expected Standard	48	44	22	13
% gain from Autumn to SATs (unverified)	+22	+25	+11	+9
Percentage change from Autumn to SATs	+85	+132	+100	+225

It is very positive to note that although there were very low starting points for this year's cohort of year 6 children, they were supported effectively to make significant gains through the academic year. The outcome is a picture of Accelerated Progress with children supported to make significant gains through the year but with a low Combined score as follows:

% achieving EXS	Reading	Writing	Maths	Combined
Shropshire CLA	48	44	22	13
National CLA	53	46	47	34
WM Regional CLA	57	52	53	37
Statistical Neighbours CLA	62	52	50	37

All scores in Reading, Writing, Maths and Combined for all Shropshire Learners were also all below National all Learners achievements this year, particularly so in Maths which then affected Combined outcomes. However, the data suggests that the gap between Shropshire all learners and CLA this year has narrowed in Writing by 2.7%, stayed broadly in line for Reading and widened for Maths.

2.4 End of Key Stage 4 results

Some examples of individual unverified outcomes are listed below. Considering that 42% of the SSD903 cohort this year have an EHCP (compared to 22% last year) and 26% attend a specialist provision there are some remarkable achievements. Re-marks are being sought for several pupils who were close to the boundary. (There were multiple young people who were predicted 4s in English and achieved 3s.)

The year 11 cohort this year would have been in year 7 when the pandemic took full effect and switched to learning mainly online at home in the Spring of 2020 and for a further two years. The GCSE pass rate fell for a third year running across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and back to pre-pandemic levels. It is reported that the regional divide has widened further with the West Midlands being the lowest performing region. This summer 17 Shropshire CLA students achieved 8 GCSEs or more (compared to 13 last year). Eleven students are studying A Levels. Some examples of notable successes are:

J achieved Grade 9 in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Grade 8 in History, Grade 7 in Maths and three more GCSEs including English at Grade 6. J has an EHCP in place due to having ASD and attended the Kettlemere hub. He plans to study A Levels in Science, hopefully at Thomas Adams.

N achieved Grade 9 in Chemistry, Grade 8 in Biology, Spanish and Business, Grade 7 in Maths plus 3 more GCSEs including English at Grade 6 or above. She also achieved a Merit in BTEC Health and Social Care which is equivalent to GCSE Grade 6. Nia is staying on in 6th Form.

M (UASYP) achieved Grade 6 in Urdu, Grade 4 in Maths, Grade 3 for Combined Science and Grade 3 for English Language and Literature. He also achieved two more GCSEs at Grade 1. He now wants to continue into Sixth Form.

F felt unable to attend lessons in Year 10 but with intervention and support from the team around her has achieved Grade 5 in Fine Art, Grade 4-3 in Science, Grade 3 in English Language and Maths, and Grade 1 in History. She has demonstrated accelerated progress that she can now build on in KS5 and she is staying on in Sixth Form to study A Level Graphics and Art 3D.



K achieved Grade 6 in English Language, seven GCSEs at Grade 4 and one at Grade 3, this has been achieved despite losing her Mum at the start of her GCSE studies and experiencing a subsequent placement breakdown.

L achieved a Grade 1 in GCSE Maths and a BTEC Level 1 Sport Pass despite needing to be moved to Cumbria immediately before his exams due to CCE risk. He sat his exams in an unfamiliar exam centre, so turning up and completing the exam must have taken a huge amount of courage.

These are just a few highlights, there are many more stories of resilience and personal progress for which our young people should be very proud. Initial and unvalidated data indicates our young people achieved the following and of particular note:

- 13% achieved 5 GCSEs at grades 9-5 including English and Maths, compared to 4.2% last year.
- Significant gains were made in Maths outcomes this year for both indicators of grades 4 and 5 or above.
- There was an improved percentage of children achieving grades 5 or above in both Maths and English

Achievement by indicator for SSD903	English grade 4 or above	English grade 5 or above	Maths grade 4 or above	Maths grade 5 or above	English and Maths both at grades 4 or above	Eng + Maths both at grades 5 or above	5 GCSEs at grades 9-4 inc E+M	5 GCSEs at grades 9-5 inc E+M
Summer 2024 (unverified) cohort of 46	30.4%	20%	30.4%	17.4%	24%	13%	22%	13%
Summer 2023 (verified) cohort of 24	29.2%	16.7%	20.8%	8.3%	16.7%	4.2%	16.7%	4.2%

Further information due from the Insight team will enable us to see how this compares to National and Regional Averages for CLA.

2.5 Tracking for the Phased Transfers of young people with an EHCP started in January. A notable success of this action is as follows:

Transfers by year groups	% with confirmed offer of provision
Year -1 into Reception	100%
Year 2 into 3	100%
Year 6 into 7	100%
Year 8 (middle school) into 9	100%
Year 11 into 12	84% (16/19)

Of the year 11s without a place in year 12:

- 1 is in Derbyshire and provision is being requested from the Derbyshire SEN team.
- 1 is seeking employment.
- 1 was at risk of permanent exclusion and is being given support to engage.



2.6 There were some considerable successes for our students at the end of Key Stage 5 this year:

A levels and Level 3 outcomes

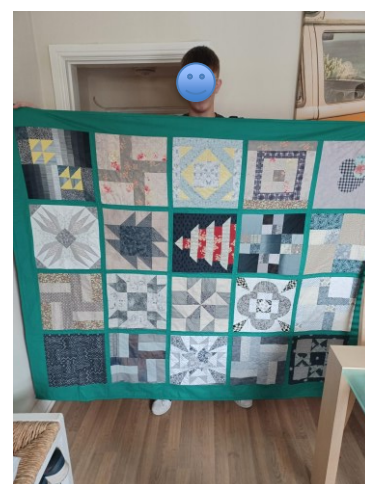
Student initial	Grades achieved	Subjects	Next steps
S	BBC	Psychology, Geography and Biology	Liverpool University to study Marine Biology
N (UASYP)	CCC	Politics, Law and Computer Science	Liverpool University to study Law
AL	E L3 (equivalent to A levels) Merit	Sociology Health & Social Care Child Development	Not yet determined
K	Distinction * Distinction * Distinction * (equivalent to 3 A levels at A*)	Fashion & Textiles	Employment before starting an apprenticeship in 2025

Congratulations cards have been arranged by our service to congratulate the above students and support them on their next steps. Those going to university have been offered one of the hand-made quilts kindly donated by the Shropshire Quilters.

2.7

Three out of four of our A Level pupils completed their course and the one student who didn't sit his exams has been supported to switch to an Access to University course. Both of our young people who studied a Level 3 Applied General Qualification completed their course. For those young people leaving year 13 this summer, confirmations at the end of September are as follows:

- 51% have a college or training place.
- 3.2% have a place at a university.
- 14% are employed and 2% are in an apprenticeship.



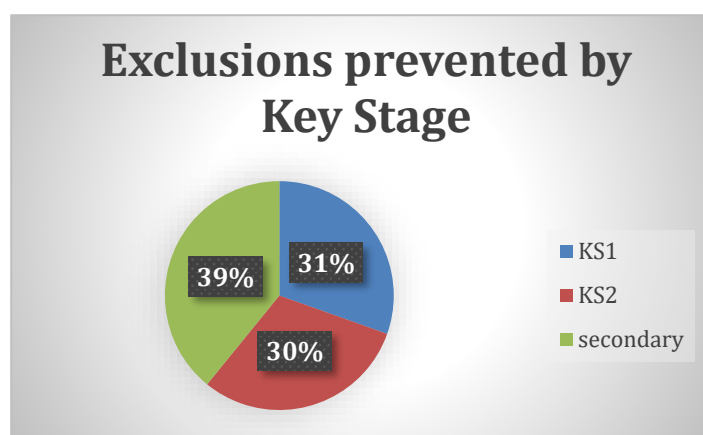
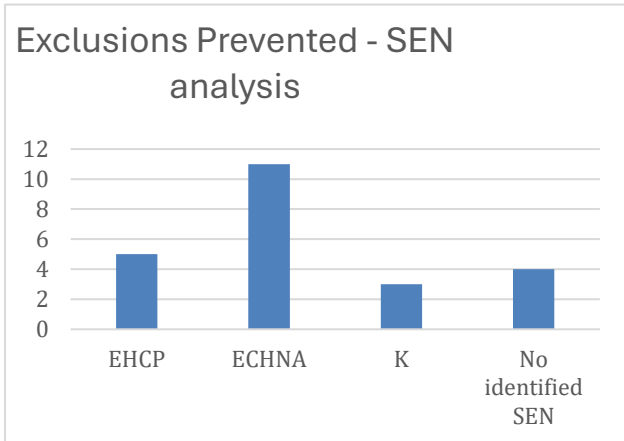
2.8 Educational engagement

A notable achievement has been 0 permanent exclusions for Shropshire Looked After Children for 3 consecutive academic years. This was recognized by OFSTED in the recent focused inspection [50255790](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk) ([ofsted.gov.uk](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk))

Most children are making positive progress at school. There are strong links between schools, the virtual school and social workers to ensure that schools have the right information and support to meet the child's educational needs. Personal education plans are routinely reviewed, and the child's voice, wishes and ambitions are central to informing these plans. The virtual school has been successful in ensuring that no child in care has been excluded since the last inspection.

Additionally, 23 permanent exclusions were prevented last academic year. The impact of our work on reducing Permanent Exclusions has improved the long-term life chances for our young people. The photo on the right is one of our young people taking part in a climbing activity where PP+ has been used to support a bespoke curriculum to help him towards overcoming anxiety and integration from a Reduced timetable to full time education following being electively home educated before coming into care. This outcome has been achieved with positive use of the PP+ Grant and through use of our SLAs with providers, as well as partnership working across the Shropshire LA and with schools. The relationship with Shropshire SEN has been of particular importance given that the data indicates the following profile at the point of intended exclusion.

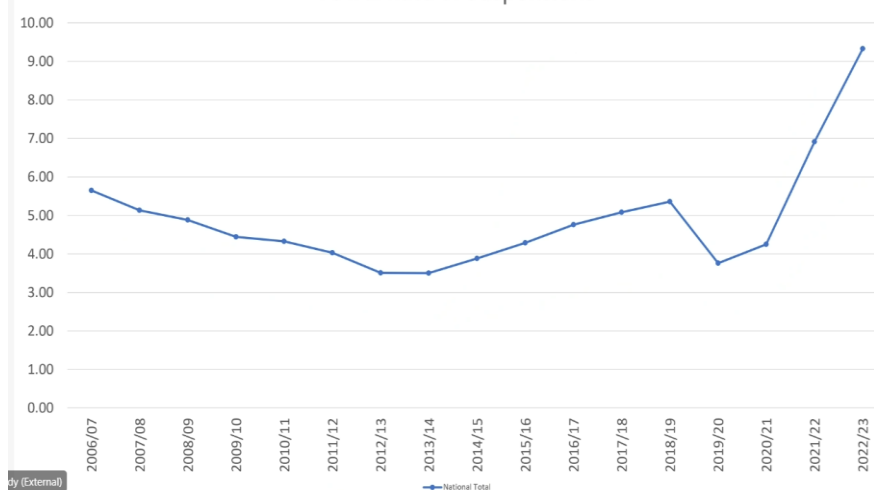




The data also indicates that nearly a third of exclusions prevented were in Key Stage 1. As a result, an action for the 2024-25 academic year is to investigate new providers that can support much younger children where there is a need for inclusion through bespoke interventions, also to seek input from the EQAs to explore the quality of provision in schools and provide systemic support/challenge to improve their SOAP.

2.9 The Suspension rate for Shropshire CLA was 27% in 2021-22, reduced to 24% last year and in 2023-24 was 35%. This is in the context of the national picture of rising exclusions and suspensions.

TOTAL Rate of Suspensions



- [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

(National picture from West Midlands AP data network)

Suspensions analysis for 2023-24

Total Number of children suspended during 2023/24	Total Number of days lost to suspension during 2023/24	Average Length of a suspension during 2023/24	Main reason for suspension during 2023/24
66 (12% of the cohort)	389.5	2.16 days (approx.)	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour

For CLA in the statutory school years affected by suspension during the academic year, **SEN needs** were as follows:

EHCP	28.79%
EHCNA	15.15%
GSP	3.03%
SEN Support	18.18%



In terms of settings:

- 76.67% of suspensions took place in mainstream settings.
- 26.67% of suspensions were from out of county schools.
- 20.55% of suspensions were from specialist schools and 1.11% from TMBS.

28.33% of suspensions occurred in Primary settings (mainstream and specialist). The highest number of suspensions were for young people in Year 1, with 26 suspensions affecting 6 young people. One young person accounted for around 45% of these for year 1 pupils and was facing permanent exclusion which was avoided - and the young person now has a specialist school placement and EHCP to support their needs.

3.0

The Attendance Summary at the end of the academic year is as follows:

Attendance %	Shropshire CLA	Shropshire all learners (*DfE Attendance Portal - Shropshire)	National all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)
Combined	91.5%	91.9%	92.9%

PERSISTENT ABSENCE FIGURE (PAF)

PAF Shropshire CLA	PAF Shropshire all learners (*DfE Attendance Portal - Shropshire)	PAF National all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)
21.9%	24.6%	20.2%

SEVERE ABSENCE FIGURE (SAF)

SAF Shropshire CLA	SAF Shropshire all learners (*DfE Attendance Portal - Shropshire)	SAF National all learners
4.82%	2.2%	Unavailable monthly

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Shropshire CLA	Shropshire all learners (*DfE Attendance Portal - Shropshire)	National all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)
1.5%	1.8%	2.4%

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

Shropshire CLA	Shropshire all learners (*DfE Attendance Portal - Shropshire)	National all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)
5.38%	8.1%	4.7%

ILLNESS ABSENCES

Shropshire CLA	Shropshire all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)	National all learners (*DfE Pupil Attendance in Schools Stats)
1.91%	4.4%	3.5%

*Some July attendance data is missing from schools and will be pursued again once schools open in September, figures will then be finalised.

The trajectory and comparatives are indicated to be as follows:

LA	Overall absence percentage CLA 31st March 2021	Overall absence percentage CLA 31st March 2022	Overall absence percentage CLA 31st March 2023
Shropshire	8.40%	8.00%	6.90%
Herefordshire	10.90%	9.60%	7.90%
Devon	No data	9.80%	9.90%
Dorset	No data	9.10%	9.90%
National	9.10%	7.80%	9.80%

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2023?subjectId=7344bd3a-2cc4-4b62-85d0-08dc5d2e18da>



LA	Persistent absence percentage	Persistent absence percentage	Persistent absence percentage
	CLA 31 st March 2021	CLA 31 st March 2022	CLA 31 st March 2023
Shropshire	29.70%	21.10%	16.70%
Herefordshire	37.30%	21.90%	20.30%
Devon	30.50%	25.20%	23.60%
Dorset	33.50%	22.50%	29.20%
National	30.40%	19.10%	24.30%

To note, the positive outcomes for Shropshire CLA are as follows:

- Attendance overall was broadly in line with Shropshire All Learners and indicate an improving trajectory with better outcomes than all reporting statistical neighbours and national (except in 2021).
- Unauthorised Absence and Illness were both less than for Shropshire and National All Learners
- Persistent absence and Authorised absence were both less than Shropshire All Learners.
- Persistent absent rates in the table above indicate an improving trajectory over 3 years and considerably better outcomes than statistical neighbours and national in 2021 and 2023.
- Reduced timetables were reduced in number by a 15% change over the whole year despite a +17% change in numbers in that time. The aim is always full-time education and reduced timetables are also a source of support for those young people who need some personalised adjustments and a bespoke offer. The Virtual School PP+ Support Map endeavours to have opportunities for swift support where this is felt by those with parental responsibility to be in the child's best interests.

Severe absence is higher than for Shropshire All Learners; the National figure is not available. Year 11 students counted for nearly 2% of this figure and are often a particularly vulnerable group that receive a high level of support from the Virtual School.

3.1

Some further analysis of the data for children not on roll at a school (NRS) this last academic year indicates some of the challenges that looked-after children face re access to education.

Electively Home Educated at point of coming into care	Placement Move	SEN	SEN & Placement Move	UASC
4	9	4	2	1
(1 primary, 3 secondary)	(3 primary, 6 secondary)	(1 primary, 3 secondary)	(both secondary)	(secondary)

Social Care and the Virtual School work together to prioritise access to education and support a personalized plan to support integration, for example following a placement move or when adjusting from Elective Home Education to full time. The aim is for development of a new triage and escalation approach for the academic year 2023-24 in line with LA responsibilities stipulated in the Working Together Guidance [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

For young people who have an EHCP (Education, Health & Care Plan) but were needing a new school, had a suspension or were on a RTT there was fortnightly tracking and action on this priority group. For example, 27 RTTs were closed by the end of July. There has been a notable barrier to swift admissions for young people with an EHCP particularly in some neighbouring Authorities. Complaints have been made by SVS and Social Care working collaboratively and a new Escalation process is being piloted - early results are indicating positive outcomes. With the VS Head moving into a new post in the Local Authority the aim is also for increasing opportunities for a wider approach.



3.2

The Virtual School was prepared for the new Working Together Statutory Guidance with collection, tracking, advice/support and reporting mechanisms in place. Key to this is the integrated tool that the ePEP system uses in conjunction with the DFE Portal to give the school the coding detail it needs to enable swift action where there are patterns or suspensions for example. Targeted Attendance Meetings are held fortnightly with team members and monthly reporting at an Attendance Scrutiny Meeting with the Head Teacher is routine. The adjustment into the new Learning and Skills Structure will support the overview of attendance and inclusion for all learners including those supported by the Virtual School.

3.3

Data at the end of July 2024 indicated 156 students in Key Stage 5 being supported at the Virtual School and of these:

- 72% of students were in education employment or training (EET) at this point ie 28% NEET - and of these:
- UASYP NEET: 19 students (this is an increase from 10 from Spring to the Summer term)
- Citizen NEET: 25 students
- 12 are citizen learners looked after under Section 20.

At the mid-September 2024 point there were 83% of Key Stage 5 students in education, employment or training (EET) and further enrolments are being supported. Of these confirmed as being in EET:

- 79% are in Higher Education
- 3% are in Employment.
- 1% are engaged part time in training or employment.

In September 2023 the Shropshire CLA NEET figure was 12%, it peaked in December at 22% and then dropped to 17% in January when new ESOL courses started.

The average monthly NEET figure for Shropshire CLA for December, January and February was 19.7% or 80.3% in education, employment or training, using the same calculation as the DFE.

(DFE comparisons are not yet available for individual LAs or by vulnerability, most recent data is end of 2022 [Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)).

The national headline for All Learners was 78.9% participation for 16-18 year olds and 8% NEET [Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18, Calendar year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#) Note this is by calendar year so not like for like.

3.4 At the end of the academic year the data indicated that the main barriers to EET were:

- excluding UASYP the NEET figure at the end of the summer term was 16%. West Midlands providers were overwhelmed in 2023-24 for ESOL courses and there were no spaces as a result. This was a frequent topic on the agenda at West Midlands UASYP meetings.
- 60% of the NEET group had SEMH as their main barrier to attending education, training or employment.
- 68% of 44 young people who are NEET live outside of Shropshire.

3.5

One example of how the VS Links support students from NEET to EET in KS5 is with AJ - he had previously been employed in two part-time jobs since leaving school and had help to seek an Apprenticeship in Business Administration. He passed Functional Skills Level 2 in Maths through engaging in online tuition that the VS PP+ Grant funded and his wish is to progress on to university in the future.

One year 11 student had some mentoring from Smashlife last year and were able to use Smashlife's contacts to secure an apprenticeship for K in construction. He has started this autumn, is in college on a Monday and works in the week. The business owner has said "K was brilliant, listened well and through conversations is invested in the apprenticeship." Smashlife are giving ongoing support in the form of advice to the business owner so they understand in general some of the barriers that CLA have to overcome and may need a little extra support to succeed.



Key stage 5 colleagues were present on GCSE results day so that help was on hand for any student who needed a plan B, whether that be for doing better or worse than expected. One student surpassed his predicted grades and there was swift communication with his Social Worker and school to revisit his destination to A level courses at sixth form instead of college.

3.6

This Autumn term Shropshire Virtual School is progressing the Business Plan for supporting UASYP into Education, Employment and Training having designed a bespoke Shropshire Re-Engagement Programme with a Section 41 provider. Workforce board has approved the post to support this work and so this can go to Grade Evaluation with HR as the next step.

3.7

A Virtual School Assistant Head now takes a lead in the School Development Plan for Aspirations, Progression and Key Stage 5. They are also working jointly with Social Care towards employment of a Care Leaver apprenticeship with a Business Case. The Virtual School has been working in partnership with the Upskill team to develop a process which ensures that our Shropshire Looked After Children are identified when seeking a work experience placement within the local authority so that there is personalized support from the young person's Virtual School Link.

EW is a Year 10 CLA pupil who has just successfully completed a 'family business' placement within the Health and Wellbeing team at Shropshire Council. During her tour of Shirehall her mentor commented positively that EW seemed to know lots of people in the building as VS staff were around to check in – this will have had a positive impact on E's sense of belonging. Feedback from the Designated Teacher for EW:

"E's feedback when I have seen her has been really positive and she has really enjoyed the variety of things she has been doing. She has been very chatty about visiting different areas to include Shirehall, Ludlow and Hope. Thank you for helping secure the placement for her."

Information promoting work experience in the family business has been shared widely with partners and by Virtual School links during PEP meetings (years 10–13) and through our Designated Teacher Network. Three of our young people made enquiries about completing their work experience recently, two school-age and one post-16. Two young people completed applications with one being successful and another being signposted to one of our partners (not in the LA).

3.8

Next steps in the plan are as follows:

- Upskill will seek feedback from young people and team managers.
- This will be used to inform a series of case studies with videos. The Virtual School will participate in creating the videos and promote the benefits to LA teams from taking on a work experience placement.
- Virtual School Links will use the work experience placements as part of flexible learning plans for young people in years 10 -11 and as part of the NEET to EET offer for Key stage 5.
- Lead a discussion with HR the Protected Characteristic for CLA/CLs and how this development needs to fit with Shropshire Council's Recruitment Policy in general (not just for Apprenticeships)
- A new approach with a plan dedicated Work Experience Activity Days for our young people through the new academic year so that we continue to actively develop the aspirations of our young people with the family business and other partners.

Personal Education Plans

3.9

The PEP workstream is led by an Asst Head and this year she has introduced PEP Monitoring activity in the form of regular meetings with individual team members to focus on completion and quality, as well as targeted actions for partners and schools. The School Development Plan target is always to work towards 100% completion and this last academic year the target was for 90% of PEPs to be Good Quality. This year the results have continued to improve further.



4.0 The data summary is as follows:

COMPLETION

Indicator - % of PEPs completed	Yr -1 to yr 11	Key Stage 5	Combined
Autumn term	98.1%	96.2%	95.8%
Spring term	96.2%	83%	93.2%
Summer term	99.8%	86.3%	97%

QUALITY

Indicator - % of PEPs that are Good Quality*	Yr -1 to yr 11	Key Stage 5	Combined
Autumn term	94.9%	73%	92.2%
Spring term	88%	68%	79%
Summer term	97.7%	96%	97.2%

Data is for children in year -1 and Reception age as allocation of Vs Links for year -2 was delayed due to staff absence & recruitment activity.

The overall average for completion for Early and Statutory School Years was 98% and for quality it was 94%.

The overall average for all key stages was 95.3% for completion and 90% for quality.

(The SVS Quality descriptors can be found here [Personal education plan \(PEP\) | Shropshire Council](#))

4.1

The Key Stage 5 PEP launched on 2nd September following consultation, design and training for all partners. It has a raft of features, for example improved capture of young people's voices, reporting tools and prompting positive conversations towards improve outcomes. The VS website will have a suite of documents to support access to information plus ongoing learning, this links to the Social Care Training website. Another development is the new Shropshire Early Years PEP which has been designed with support from an Early Years LA Advisor and linked School Governor and launches on 2nd September. It matches with all EY guidance and uses data from the Checks for 2 year-olds to support early intervention at this crucial stage.

Pupil Premium Plus

4.2

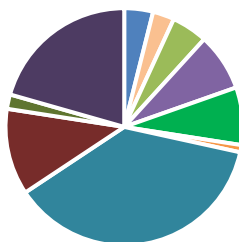
A new PP+ Policy was published for the 2024-25 financial year and is on our website at [Pupil Premium Plus | Shropshire Council](#). To drive the focus on supporting schools to successfully include our young people and provide opportunities such as cultural capital, transitions and academic achievement the Virtual School has created a PP+ support map [pupil-premium-plus-support-map-2023-24.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#) This continually evolves as we strive to source new opportunities for engagement and progress.

4.3

Each school is sent a termly amount of £433 per term per child if there is a Good Quality PEP so they can plan for effective use of the Grant through the year. Additional requests to the VS can be made by a school at any time, just like a parent might want to for their own child. The rest of the Grant is retained and used for salaries, service level agreements with quality assured providers and training for example. A report is run at the end of the academic year to analyse the spend and plan future allocations. The PP+ Grant was fully spent in the financial year 2023-24. A financial breakdown by category of spend for the financial year 2023-24 for retained PP+ is as follows:



Retained PP+ spend by category



- ePEP
- Cultural and sport
- Emotional health/Well-being
- Equipment/Resources (not IT)
- Inclusion/Attendance
- IT Equipment
- Staffing
- Training
- Transitions/Aspirations
- Tuition

4.4 Impact Summary

Letterbox: Literacy and numeracy packs are put together by experts and sent directly to each child from age 5 to 11 from May to September – plus they each receive a Christmas parcel. Each child has a carefully selected pack taking into account their age and stage, including special educational needs.

96% of the children say they like or love Letterbox and 68% say they now read more on their own.

Feedback from one carer was “I find the (child) is much more open to the books in BookTrust’s Letterbox parcels. Those books have been sent to them in the post, rather than given to them by me. They are more than happy to read through the Letterbox books because the parcel is something that’s theirs.” Some examples of books that will go out to our children for this year are:



Tuition

The Virtual School has Service Level Agreements with three providers. A new SLA with Nisai is purely online as a response to what our young people are asking for. The National Tuition Grant was used to buy 1703 hours of tuition for our young people and this supported progress (as per sections 2.3 and 2.4).

Aspire & Seeds of Change

This provides a bespoke careers mentoring programme for year 10 and 11 students – and this year we expanded into supporting pupils in year 9. Young people receive 1:1 mentoring to help them develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes for personal growth, being able to think positively about their future and identifying support mechanisms to help them achieve employment, education or training goals.



"It opened my eyes to what's out there and improved my confidence. I know a lot more about my future than I did".



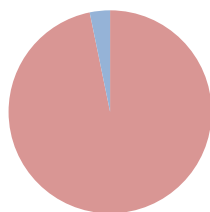
Some outcomes of note are that:

- ✓ 100% of pupils said they have a clearer vision about their future.
- ✓ 85% said they feel more motivated.
- ✓ 100% of the pupils increased their self-assessment scores in 4 or more areas and 50% in 7 out of the 13 areas.

Educational Psychology

The Virtual School has a Service Level Agreement with the Shropshire Educational Psychology Service which funds assessments, intervention and 3 x roll outs of foundation level training in Attachment level 1 which has had very good feedback as follows:

Would You Reccomend This Training To Your Colleagues?



■ Yes ■ Unsure

"Informative slides and breakdown of different attachment styles"

"Opening mind to think of others with attachment than just who I was specifically there for"

"Understanding that some of these attachment issues are formed when babies are so young and how this can manifest as you grow older"

"Deeper insights into attachment styles and definitions made it easy to apply to children we work with"

"Knowing the different types of attachment and being able to identify them"

"Learnt different attachment issues and how the child may display these behaviours. Information given to support these behaviours"

In the academic year 2024-25 we are developing our work with Shropshire EPs to include training on precision teaching in literacy and numeracy – plus training on FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). Support for the team with EP led group supervision will continue in a new format.

Time for You is a consultation offer for schools for CLA, PLAC and Children with a Social Worker, this is supported by an independent Educational Psychologist. It has been very well received and always fully booked - in fact, schools recommend this offer from SVS to other schools. 100% of schools strongly agreed or agreed they found the sessions helpful (83% strongly agreed)

The breakdown of sessions by category is as follows:

Number of children who were CLA	24
Number of children who were PLAC	13
Number of Children who were CWSW	9

Examples of feedback are:

"Excellent discussion about the child... - even though the pupil was unknown to her, the process and strategies suggested matched strongly with the needs presented. Anything unfamiliar was explained clearly and summarised to make sure everyone was in agreement with the final targets."

"It was really helpful, to talk through what we here experiencing and nice to have reassurance we are doing the right thing. Felt empowered"

"I find the sessions to be safe spaces in which to explore ideas and reflect openly about practice. This session was useful to focus on a child in detail, whilst also bearing in mind the needs of our wider Year 4 cohort... Thank you."



Smashlife

Over 200 hours of Mentoring support took place for 30 young people aged 8-16 and over. Feedback from young people is incredible with comments such as:



“Thank you for helping me for the past few months. I have really changed since you have been here and I am really happy you have been there for me. We have had good and bad days but you have always been there. Thank you for everything you have done.”

“It has meant a lot seeing someone that has been through it” – this references that some of the mentors are care-experienced themselves.

Smashlife also delivered at a Network event for Designated Teachers to give key messages as care-experienced practitioners.

Bloomin' Lovely

This social, emotional and mental health intervention is provided by a Horticultural Therapist and has been new to the VS this year. Four young people have been supported in over 30 sessions and their feedback includes:

- ‘I hated soil before I started working with you, now I think it is amazing!’
- ‘I feel really relaxed when I’m here.’
- ‘I love being outside and doing fun stuff with you.’

A case study on one of our year 1 children who was at risk of exclusion was showing signs of aggressive and dysregulated behaviours such as pushing or hitting other pupils which caused them to fear her. However, she responded well in an outdoor setting and to support her development of friendships another child was included in the sessions. Topics such as how to share without snatching, turn-taking, teamwork, and friendship, were regularly approached using a practical and therapeutic approach. In the sessions she would sometimes become hypervigilant and distracted, especially when other people came into proximity but this improved. She enjoyed the sessions that involved messy play the most, such as mixing soil and water was her favourite. She also enjoyed role playing with fairy and pixie, poppy heads that she made into dancing girls and decorated faces to showed different emotions. This intervention also contributed towards evidence for identification of SEMH needs towards an EHCP.

Lifeshed

This is a personalised mentoring service for children and young people. An Emotional Regulation Mentoring Programme approach is used to set specific small step targets and measure progress from baseline to the end of the intervention. An example for one child focused on social interaction with a target to confidently participate in projects with other young people. Some children made very significant shifts through the intervention eg from 1/10 to 9/10, most children shifted by at least +3 points.

There was 93% attendance at sessions through the year for the 11 children who were supported. Some examples of feedback from young people:

“I think Life Shed has given me life lessons and helped me a lot.”

“They help me get un-frustrated...and they help me not swear.”



4.5

The Virtual School has used PP+ and other Grants to develop a comprehensive training offer:

Nurture Project: over 36 schools are now trained in The Theory and Practice of Nurture. The VS have this summer started the process of follow-up visits to schools to start collecting impact data. A Case study in one school evidenced:

- 100% of children accessing the nurture provision made progress on both Developmental & Diagnostic elements in 6 weeks – with 1 pupil progressing into scores for 'expected developmental range'
- 100% of same pupils have made progress academically.
- 100% have achieved the targets on their PEP, with new targets set each term linked to the nurture project.



One Head Teacher of another primary school said that the course has given ***“Understanding how the young person’s brain functions in those challenging situations was really instrumental in helping us to move forward. The (child’s) academic levels have much improved. Gaps in learning, particularly in Maths has closed. They work more independently and remain in the classroom...changing our approach has meant we are dealing with situations differently eg a more restorative conversation, while the young person still understands the rules and boundaries. We like how this links into other approaches such as Emotional Literacy Support.”***

In another school

- ✓ 2021-22 – 50% of CLA, PLAC, CWSW accessing the nurture provision were making Expected Progress towards outcomes in reading, writing and maths.
- ✓ 2022-23 - this rose to 80%
- ✓ 2023-24 – this rose to 100%
- ✓ 1 PLAC pupil successfully reintegrated full time into his main classroom.
- ✓ 2 CWSW are now accessing the hub provision on a 50% ratio rather than 80%.

The VS ran a variety of training for schools/settings, partners and carers last academic year. Becoming an Attachment and Trauma Responsive School was delivered to 9 schools and the VS also delivered as part of Initial Teacher Training for Secondary at the Marches Academy Trust. Examples of feedback are:

“Personal experience and level of knowledge of the trainers made clear links between theory and practice.”

“The concept of co-regulation...being able to understand and unpack a child’s behaviour after thinking again about the different attachment styles.”

Emotion Coaching Train the Trainer was delivered to 19 schools and 16 LA practitioners who attended 2 days training and then some online follow-up sessions. The Senior leaders and LA practitioners are now matched as training partners and Whole School Training is now rolling out. From that we are building a training team that will continue to deliver Emotion Coaching to all Early Years settings, schools, colleges, SWs and other LA colleagues in 2024-25 and onwards. Feedback examples are:

“I look forward to implementing it as a whole school approach.”

“It was a very enjoyable and worthwhile course that will greatly benefit our children and school.”



- Boxall Profile training has been delivered to 60 schools and has proved very popular and impactful in terms of applying a toolkit to support a graduated approach for SEMH. Colleagues in the Education Access Service are also being trained in this to support their practice and advice when working with schools.
- Speech and Language training was delivered to 20 secondary and primary settings by the VS Speech and Language Therapist this year.
- Pathway to Adulthood training was delivered to 28 practitioners and parents/carers to support towards planning for independence and aspirations.
- This is in addition to Designated Teacher New to Post Training for Designated Teachers and CLA Governor training and the termly Network for Designated Teachers. The summer event was face to face. It was excellent to see this widely attended, including Heads and the Head of Service for TMBSS. The focus was transition and promoting how all Designated Teachers (DTs) are key partners in Corporate Parenting. A compliment from one presenter was ***“Last week I had the pleasure of being invited to present to Head Teachers and DTs by Shropshire VS Head Teacher...what a breath of fresh air...in terms of connection they totally get it...they have brought a sense of belonging for me...from personally messaging us before seeing us speak at the Attachment Research Conference to say she felt very proud...and getting on board with our ideas and child centred vision”.***

5.1

The Post 16 PP+ Grant was received last academic year for the first time and a strategic plan was created for an effective spend. The Grant is to improve the outcomes of Looked After young people in the Post 16 phase ie Key Stage 5. The terms and conditions outline how it must be spent on well-evidenced interventions by supporting our young people towards achieving their full potential, particularly in reference to **attainment, attendance and retention**. The DFE specifies that the Grant should be spent in line with achieving duties outlined in the Guidance [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-and-previously-looked-after-children) and that an effective spend should enable the young people to have sustained involvement in education, employment or training.

Our Post 16 PP+ offer can be found here [Key stage five | Shropshire Council](#) and includes personalised mentoring, a SLA with Shropshire Educational Psychology team, the Pathway project for tuition, training and care experienced speaker events (see photo on right), celebration event, welcome packs for UASYP and a new EASO post to support with PEP completion and quality. Shropshire Virtual School is part of the National Research project being run by the Rees Centre so that we can contribute towards the impact study and future development of this Grant this with the DFE.



Engagement, Achievement and Pupil Voice



5.2

One of the highlights of this year was the SVS Conference in November. The focus was Stable Schools Built on Love with regard to the 'Stable homes built on love' review by Josh McAllister.

Conference 2023
'Stable Schools Built on Love'



www.shropshire.gov.uk
General Enquiries: 0345 678 9000



Our School Council did a ‘take-over’ of the event for the second part of the morning following preparation work with Jaz Ampaw-Farr (who also delivered the keynote)

They led an activity for practitioners in the room that asked them to experience what it might feel like to be in care and juggling multiple emotions and worries. They followed this with a table activity and questions on the roving mic – and culminating in every adult writing pledges about changing practice to build in love.

Voices of our young people were also heard throughout the day through the medium of poetry, art and song. Art work on the conference theme was done with the support of Shrewsbury School and showcased on the day (and this is now on the Landing at the Shirehall). The day ended with a choir performing two very relevant songs to conference.



Feedback was excellent and one example is:

“Thank you to you and your team for hosting such an inspirational conference today. The conversations that I was part of were both strengths-based and aligned to your genuine and passionate vision for positive development and educational improvement for our children... you are definitely inspiring change and creating futures.” (Parent Governor)

Our School Council now meets every half term and is going to be working on a SVS website ‘for young people by young people’ and the aim is for them to present to Designated Teachers as a sanding item at each Network going forwards.

Cultural capital opportunities are very important for our children.

Shropshire VS work closely with the Regional VS Heads group to create a variety of opportunities through the year. [About The Arts Programme | WMVS Children In Care Foundation \(wmvscicfoundation.org.uk\)](#) – for example our students took part in a Celebration of the Women in Theatre Workshops in Birmingham, a Geese Theatre workshop to ensure the voice of care experienced young people is heard – and are represented in the West Midlands Designated Teacher Conference.



One of our young people won an award in the Peggy Harrison Poetry Competition and here is a photo of her with the mayor at prize giving.



Here are two of our young people who took part in World Book Day! (left)

This photo (right) is of one of our young people with special educational needs who was supported to take part in a family samba workshop.



One of our KS4 students at risk of exclusion has been supported with his talent as a DJ. Below is how he was able to shine at a local event as a result of PP+ being used for lessons and equipment, plus close working relationships with his SW, school and Carer.

AC provided the entertainment for our showcase and was brave enough to DJ with Kate as people came into the building to really get the party started! Katie Jennings, our CEO said "he was very professional, everyone really enjoyed it and it added a great atmosphere and ambience to the event". As young people, their families, carers and professionals came in, you could see them smiling and even dancing a little to the music as they entered the gallery to see the exhibition for the first time. AC seemed relaxed and not too uncomfortable when he was credited by our Chair of Trustees (Helen Ball) when the event officially started. He also joined in with the drumming circle during the event, where he joined other young people from a different project in their performance. We were really surprised he agreed to take part and seemed to be supported by and trusting of Kate's encouragement.

Participation activities are on offer routinely and support our school team to get to know our children and develop a sense of belonging with our Virtual School as well as promote achievements, aspirations and progression. These have included visits to the theatre, exotic zoo, alpaca farm, boxing/fitness course with awards, outdoor education, composing and performing a song and online competitions to name a few.



On Saturday 21st September the school came together to celebrate the achievements of our young people at a special event for the young people and their carer/family members. Over 200 children were nominated and at the event they all got the chance to walk on the red carpet with medals, certificates and prizes being awarded along the way. There were also activities to enjoy such as the exotic zoo show, inflatables, arts & crafts, falconry and sports.

It was fantastic to see the young people enjoying themselves and feeling proud of some incredible achievements including sporting scholarships, excellent GCSE results, performing at national events, visiting the elderly, showing care for friends and using their voice effectively to make a positive difference for

others. As Corporate Parents we are all proud of each and every one of them.

Thank you to Tanya Miles, Executive Director of People at Shropshire Council who attended to congratulate each young person, as did Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families, David Shaw Assistant Director for Learning & Skills, Councillor Roger Evans and John Adams a local business owner who also sponsored some of the individual awards.



A huge well done also to the Shropshire Virtual School team who made it all happen.

Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC)

5.7

The VS have continued to work with Together for Children across the region, collaborating closely with our partners in Stoke, Staffs and Telford & Wrekin. An online training pilot for parents was jointly commissioned and the impact was that an average of

- 5.83 out of a possible 6 were satisfied with the quality of the course.
- 5.71 felt they had increased their understanding.
- and 5.74 able to apply their learning.



As a result, joint training on a variety of topics from learning, sensory needs to play has been commissioned for parents (also kinship and foster/connected carers) for 2024-25 – see <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/media/pmtdwxj2/wmvs-cc-training-flyer-aw.pdf>. Going forward in 2024-25 the VS is planning to hold a joint arts event with Shropshire and Telford with Geese Theatre in March 2025.

In the Spring term of last year, the VS appointed a new EASO linked to PLAC and 1:1 advice was given to 57 parents. The main themes of advice and guidance were around SEN, pupil premium spend and inclusion. At the Designated Teacher Networks, the VS delivered specific input on guidance and the support / advice offer available for schools.

The VS also rolled out a new CLA to PLAC Transition package which is a process to support planning for effective use of PP+ in advance of the legal change of status and any funding gap (as schools don't receive PLAC PP+ until the following new financial year.) This supports the children to continue with interventions they were having and to support parents/carers to feel more secure that the support doesn't have come to a hard stop because their CLA status changes.

Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

5.9

Shropshire Virtual School continues to be part of the Regional Network group for CWSW and presented at the Conference for WM Virtual Schools on this subject.

The VS has a linked EASO for supporting with advice and guidance around this cohort of children, including for our Social Care colleagues and schools. Last academic year advice was given in regard to over 65 young people, mostly to support inclusion and access to education.

A key activity was a focus on CIN and CP Plans jointly with our Education Access colleagues in order to evaluate the education element. This academic year this will progress into sharing findings and progressing recommendations.



Progress on our Hearts and Minds Project is very positive, this is a project where data on CIN and CP is used to offer an enhanced training opportunity to a selection of schools, this is based on:

- becoming an attachment and trauma responsive (whole) school
- Emotion Coaching (whole) school
- Emotion Coaching Train the Trainer accreditation (which supports further training roll out across county)
- A bespoke element with an inclusion focus

The Phase 1 primaries (Woodside, Greenacres and Holy Trinity) have all completed their training their attachment and trauma training, emotion coaching and are on their bespoke element. These vary from emotional based school avoidance and becoming an accredited national nurturing school on the Nurture UK programme.

Lakelands and William Brookes schools are also now on their bespoke element which is whole school restorative and relational practice with Mark Finnis. Relational policies are a key outcome and Lakelands also presented on early evidence of impact at Shropshire Learning & Skills SLT meeting as well as to the Designated Teachers at the SVS Summer Network. For example:



	Attendance	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	PAF (cohort)	SAF
CIN	94.8%	2.2%	2.6%	33%	0%
CPP	87.3%	6.1%	5.7%	33%	0%
Combined	90.4%	4.6%	4.5%	33%	0%

DFE Portal 14.5.24

At 22.5.24 the snapshot from Power BI indicated:

- Their attendance overall is now third best in the county at 92.3%.
- Now 3rd lowest for severe absence and 4th lowest PA.
- For SEN support it is 2nd best in the county at 90.2%
- For pupils with an EHCP (47 pupils) – 88.5% (includes 22 pupils in ASD hub)
- A 49% reduction in episodes of suspensions and 31% reduction in more than one episode of suspension in 2023/24

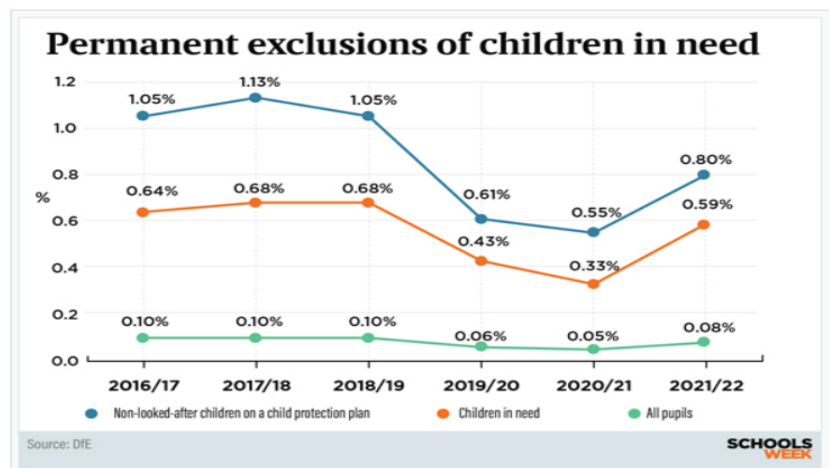
Phase 2 schools are starting this September, this includes a specialist school as well as 1 secondary and 1 primary.

6.0

Concerns continue around **national** attendance for CWSW, for example data indicates a trend as follows – and for CIN the persistent absence rate in 2022-23 was 44.4% (more than double than that for CLA and all pupils)

The data submitted to Shropshire EAS team indicates that during 2023-24 pupils on Reduced Timetables were as follows:

- 49 children on a Child Protection Plan
- 13 children on a Child in Need Plan



However, data indicates that Shropshire CIN and CP attendance is equal or better than all statistical neighbours and national for 2 consecutive years.

LA	Overall absence percentage CIN 31st March 2022	Overall absence percentage CIN 31st March 2023	Overall absence percentage CPP 31st March 2022	Overall absence percentage CPP 31st March 2023
Shropshire	14.20%	13.90%	14.90%	17.30%
Herefordshire	19.40%	20.10%	25.70%	17%
Devon	19.70%	20.30%	17.90%	23.60%
Dorset	18.70%	22.20%	19.90%	23%
National	16.40%	16.40%	19.50%	21.70%



Additionally, data indicates that Shropshire CIN and CP attendance is considerably better than all statistical neighbours and national for 2 consecutive years. The DFE had planned to visit Shropshire as they had identified good practice, but this was cancelled due to the election

LA	Persistent absence percentage		Persistent absence percentage	
	CIN	CIN	CPP	CPP
	31st March 2022	31 st March 2023	31st March 2022	31st March 2023
Shropshire	41.10%	39.60%	41.70%	52.70%
Herefordshire	58.50%	57.30%	65.80%	53.80%
Devon	55.90%	53%	51.50%	62.40%
Dorset	52.30%	57%	53.40%	63.40%
National	48.50%	44.40%	56.20%	57.5

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2023?subjectId=7344bd3a-2cc4-4b62-85d0-08dc5d2e18da>

6.1

The VS have worked closely with the Insight Team to help develop the Power BI tool for CWSW attendance data that will give enhanced information to support improve strategic planning.

6.2

The Virtual School has delivered workshops at Social Care Team Meetings (for example on SEN) as well as delivering sessions in Practice Week on Emotion Coaching and understanding the role of the Virtual School. This aims to support the knowledge and understanding of Social Workers on educational topics so there is an integrated approach towards securing best outcomes.



6.3

A selection of compliments for Shropshire Virtual School from 2022-23

- Helen (a PLAC parent) spoke on BBC Radio 2 about the advice and support she received to help a school manage her Reception age PLAC with overcoming toileting challenges which were impacting her on accessing education and holiday clubs. [Jeremy Vine - Tina Daheley sits in - BBC Sounds](#) She said how Shropshire Virtual School have been a “massive tower of support to us”
- Helen Willcox, DT and SENCo at Whittington C of E primary school in Worcester – *“I have been fortunate over the last few years to work with a number of local authority Virtual Schools... my first impressions of the work Shropshire are doing is excellent...I have also taken note of the wide range of training opportunities that seem to be on offer through Shropshire. All round, a great offer! I hope I continue to work with you all.”*



- Email from a Social Worker to Katherine Jones (VS Education Advice and Support Officer)
“Katherine has worked above and beyond in supporting and progressing education for W, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that W is receiving suitable education and that this is consistently meeting his needs. Katherine has been a strong advocate for W in meetings, conversations and in communication with the school. Katherine has navigated challenge after challenge working with W, family and school and has always kept W’s educational best interests at the core of everything. I am pleased to have worked with Katherine and cannot fault her for anything, she has supported me and kept me updated when required and has got W to a place where he is now able to complete exams over the coming weeks which is a huge positive and milestone for W.”
- From Severdale Academy re PEPs for students with complex and profound needs - feedback was that out of the 11 different local authority peps they complete Shropshire is leading the way on the most meaningful and easy to complete documents. The Designated Teacher felt the attainment section was meaningful and that the pep document is easy to complete and ‘flows’
- From a Residential Social Worker who said that SVS are “just so child focused, it's great to see and work with you.”
- From a Head Teacher – “I just wanted to thank you for all of your support with our young man. I know how many children you are responsible for, so thank you for the funding to give him success in school. I really do appreciate it.”
- From a Residential Care Manager: - OFSTED “noted yourselves as professionals you would want ‘wrapped around the care of the young people’.”
- From Kirstie Hurst-Knight – “Just wanted to follow on from last week’s Virtual School Governors meeting really as both Chair of Governors and in my role as Lead Member for Children and Education a heartfelt thank you regarding the massive improvement in the quality of the PEPs. I know a considerable amount of work has gone in to updating this document and to go from 58% in 2021 to is it 95% now is nothing short of outstanding.”
- From the CLA Service Manager – “It is pleasing to hear that S is doing so well. This is also a good example of professionals coming together and working collectively in the best interest of a child.”
- From an ASYE Social Worker “Just wanted to say thank you for taking the time earlier to support with the young person’s plans and explain it all to me – it was really helpful, especially as a newly qualified social worker to understand the processes and timeframes etc. I appreciate you are just as busy so thank you 😊”
- “The day was inspirational, full of great energy and up lifting - I always say to our staff “you provide the energy that’s needed” and today you certainly did that. You have brought so much positive energy, determination, challenge and a culture that has been needed for such a long time - change can be hard to implement - but I wanted you to know that I really feel it... We have never felt so included by our “corporate parents” we appreciate it more than you know. You certainly epitomise “leading from the heart.” (Andy Smith, Smashlife)
- “I just wanted to send a quick note to say what a wonderful job was made of the conference 'Stable schools built on love' last week. The keynote speakers were excellent and I found it really inspirational. I am attempting to spread all the important messages!” Elizabeth Madin, Head Teacher Kinnerley Primary School.



Summary of Priorities from the School Development Plan for 2023-25

This link takes you to a user-friendly version of our School Development Plan [Our School Development Plan \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/our-school-development-plan)

There was good progress with actions in the first year of the School Development Plan and key next steps in year 2 will be as follows:

We will

- further develop the voice of our young people – eg School Council will present at Designated Teacher Networks, Corporate Parenting Board and regional events.
- develop our Emotion Coaching Trainer group and roll out the training across more Shropshire schools.
- increase the number of schools in the SVS Hearts & Minds Project, supporting more schools to be attachment and trauma responsive earning the Bronze ARC Award as well as in other aspects of inclusion eg relational practice.
- further develop robust tracking of SVS data using the Power Bi Dashboard data, including for KS5 PEP reporting
- develop our new Kinship Offer – and roll out our enhanced training offer for parents/carers.
- support schools in the transition to using the DFE portal for Attendance data, refresh the SVS Attendance Policy and introduce new integrated processes around supporting CIN, CP and CLA with access to education - including new escalation processes.
- aim to improve attainment outcomes including in Maths for the end of KS2, sustain improvements for the end of KS4, focus on improving Early Years and KS1 outcomes in GLD and for Phonics.
- train the VS team in precision teaching in Literacy and Numeracy with the support of the EP Service, roll this out in schools – and implement our new learning at home strategy.
- use the Audit undertaken to develop robust integrated working and ensure education is a priority area in Child in Need and Child Protection Plans.
- work collaboratively with partners on minimising the time CLA are not on roll at a school and continuing to focus on preventing exclusions/suspensions.
- Undertake a revision on forecasted numbers of CLA and consider staffing to meet business need, including in line with the changed role of the VS Head.
- develop effective use of the social emotional and mental health scales in our PEP in relation to supporting positive mental health of our Shropshire Children in Care
- further progress our work experience offer in the family business, develop employability projects and a programme in KS3 for children as part of a pathway to university programme.
- progress discussions with HR re the Protected Characteristic for CLA/CLs and how this development needs to fit with Shropshire Council's Recruitment Policy
- continue working jointly with Enable and the Care Leavers Team on a possible apprenticeship opportunity in the Café at the Guildhall.
- play an integral part in developing the trauma informed workplace in Shropshire Council.

Report by Jo Kelly, Head Teacher, Shropshire Virtual School
Date: 10.10.24

