

1. Introduction

1.1. This was the first year in which the Pupil Premium for Looked After Children (LAC) has been managed nationally by Virtual Headteachers rather than being delegated to schools. In East Sussex of course the Pupil Premium has been voluntarily pooled and managed by the Virtual School since its inception in 2012 and our approach to managing and distributing the fund in order to benefit our LAC has not had to change.

1.2. Last year there was a significant increase in the funding available as the Pupil Premium for LAC increased from £900 per child to £1900 per child (sometimes referred to as Pupil Premium Plus). The total fund rose from £358,000 to £855,000. Per capita funding remains unchanged for 2015 – 2016 although an expected fall in the number of LAC will mean a decrease in the total fund available in future.

1.3. The increased funding last year enabled the Virtual School to work more strategically in order to support the education of our LAC as well as holding and distributing a fund on a needs-led basis. The continuation of the Pupil Premium Plus into 2015-16 will mean that the projects initiated in 2014-15 (see below) will be able to continue and we will continue to be able to respond to need as identified by each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP).

1.4. Last year a proportion of the pooled fund was used to support children who, although they did not generate a Pupil Premium payment, were looked after or had previously been looked after. This included those new into care, those at nursery school, care leavers in education, adopted children and those on Special Guardianship Orders or Residence Orders. With the exception of care leavers, these groups now attract Pupil Premium, although in the case of adopted children this is paid directly to schools and in the case of those in nursery education Pupil Premium is funded at £400 pa. We continue to use a small proportion of the fund to support care leavers (see Table 2)

1.5. As with all central government funding it is difficult to predict the longevity of Pupil Premium. However, whilst Pupil Premium was introduced during the tenure of the previous government, the development of Pupil Premium for LAC and previously looked after children, and its management by Virtual Headteachers, was driven by the Children's Minister who has remained in post after the election.

2. The Work of the Virtual School 2014-2015

2.1. The Virtual School is made up of a small team of educationalists who have a responsibility to promote and support the educational success of East Sussex LAC wherever they are educated. We are based at Hailsham Community College but work across the County and beyond. We are part of the LAC and we have our own Governing Body. We are looking for a new base from September 2016.

2.2. Every school in East Sussex and every school outside the county where an East Sussex LAC attends has a named worker from the Virtual School who is available to support the designated teacher and other staff to ensure that our children succeed.

- 2.3. We track the educational progress of all our LAC and make weekly contact with schools to check attendance. We use SIMS just like a “real” school to enable us to evaluate the progress children are making
- 2.4. We attend PEP reviews and will advise, support (and, if necessary, challenge) any professional who has a responsibility for our children.
- 2.5. This year we have continued to widen our brief beyond our statutory role for LAC. We continue to support care leavers in full time education up to the age of 25 and this last year we have formally taken on the role of supporting the education of children previously in care (adopted, SGO and Residence Orders). Pupil Premium for those formerly in care is paid directly to the schools those children attend.
- 2.6. We provide training for a wide range of professionals including designated teachers, trainee teachers at the universities, social workers and foster carers and can provide whole school training for teachers, TAs and INAs on the impact of attachment difficulties in the classroom. Last year we provided Attachment training in schools, we trained foster carers in how best to support the education of their children and in the specific areas of supporting Literacy and Numeracy and in Dyslexia awareness and we have supported schools accessing training from other providers.
- 2.7. We also organise an annual conference (this year it was on June 30th) for all those with an interest in the education of LAC.
- 2.8. The Virtual School runs a number of courses for LAC and care leavers, including a Summer programme of 5 half day sessions for children of reception age and their carers, a residential course for Y6 pupils focussing on transition to secondary school, a "Spring School" for KS3 Pupils, a residential revision course for Year 11 students and summer schools for both Year 10 and Year 12 students.
- 2.9. The Virtual School works closely with local boarding schools and together with a national charity has developed an assisted places scheme for LAC that has attracted national interest. We aim to place 3 or 4 children each year at local boarding schools at no additional cost to the local authority. Those who have been placed so far are thriving and benefiting from the high quality pastoral care available in some of the best public schools
- 2.10. We manage the Pupil Premium Grant for LAC.

3. Pupil Premium 2014-2015

- 3.1. We were once again able to meet nearly all requests for Pupil Premium this year. This is as a result of both the increase in funding and a more widely held understanding of the criteria used to access the fund. Where requests were declined it was inevitably either because there was an existing source of funding in place (for example foster carer's allowances) or the request did not relate to an intervention or activity that would impact sufficiently on a young person's learning (for example some of the requests we received for tablet computers etc). The following paragraphs give a brief overview of the allocation (for full list see Appendix 2 Table 1)

3.2. In total there were 1174 requests for funding from Pupil Premium for the 394 school aged children who are looked after. An average of nearly three separate requests per child.

3.3. There was a significant increase in the amount allocated to **maintaining school places** and this was used both for providing alternative curriculums for children who would otherwise have been at risk of exclusion or disengagement and was also used to fund transport for children who had to move their care placement but where we wished to maintain their school placement. New protocols are in place so that, except in an emergency, a placement change must be approved by the Virtual School if it is likely to have any potential impact on a child's school place. See Appendix 3 Case Study 4

3.4. **Tuition.** Provision of 1:1 **tuition** remains a significant driver of good outcomes, particularly in English and Maths. This year we embarked on a strategy of employing our own tutors on a claims only basis rather than relying on agency staff. This has significantly improved the quality of the tuition provided by tutors who are becoming experts in the field of supporting LAC to achieve. All LAC have access to personal tutors who are all trained and qualified teachers. This year we were able to recruit 15 additional tutors which means we now have the capacity to provide tuition to all year groups and not just to "exam" cohorts in Year 6 and Year 11. See Appendix 3 Case Study 12

3.5. One of the most effective uses of Pupil Premium is developing the capacity of schools to more effectively support the learning of LAC through **training**. The Virtual School provides general training to school staff from within its own resources and does not draw on Pupil Premium to do this. Pupil Premium has funded a number of schools to train teachers and support staff in the Thrive Approach (a whole school approach to supporting children with additional emotional needs) as well as making contributions towards other staff development in schools that will benefit LAC.

3.6. We aimed this year to increase the capacity of the Virtual School through working with and through other Children's Services Teams. We have developed the concept of "Designated Officers" in all the teams that work with LAC, borrowing on the existing model of Designated Teachers in schools. We have designated officers who work with us to help ensure joined up working around LAC in SEN, the Educational Psychology Service, Admissions, Early Years and ESBAS. As **ESBAS** is a traded service, we have used Pupil Premium to fund 69 direct interventions from their team where schools have requested this. See Appendix 3 Case Studies 5 and 10

3.7. We have recruited 4X **Teaching Assistants /Individual Needs Assistants** also on a claims only basis and they are available to provide additional support within the classroom to support the child's learning. We also have used Pupil Premium to make a contribution to the funding of additional hours of support from school's existing staff. This type of support is often used to support a child whilst they are being assessed for an EHC Plan. See Appendix 3 Case Study 3

3.8. Pupil Premium has been used to support a wide range of **extra-curricular activities** where it is felt that this will impact positively on motivation and attitude

toward learning. Activities include Sports Clubs, School Holiday Clubs, Drama and Dance Clubs. We have also used Pupil Premium to contribute toward **school visits** although we would always expect foster carers to fund most of these from their allowances. See Appendix 3 Case Studies 9 and 11

3.9. **Educational Resources** covers a very wide range of requests and includes all non IT resources used directly by the children or used by teachers to help support them. The biggest element of this budget is the Book Club which we now organise ourselves (rather than using the national LetterBox Scheme) in partnership with a local bookshop. 236 children receive termly parcels of books and other educational material for them to use at home with their foster carers to help encourage reading and educational play. The parcels are extremely popular with the children who love the content and the personal way it is addressed (and tailored) to each individual. See Appendix 3 Case Study 15

3.10. Pupil Premium has also funded **therapeutic support** for 33 children ranging from Play Therapy, Drama Therapy and Thrive sessions, **music lessons** for 48 children and **IT equipment** for 89 children. See Appendix 3 Case Studies 2, 5 and 12.

4. Pupil Premium 2015 - 2016

4.1. As Pupil Premium is now paid from the first day a child comes into care it is not possible with any certainty to ascertain the exact sum as adjustments are made throughout the year. At the start of the financial year there were 363 school aged LAC that would indicate a total Pupil Premium fund for LAC of £689,700. However in year adjustments and time lags following a removal from care would suggest a budget of £750,000 can be anticipated.

4.2. The Virtual School will continue to manage the Pupil Premium as it has done since its inception: responding to needs identified at PEP meetings, supporting schools in the work they do to “go the extra mile” and embed and consolidate the capacity building that we started in 2014 – 15 following the increase in the size of the grant.

4.3. Given the uncertainty over future funding we will prioritise requests for funding from schools that will build capacity within to best support our children and young people. We will continue to promote and support The Thrive (therapeutic) approach and other training with school staff

4.4. Capacity building includes developing and expanding our team of tutors and peripatetic support staff, continuing to develop the concept of designated officers within other children’s services teams, increasing access to specialist educational psychology services and accessing Traded Services on behalf of schools that request this.