

Case Studies

Reception and Key Stage 1

1. SI KF (Reception)

K has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and although she can function well within a mainstream setting she does have some problems with the left hand side of her body being weaker, therefore some physical tasks are more challenging. K attended the Virtual School Summer School for Reception children which she took part in really well and enjoyed. Since starting at her mainstream school the Virtual School has also provided a Numicon Number kit for home learning; a writing slope for school; Motricity extra support and also extra TA support in PE lessons. These are having a positive impact on her engagement and her handwriting is beginning to show signs of improvement. Support will continue for K as she moves up the school.

2. SI AC (Year 2)

A has been in Care since the age of two and has been in the same stable foster placement for most of that time. A is very bright and may be gifted in Maths, however he has always struggled with behaviour and school describe him as attention needy. Following an ESBAS assessment the Virtual School funded 10 sessions of Thrive emotional support work which has had a positive impact on his behaviour this year. The Virtual School are also funding drumming lessons for A which school describe as being a release for him.

3. MK (Year 2) (BD)

MK experienced understandable upset at the news she would not be returning home to her birth parents, her placement broke down and her behaviour at her mainstream school deteriorated to a point where there were times she had to be restrained in order to prevent her hurting others and she was eventually excluded for a fixed term. The Virtual School funded additional 1:1 support for her which enabled a successful reintegration in which she spends part of each day with her class and part of the day with her support worker engaging in both school work and therapeutic “thrive” activities. The Virtual School is supporting the school with the process of developing an EHC plan so that the school is supported in meeting her needs.

Key Stage 2

4. AJ(Year 4) and JK (Year 6)

Sibling pair attending primary school in the Wealden area. Both children are making exceptional progress at school. As a result of a placement breakdown at short notice the two children were placed in an emergency short term foster placement in Newhaven with the prospect of having to change school. Given the foster placement was short term and given that one of the children was shortly to transfer to secondary school, the Virtual School used Pupil Premium to fund transport to their existing schools while a long term placement could be found.

5. SJ (Year 4)

When SJ was removed from the care of his aunt and came into the care of the local authority, he had to change schools due to his placement location and because some of his cousins with whom he had previously lived, attended the same school. S was unable to cope well with the change and his behaviour regressed to the point where he was exhibiting extreme, violent behaviours in school, was not engaging in learning and was at risk of permanent exclusion, following three fixed term exclusions. Consequently, he was placed on a reduced timetable in October 2014 and a robust package of support was funded by the VS as part of his reintegration plan which included ESBAS support; 1:1 VS tutor support every morning and Artbox therapy. He was originally withdrawn for 1:1 tuition, but has been gradually reintroduced to working in the classroom with reduced support. He has now started to re-engage with learning and is enjoying school. When S was placed on a reduced timetable, the school were uncertain as to whether a mainstream school would be able to meet his needs, but are now very optimistic that his experience with them will continue to be positive. Since the support package has been in place, he has not received any further fixed term exclusions. His behaviour has vastly improved, but as he is academically behind his peers and currently continues to need one-to-one adult support so that 'trigger-points' can be recognised and managed without him becoming dis-regulated, the VS are funding INA support for the remainder of this academic year and term 1 of the next.

6. MR (Year 5)

Since first coming into care, M has been separated from his three siblings (two siblings have returned to the care of the birth parents) and moved schools twice and placement four times, within two years. Due to his siblings returning to the care of his parents, he had to move schools and there was no time to prepare him for this transition, so the Virtual School provided one of their full time INAs at the new school. Due to M's challenging behaviours, he had to be withdrawn from class for considerable amounts of time and he struggled to make any academic progress. Emotionally he was in 'crisis', as he was trying to make sense of the fact that he was going to remain in foster care and blamed himself, as he perceived himself as the 'naughty' child. After the Care Order was granted, permanent foster carers were identified, but this necessitated another move of school at the beginning of year 5. His SW had established that the Virtual School's INA had become a trusted adult for M and would be key in planning for a successful transition. The INA was able to accompany M on several visits to the new school, prior to him starting and also visited his new placement to support home/school communication. Gradually, the INA was also able to withdraw his support to prepare M for being unsupported at the new school and ending his relationship with him. The INA sent several postcards to M over the summer months and at the start of the new term at the new school, so that M knew he was being 'kept in mind'. M has settled well into his new school ; he has managed without an INA, his behaviour is more settled and he is now making academic progress and if this continues, is on track to exceed his end of KS2 targets.

7. EB (Year 5)

E was attending an independent school in a class of six when he came into care, but due to its closure, he had to transfer to a state-maintained mainstream Primary school. Prior to attending the independent school, he had been home schooled. E presented as a highly anxious, introverted child, was academically behind his peers, lacked the ability to initiate contact with other children and as he also had no experience of state education. Moving to a large Primary School represented a huge transition for him. Initially he attended mornings only and the Virtual school funded a 1:1 tutor, not only to support him academically, but also to help him understand classroom rules and routines, to develop his social skills and adjust to being part of a large school community. With this intensive level of support, E was able to gradually adjust to school life and over a period of seven months progressed from being withdrawn for 1:1 tuition on a part-time timetable only, to attending full-time and reintegrated to learning independently in the classroom. He was also beginning to make some friends. The support provided by the Virtual School enabled E to have a positive experience of mainstream school life and recognise himself as an independent learner

8. SD (Year 6)

In Year 5, S was in a nurture class with much younger children for the majority of the year. S was non-compliant and often aggressive towards staff and peers, both verbally and, at times, physically resulting in a number of fixed term exclusions. She was unable to be remain in her mainstream class even for very short periods and was not achieving her potential. A Support Worker from the Virtual School saw S on a weekly basis to support both S and the staff in her school, and prevent further exclusions. A school-based plan was developed to ensure that S would receive the full amount of support required. Towards the end of last summer, as a result of a placement move to another area of the county, an appropriate school place was sought for S but this proved very difficult. However, the VS worker had built up a trusting relationship with S and was able to assist with her transition to a flexible learning provision where she was able to attend lessons alongside other pupils. She now attends a mainstream primary school and will be transferring to secondary school in September

9. TW (Year 6)

Following a move of placement and great anxiety over her birth parents T moved to her current school at the end of year 5 at which point she was making poor progress across all subjects. Last year the Virtual School funded 1-1 and small group tuition to support her academic progress and she took part in Challenger Troop (an army course) to help develop her self-esteem. This was all funded by Pupil Premium. T's last assessment in March showed her having made significant progress across all areas, leading her to win a school award for the most improved student.

Key Stage 3

10. CJ (Year 7)

C has been in Care since he was 4 years old and has had 4 changes of carer in that time which has had a significant impact on his behaviour which had led to some fixed term exclusions. There were concerns expressed that C may find the transition to secondary school difficult. The Virtual School provided additional transition support which included C attending the Virtual School Year 6 residential course, "Thrive" emotional support and extra visits to school supported by a Virtual School worker who knows him well. He settled well but has still struggled with friendships. Following a PEP meeting it was agreed that in addition the Virtual School would fund ESBAS to do some individual work with CJ and then set up a small group to work on friendship skills. This has been very successful and resulted in fewer incidents on the behaviour log and no exclusions from this new school.

11. CW (Year 7) (BD)

C had been in and out of care whilst at Primary School and was the only one of his siblings to remain in care long term and this contributed towards him finding it very difficult to make friends and he was often inappropriate with his peers. Within a week of transferring to his secondary school there were significant concerns about his behaviour and there were several incidents in his first term that led to fixed term exclusions all of which had been triggered during free time where incidents happened that then impacted on the rest of the school day. The Virtual School funded a lunchtime sports club which provided C with an activity he would enjoy and also served to give him a physical outlet for his energy and improve his relationship with his peers. This was successful and there were no more exclusions and C is much more secure within his peer group.

12. KM (Year 7)

K came into care during year 5, prior to this her attendance was incredibly poor. Since coming into care K's attendance has been 100% and she is really enjoying school, working hard in all subjects, as well as accessing after school clubs in dance and sports. K received 1:1 tutoring twice a week initially and then weekly from year 5 and we continued this through to term 2 of year 7 from a dyslexia and language specialist consultant funded by the Virtual School and this experience has prompted her to request further tutoring to support her learning. KM is receiving a further block of 1:1 tutoring at school from the Virtual School which she is very engaged with and enthusiastic about. K has been receiving book parcels from the book club and is now an avid reader and has moved to a reading age of 12/0. K also attended The Virtual School residential course at the end of year 6 and Spring School during year 7, and these have really helped develop her confidence. Her designated teacher describes her as "a popular and delightful student". K's reading has progressed one whole level at secondary school within the first four terms of Year 7.

13. VC – Year 7

V has complex special needs and has accessed a large network of support within school and from outside agencies. This included Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational

Therapy, intensive intervention in class and home tuition funded by the Virtual School. V has a statement of SEN pertaining to her range of learning and emotional difficulties and now successfully attends a Maintained Special School. V's social skills and independence are very limited hence the special school allocation but with the level of provision academically she made outstanding progress in key stage two, achieving a level 4 in Reading. As a result of her academic progress, initially V was not offered a special school place however the Virtual School put together a very strong argument that while V had made the academic progress, such an intense level of support in a mainstream secondary setting would not be available and she would be at risk of being socially isolated and exceptionally vulnerable.

Key Stage 4/5

14. RB (Year 11)

R had a statement for significant cognitive delay and moderate leaning difficulties, his auditory memory and processing were on the 1st percentile. R did well in years 7 and 8 in terms of effort, engagement and enjoyment of school but found year 9 very hard. R became very conscious of the gap between himself and his peers and was finding lessons very hard. Maths had always been particularly difficult for R as he struggled to retain any strategy from one lesson to the next. R 's behaviour deteriorated significantly in school and he disengaged from lessons. It seemed that R had given up on himself and his self-esteem was very low. Following deterioration further in his behaviour after the death of his birth father in year 10, the Virtual School caseworker suggested a behavioural consultant work with R in school for 10 sessions. This proved to be very effective and following this intervention R began to re-engage with education. He then requested tutoring to help him with his English and Maths in year 11 which he received until he left school. R achieved well in his BTECs achieving level 2 passes, entry level Maths and a number of GCSEs including English.

Group Case Studies

15. The Book Club

The Virtual School runs its own "Book Club" in conjunction with a local independent book shop and bi-monthly every child that is in Year 1 to Year 8 is sent a parcel of books addressed directly to them at their placement address. Each parcel of books contains a minimum of 3 books, with a variety of fiction, non-fiction and activity books which have been selected on an ability basis so that every child can access their parcel. We receive very positive feedback from carers, social workers and the children themselves regarding the book project and how wonderful the parcels are and that they are encouraging the children to read more and to spend time sharing these books with the adults around them. At last year's Children in Care Awards, I introduced myself to the children at the table and instantly two of them asked if I was the lady who sends them the book parcels and we proceeded to have a long talk about the book parcels and their contents. The children were able to tell me

all about the books that they had received, their favourite books and also suggest some books that could be sent in future parcels.

This year in conjunction with the Children in Care Council, we have started a Book Club for those students in school years 7 – 8. The CICC decided that as these students are older, they would prefer to have more say about the contents of their parcel and so after an initial parcel containing a dictionary & thesaurus, the students are sent a letter offering them a choice of 6 books of which they can order 2 books of their choice. Again we are receiving very positive feedback about this parcel from the CICC, the students themselves and their carers. The most recent feedback we have received states "Thank you for my Granddaughter's books this is of great help to her. She does love to read".

236 children have accessed the Book Club in the financial year 2014-15.

From a foster carer.

SG and DG have received their books again today and I wanted to write to you to express our gratitude for this ongoing service. The children always look forward to receiving them, especially because they both have a parcel each to open. It is lovely to see the anticipation on their faces as they rip the packaging and the excitement on seeing the contents inside. Please see below what each child has to say about it.....

"I like the book parcels because I love to read. I really enjoy them. I like the diary best this time"

"Thank you for the books I have had so far. I like the diary best now as I can put a lock on it. I am looking forward to having more books to help me to read better!"

This service has such a large positive impact on their lives and for this I thank you.

16. Fegans Counselling Support

Children in Care are often in a state of uncertainty regarding long term plans for their future, while awaiting Court decisions. This can mean that at times they are unable to access the CAMHs Service. In these instances where children and young people need emotional support the Virtual School has used Pupil Premium to commission Fegans Counselling service.

These sessions are child led and often the focus is around friendships and managing behaviour in school. Schools report that following counselling sessions children are calmer and more able to focus on their work.

One Y2 child was unable to be allowed out at playtime/lunch due to his aggressive outbursts and inability to play with other children. After some Fegans counselling he was then able to start going out for limited periods and gradually built up to being out with his peers the whole time. In all he had 30 counselling sessions.

17. Summer School

The Virtual School runs a Summer school for children starting Primary school in September. This consists of a weekly session where they attend accompanied by their foster carers to enable the carers to be supported as well as the children. The sessions aim build confidence

and encourage the children to develop and interest in the world around them preparing them to take on new challenges. At the same time the sessions help to develop foster carer's skills and abilities to support their foster children at school.