

BARNET VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Oversight and Scrutiny Committee Report April 2024

1. School Context (as of 26/03/24)

		2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/23	Autumn Term 2023	Spring Term 2024				
	Nursery	11	12	13	14	15	13				
	% of children SEN support		2	1	3	1	2				
	% of children with EHCPS		3	1	2	2	2				
Statutory age group	Statutory age	196	195	191	186	179	181				
	Reception	4	7	8	8	11	12				
	Key Stage 1	16	14	15	21	15	13				
	Key Stage 2	43	37	45	45	52	48				
	Key Stage 3	51	53	52	48	42	43				
	Key Stage 4	82	84	71	64	59	65				
	Male/female	113/83	109/86	108/83	115/71	102/77	108/73				
	% of children from ethnic minority groups	70.6%	73.3%	68.1%	67.2%	65.9%	66.9%				
	% of children SEN support	19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)	24% (45)	18.4% (33)	19.9% (36)				
	% of children with EHCPS	24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)	32.8% (61)	31.8% (57)	33.1% (60)				
		O/ B	I/B	O/ B	I/B	O/ B	I/B				
		33	16	30	18	38	21	41	20	35	20
Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	25	35	28	21	10	15					
Children without a school place	0	2	5	6	6	9					

42.94% of our children are placed in in-borough schools and 53.11% in out of borough schools.

Post 16 age group	Post 16	135	152	155	147	138	150					
	Male/female	96/39	113/39	111/44	102/45	97/41	105/45					
	% of children from ethnic minority groups	78.5%	79.6%	79.4%	83%	81.9%	83.3%					
	% of children with EHCPS	14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)	16.3% (24)	18.1% (25)	18.7% (28)					
		O/ B	I/B	O/ B	I/B	O/ B	I/B					
		11	3	16	5	7	16	14	10	16	9	17
	Number of UASC	67	76	75	66	60	68					
	Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 12	11	19	15	18	8	9					
Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 13	14	14	22	20	24	28						

N.B. Based on Barnet's strategic vision, indicators have been colour-coded based on Barnet's achievement compared to other Local Authorities (LAs) nationally using the following system¹:

¹ NB: We have used rank percentile (i.e. where Barnet's rank is as a proportion of total 152 LAs) which is different to the percentile of Barnet's outcome measure

LA rank percentile	LA ranking
Top 10%	<16
Top 20%	16-30
Top 25%	31-38
50% - 25%	39-76
Bottom 50%	76+

2. EHCPs – statutory age children

Out of 177 statutory age children, 60 have Education and Health Care Plans and 38 are SENS (special educational needs support). This is 55.37% of the whole cohort.

Number of young people with EHCPs		60	
Male/female		44/16	
In borough/Out of borough/No provision		20/36/4	
Primary age (reception to Yr 6)		21	
Secondary age		39	
Type of school			
Alternative Provision	2	Special	22
		Mainstream	28
		Other	3
No provision	4	Secure	1
Primary Need			
Autistic Spectrum Condition	10	Moderate Learning Difficulty	4
Physical disability	1	Profound and multiple learning difficulties	1
Social, emotional and mental health difficulties	40	Special language and communication needs	2
Other learning difficulty/disability	1	Severe learning difficulty	1

4. Attendance (statutory age children)

Data for 2022/23 shows an encouraging picture with regards to attendance.

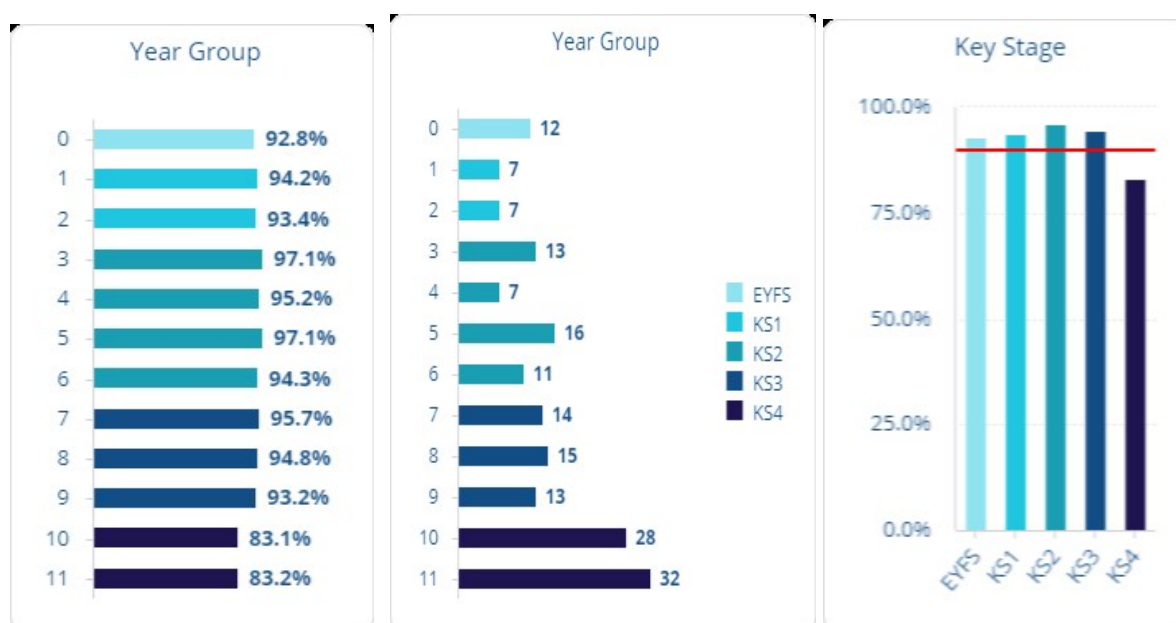
Total Barnet Children Looked After Absence Rate					
%	Overall Absence	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Persistent Absentees	Severe Persistent Absentees
Barnet	6.1	4	2	15.7	-
London	9	5.4	3.6	23.7	5.1
England	8.3	5.3	3	20	4.9
Barnet Rank	14	21	32	21	-

For Barnet CLA cohort's (108 children who have been in care for 1 year + on 31st March), overall authorised, unauthorised, and persistent absence rates in 2022/23 were below the London and national averages. Barnet's severe persistent absence rate is not available due to small numbers. Barnet's CLA cohort ranked within the top 20% of local authorities across overall, authorised and persistent absence rates, and within the top 25% for unauthorised absence rates. 2022-23 attendance rate of 93.9 is also a significant improvement on 2021-22 – 89.7% and the rate of persistent absence improved from 24.5% to 15.7% with the ranking against other LAs improving from 131 to 21.

Current Attendance – Spring 2024

Whole school attendance over the Autumn and Spring Term was **91.23%** (same time last year **90.98%**)

Within the DfE eligible cohort (children who have been in care for 1 year + on 31st March), attendance over the Autumn and Spring Term was **91.33%**.

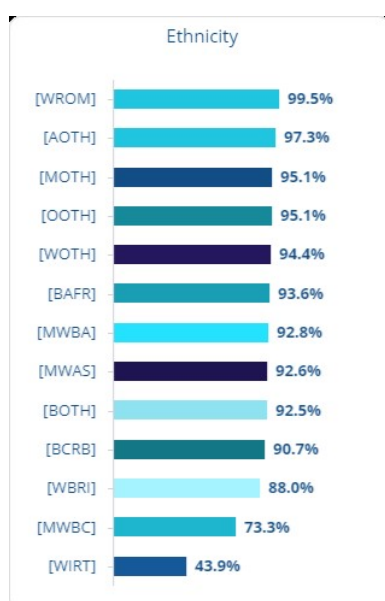


Attendance over the Autumn and Spring Term has been strong across almost all year groups except for year 10 and 11. Pupils in KS4 nationally have the lowest attendance levels and this is also compounded for us by the fact that this is our largest cohort.

The attendance of our young people placed in borough is slightly lower than those placed out of borough. This is because the 2 young people with the lowest attendance (below 30%) are placed in borough bringing down the total percentage as opposed to it being a more widespread issue in borough.

Attendance of males in the statutory cohort is lower than females and this is addressed further on in the report where we can see that 19 of the 26 young people with persistent absence are male.

In relation to the attendance by SEN, there are 4 young people yet to confirm their SEN status as they are very new to care UASC. The attendance of our young people with an EHCP is highest which is positive, but the attendance is notably lower for those with SEN support. Again, this seems to relate to a specific cohort of persistently / severely absent young people, 1 of whom has had a long delay in sourcing appropriate education in another LA (escalated to DCS), 2 of whom have an EHCP application submitted/underway and 1 who has emerging EBSA following a difficult placement change.



Looking at the ethnic groups with the lowest % attendance; **WIRT** – There is one student in this cohort – Yr 9 – EHCP with very complex needs – missing for extended period of time, several placement breakdowns and refusal to engage with education provision.

MWBC – This refers to 3 of 8 young people – one of whom is in year 11 based in a PRU with frequent missing episodes where they return to their mother’s home and refuse to attend education. 2 further young people in year 10 and 11 have a number of unauthorised absences both of whom have received support from our educational psychologist to address the underlying reasons for this.

WBRI – This relates mainly to 10 of 57 young people and in part is due to young people with complex needs and EHCPs moving placements and awaiting school places, some are due to complex and long histories of EBSA (for which EP support has been provided) and some are due to prolonged missing episodes.

Barnet Virtual School’s attendance figures can be benchmarked against the looked after cohort monitored by Welfare Call who have data on 22,893 young people from across the country for children In Year 1 to Year 11. Attendance for the wider group to date is 88.43% compared with 91.85% for Barnet (25.4.24). Persistent absence also compares favourably with this wider group - 26.59% compared with 22.73% and for severely persistent absence the figures are 8.50% compared with 3.98% for Barnet. Barnet’s children with SEN who are looked after also have higher attendance than this wider group – 91.02% compared with 86.91%.

Persistent Absence (below 90%) in the DfE eligible Cohort

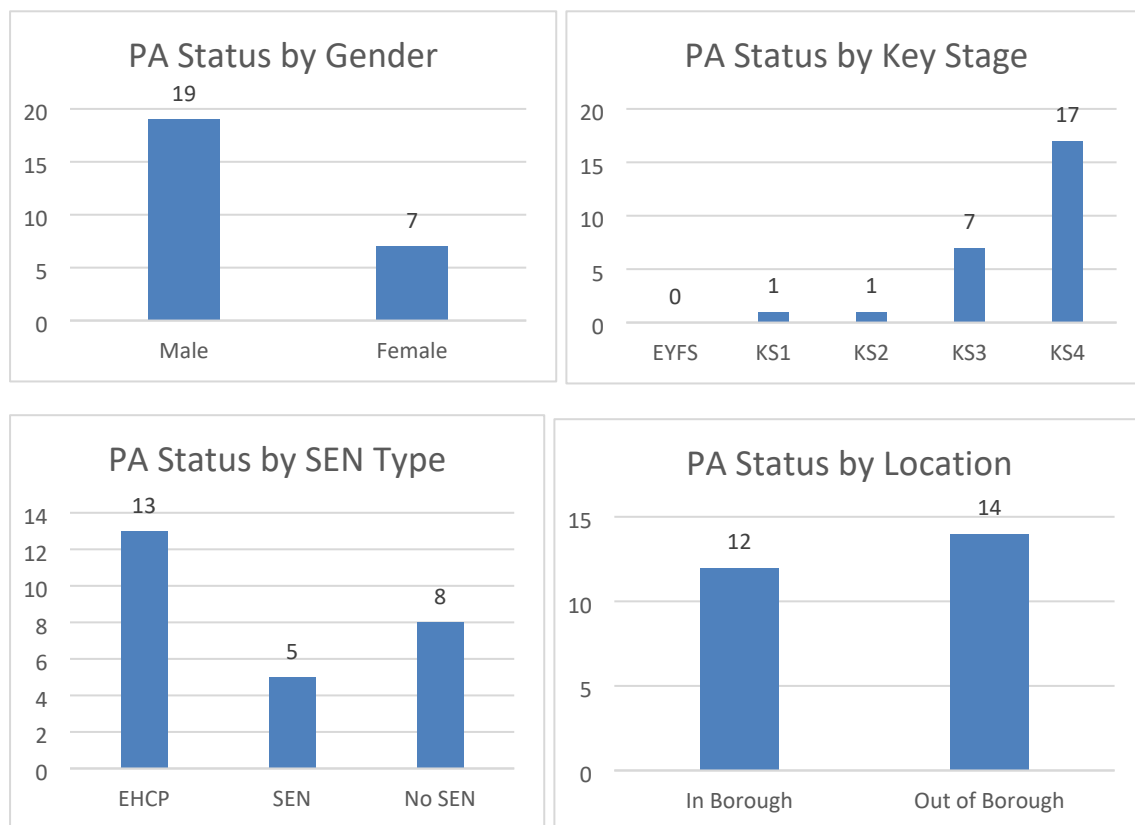
The Persistent Absence rate for Barnet children who have been in care for 12 months or longer was **20.3%** which is broadly similar to the Persistent Absence rate across **all** statutory aged pupils nationally which was **20.2%**.

Looking at the 113 young people within the DfE eligible cohort:

- 11/113 young people had **100% attendance** across the Autumn Term.
- 72/113 young people had **95% attendance or above** across the Autumn Term.
- 87/113 young people had **90% attendance or above** across the Autumn Term.
- 26 /113 young people are considered **persistently absent** (attendance below 90%) Of these 26 children, 6 are severely absent (attendance below 50%)

Persistent Absence attendance ranges	Number of Students
70-90%	15
50-70%	5 (2 x EHCP with placement moves requiring consultation with new schools) (1 x placement move and emerging Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) – supported by EP) (1 X EHCP and complex mental health needs in tier 4 placement) (1 x AP with suspensions and unauthorised absence – EHCP application underway).
Below 50% (Severely Absent)	6 (1 x EHCP – Placement Changes/missing episodes) (3 x EBSA - Ongoing support from EP (2 x Unauthorised absences with support from EP)

To provide a context to those that are persistently absent:



Evidently, there is a much higher proportion of males with persistent absence this term which is different to previous terms where it has been more evenly split. Interestingly, the absence codes for the female young people tended to be due to genuine illness or long-standing mental health / EBSA with the exception of 1 young person. The absence codes for the male young people tended to be unauthorised absence/suspensions/placement breakdowns.

Persistent absence is more prevalent in KS4 which is the typical pattern and seen nationally.

Interestingly, the cohort with the highest number of persistently absent students is the EHCP category even though attendance in this cohort overall is highest. This is largely because 4 young people with an EHCP had a significant placement change which necessitated a change of school which is often a protracted process. 2 other young people with EHCPs have particularly complex needs and have had missing episodes and the Youth Justice Service (YJS) involvement and 1 other young person is in Tier 4 provision and has longstanding mental health/EBSA.

Reason for PA Status	Number of Students (with EHCP)	How is this is being addressed by Virtual School
Emotional Based School Avoidance	4 (1 EHCP)	Involvement from Educational Psychologist (EP) in all 4 cases. 14-16 College placement identified (but broke down) Transition mentor previously involved Part time timetable EBSA plan in place with school Thinking Spaces with Family Services (FS).
Unauthorised absence	7 (3 EHCP)	Targeted support and funding through PEP. EP involvement.

		Flexible start time. Incentive plan in place with placement Thinking Spaces with FS
Genuine illness / Circumstance	7 (5 EHCP)	Ensure absence from illness is appropriate and proportional and monitor.
Placement Changes	4 (3 EHCP)	<i>Where Young People (YP) have an EHCP and change placements, SEN were keeping them on roll at previous placement until new schools have been consulted with resulting in additional absence. Tuition is provided whilst new specialist provisions are identified and consulted with which can be a prolonged process.</i>
Suspensions	3 (2 EHCP and 1 Application submitted)	Involvement from EP and Inclusion Advisory Team (IAT). Targeted funding for additional support through the Personal Education Plan (PEP). Referrals to Mentor services. 14-16 Provisions for day release vocational courses.
Other (punctuality)	1 (0 EHCP)	Targeted funding for additional support through the PEP.

Tackling persistent absence continues to be a very high priority and we are constantly upskilling ourselves and the resources and support we have available to manage this.

The attendance of all young people is monitored by caseworkers weekly and a more robust monitoring is undertaken by the Deputy Head on a fortnightly basis and with the Head on a half termly basis. This is to ensure that patterns of absence can be detected in a timely way and appropriate support can be implemented swiftly. All young people with absence below 95% have a specific target around this on their PEP to avoid wherever possible the likelihood of them becoming persistently absent.

5. Exclusions

The most recent outcomes from the DfE have information on suspensions/exclusions form 2021/22.

CLA Suspensions/Exclusions 2021-2022

Year	Measure	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
	Number of pupils	114		38,970	3,890
2021/22	Number of Pupils with one plus suspension	11		4,760	470
	% of Pupils with One Plus Suspension	9.65%	34	12.22%	12.16%
	Number of pupils permanently excluded	0		20	N/A
	% of Pupils Permanently Excluded	0%	1 (= with all LAs)	0.06%	N/A

- 9.65% of CLA received one or more suspension, an increase on last year but lower than the London and national averages
- The number of suspensions has increased in 2021-22 on the previous year but this is also the pattern nationally and in London.

- Barnet has 0 permanently excluded CLA pupils.

Barnet Suspensions over time – all statutory children

	Number of suspensions					Number of permanent exclusions				
	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	Aut Term 2023	Spring Term 2024	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	Aut Term 2023	Spring Term 2024
No of pupils	18	26	21	13	13	0	0	1 Reinstated by governing body	2 rescin ded	0
No of suspension s	25	35	53	33	26	0	0	0		0
No of days suspended	89	130.5	89.5	53.5	55.5	0	0	0		0

	In Borough									
	Fixed-period suspensions					Permanent exclusions				
	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	Autumn 2023	Spring Term 2024	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022/ 2023	Autumn 2023	Spring Term 2024
Total number of pupils excluded	8	13	11	7	4	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of days lost	58.5	72.5	41	33	28.5	0	0	0	0	0
	Out of Borough									
Total number of pupils excluded	10	14	10	6	9	0	0	1 Reinstated by governing body	2 Rescinde d	0
Total number of days lost	30.5	58	48.5	20.5	27	0	0	0		0

Of the 13 children who received a suspension in the Spring Term, 9 were boys and 2 were primary age, with 4 being Year 11. The highest ethnic group to receive exclusions was again White British. This group is the largest in the Virtual School, but the number excluded is disproportionate at 53.8%. The second highest group with 3 pupils 23.1% was White and Black Caribbean young people. 7/13 young people have been in care for more than a year. 6/7 are in out of borough schools and 4/6 have had multiple moves or school/home breakdowns.

9 of the 13 children had identified SEN with 5 of them having EHCPs, with 3 attending specialist settings.

One of the children in a mainstream in borough school received 3 suspensions in the Spring Term, 6 across the year. A permanent exclusion has been avoided by a tight and pro-active professional's network. The Inclusion Advisory Team have been working in the school and BICS are doing supervision with the staff to support them with his dysregulation. A private O.T. has been agreed to be paid from PPG to see if the triggers are over stimulation, sensory needs. An EHCP was issued in February. The school have referred the child to

the Pavilion Nurturing Hub at the Meadway site and he visited on 18/03/24 with his headteacher and Foster Carer. However, the plan has changed as he is about to move to a residential setting with education on site.

Typical reasons for suspensions continue to be:

- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Physical assault on an adult or child
- Verbal abuse
- Threatening behaviour

Suspensions enforced without clear reason are challenged by the Virtual School and schools are expected to provide alternative education from the first day of the exclusion, whether this be a placement at an alternative school or tutoring. As part of the Virtual School strategy this is communicated to schools as soon as we are made aware of an intention to suspend or exclude.

Schools are supported to look at alternatives to suspensions and with putting in place preventative measures. We provide funding through the PEP to support young people and additional tuition. E.P. support has been targeted to children at risk of suspension with work such as solution circles, observations and consultations being put into place.

6. School Places (April 2024)

Number of children currently without a school place: 7

Number of directions for a school place: 0

Of the children currently without a school place:

1 is a new to care unaccompanied asylum seeker

2 have EHCPs and have moved placements

1 is awaiting a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to PRU transfer

1 has moved from an emergency therapeutic setting

1 is a new to care child who was not in school

Changes in circumstances – Spring Term 2024

Looking at the Spring Term, there were 10 young people who changed placement and schools. This was due to:

- 7 moved school following a home placement move
- 1 moved to an emergency therapeutic residential setting
- 1 was released from Youth Offender Institution (YOI)
- 1 moved placements suddenly but was able to return to his previous school

Educational Provision – Ofsted Judgements March 2024

6 children were in schools rated requires improvement. Reasons for this are:

1 was carer choice and proximity

2 child was already attending prior to Ofsted judgement

2 were the only appropriate specialist schools

1 was the only local school

7. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) for each child includes progress and attainment information as well as recording interventions, often funded through the Pupil Premium Plus Grant, to ensure the child achieves well. The Virtual School works in partnership with teams in Children and Families and with Designated Teachers in schools, to ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality PEP that focuses on education outcomes. The PEP forms part of the child's overall care plan.

Whole Year 2022-23

	Total Number of PEPs	Number and % rag rated Gold	Number and % rag rated green	Number and % rag rated amber	Number and % rag rated red
Overall	987	37 (3.7%)	938 (95%)	9 (0.91%)	3 (0.30%)
EYFS	34		34 (100%)	0	0
Statutory	546	37 (6.8%)	504 (92.3%)	3 (0.55%)	2 (0.37%)
Post 16	407		400 (98.3%)	6 (1.5%)	1 (0.25%)

Feedback has been given to the settings where PEPs required improvement and a guide on how to complete high quality PEPs will be included in the Autumn term newsletters to DTs. Additional training around the use of Welfare Call when completing PEPs was also included within the 'New to DT training.' An additional training session on Purposeful PEPS was delivered in the Spring Term 2024.

Spring Term 2024 - Information provided as of 27th March 2024

	Total Number of PEPs	Number and % rag rated gold	Number and % rag rated green	Number and % rag rated amber	Number and % rag rated Red
Overall	346	2 (0.6%)	344 (99.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Early Years	14		14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Statutory	180	2 (1.2%)	178 (98.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Post 16	152		152 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

All PEPs in the spring term were RAG rated green or above.

PUPIL Premium Spend

Pupil Premium Plus - funding attached to targets in the PEP

In the academic year 2022-23, £191,286 was allocated directly to schools in relation to targets set in the PEPs. This was a 21.8% increase on the previous year. Of the total funding, £150,439 came from Pupil Premium Plus funding and £40,847 came from recovery funding. This funding supported 158 pupils across 111 provisions with a split between in borough and out of borough schools of 60.7% v 39.3%.

Spring Term 2024

In the spring term £66,938 was allocated directly to schools in relation to targets set in the PEPs. £56,529 was from Pupil Premium Plus funding and £10,409 came from Recovery Funding.

This funding supported 115 pupils: 65 primary aged pupils and 50 secondary aged pupils across 76 provisions. The funding via school stage for Spring Term was £44,291 (66.1%) for primary aged pupils and £22,647 (33.8%) for secondary aged pupils with a split between in borough and out of borough schools of 48.9% v 51.1%.

Pupil premium money was allocated to a variety of areas, supporting children in education. There continues to be a high number of requests for funding to support social and emotional learning interventions (22% of funding) and one to one tuition continues to be another main area pupil funding is used to provide additional support (14.7%).

8. Outcomes 2023-23

CLA KS4 Attainment Data 2020-2022

Year	Category	Barnet	Rank (out of 152 LAs)	England	London
2020	Number of pupils	29		6110	910
2021		34		5930	810
2022		19		5980	740
2023		23		6120	750
2020	Attainment 8	21.8	72	21.3	22
2021		22.6	77	23.2	24.7
2022		18.1	108	20.3	22
2023		21.9	42	19.4	22.2
2022	Progress 8	-1.79	129	-1.3	-1.37
2023		-1.05	34	-1.26	-1.31
2020	5+ E&M	N/A	N/A	10.8%	14%
2021		23.5%	4	12.6%	16.3%
2022		N/A	N/A	11%	16.2%
2023		N/A	N/A	9.5%	13.8%
2020	4+ E&M	24.1%	64	24.3%	26.4%
2021		35.3%	33	28.8%	31.8%
2022		N/A	N/A	22.1%	25.4%
2023		N/A	N/A	20%	24.7%

In 2023, the number of children in care for 12 months plus who were entered for GCSEs was again very small. However the average attainment 8 was above the national average. The progress 8 average was above both London and national averages and ranked within the top 25% of local authorities for the average progress 8. Rankings for both progress and attainment 8 improved significantly on the previous year.

Grade 5 or above and grade 4 or above data is not available for Barnet's CLA cohort due to the small cohort size

CLA KS2 Attainment Data 2023

Total CLA pupil count of eligible pupil was too small (7) to be included in the outcomes for the percentage reaching expected. However progress scores were positive and above both England and London. Barnet ranked in the top 10% of local authorities in Reading and Maths, and within the top 20% for Writing.

	England	London	Barnet	Rank
Average progress score for maths	-0.62	-0.08	1.03	15
Average progress score for reading	0.04	1.15	3.86	9
Average progress score for writing TA	-0.33	0.48	1.01	30

9. Young people's success stories

DSM

D is currently in Year 11 and has an EHCP. He was previously at the Pavilion following a permanent exclusion prior to coming into care. When he came into care, he moved placements twice which delayed getting a new education placement for him. There were great difficulties in securing an education placement for him due to safeguarding concerns with other young people in the area who he had been involved with previously. The Virtual School worked with the LA SEN department and the school (alternative provision AP) to work out a bespoke package. He now has part time provision on two days at the AP, two days a week on a construction course and one day on a mechanics course. He has also had tuition from the Virtual School put in place which he has been attending. D's engagement is much better, and he has had no suspensions in the Spring Term.

SO

SO came into care in 2013 and had been with the same carers since 2016. He was very settled with them and motivated to do well in school with excellent attendance. He started at Fareham College in Sep 2021 studying a Level 3 BTEC in Electrical Engineering. Initially SO struggled with the work and had difficulty asking for support both in class and outside. He received some additional tuition through the Virtual School. In his second year SO took everything in his stride and continued to build confidence. He ended up attaining a MMP on his BTEC and getting into his first-choice university! S ended the year attending a virtual school residential enrichment called the Arvon project. He is now at university and is reported to be very happy in his fat and university and has made lots of friends. He aims to become an electronics engineer.

DK

D came into care in September 2023. Shortly after this, his school said they were going to permanently exclude him. After intervention from the Virtual School and linking up with his home borough exclusion's team which was a significant distance away, the school agreed to rescind on the ground that he would be educated in his home borough. The school and then the Virtual School paid for education to be put in place at an alternative provision as an interim measure to prevent a home placement breakdown. The Virtual School also provided a mentor through Dream, Believe, Achieve which has been really positive for D. The Virtual School caseworker had to intervene a lot with the LA after there were delays in a permanent education placement. However, after persistence, he obtained a suitable place in Chessbrook Education Support Centre and despite saying he would not attend in no uncertain terms, has 96.5% attendance and is engaging well.

TH

T is now in Year 12 and has been in care for just over a year. When she initially came into care, she went into detox rehab and left statutory schooling without GCSEs. She has since been diagnosed with ADHD. T was given a laptop by the VS and later, art materials to help engage her in something positive. She has clear ambitions and has had a part time job. She aspires to study Fashion and Retail at the London Academy in September but needs to get her GCSE equivalents in maths and English and has 100% attendance on her part time college course. At a PEP meeting which T attended there was discussion around how she could use her interest in fashion and the Virtual School funded a sewing machine for her and a short course to learn how to use it so she can make clothes.

TLH

T is in Year 9 and has been in care since 2015. He has an EHCP and a diagnosis of ADHD. Although T managed well in primary school, things were more difficult when he moved to secondary school. He struggled with friendships and older young people and there was a high level of anxiety in school around managing him. His carer was very concerned about it not being the right setting for him and it proved challenging for the school to implement a consistent approach. As a result, the Virtual School caseworker investigated the Springboard charity's independent school opportunity for looked after children and liaised with them over the possibility for T. With the carer, the application forms were completed and after a long process and search for a suitable school, he was offered a place at Mill Hill Independent School. He started in September 2023 and so far, it has been a positive move and there have been no concerns from his carer. She expressed in the Autumn PEP that 'he feels safe, liked and supported' and travels independently to school and the support in school helps him to stay regulated. By the October, T was already attending Rugby, Gaming club, Jazz, Martlet rotation (variety of taster sessions) and climbing and was due to start piano. The school have been flexible in terms of making adjustments for him e.g. he is allowed to have alarms set on his phone to help him remember key things he has to do in the day and is starting to learn touch typing. He is doing well academically, making expected progress across the board and thinking positively about GCSE choices.

10. Post 16 Cohort

Engagement with education, employment and training

	In Borough	Out of Borough
Apprenticeship	3	
Working	4	1
College/6th Form/SEN Provision	46	58
NEET due to being new to care UASC	1	2
NEET – other	12	20
NEET due to pregnancy/parent	1	
In secure unit		3

Young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

At Post-16 the young people not in education, employment or training present a significant challenge and engaging them is no easy task. The category includes those in psychiatric units, pregnant or who frequently go missing and thus are even harder to engage in education or training. In 2023, 38% of care leavers were NEET nationally. In March we had 25% of our Year 12 and 13's who are NEET.

Action undertaken

1-1 work providing advice and guidance regarding action planning for the future.
Support for young people who are NEET regarding applications for courses.
Course ideas/opportunities provided on a regular basis to professional network.
Follow up on progress on a regular basis (weekly or fortnightly).
Continue to build relationships and trust through meetings and telephone contact.
Support young people with interviews/visits when possible.
Maintain regular communication with professional networks so as not to duplicate actions.
Liaise with placement to support young people.
VSC has developed positive relationships with specific high-quality providers to allow for maximum flexibility and support for Barnet NEET.
Encouraged to engage in activities e.g., playing instruments, joining youth clubs, accessing Princes Trust, New Citizens Gateway and Unitas Youth Zone etc.

Boxing mentoring has been rolled out for young people in and around London which is aimed at supporting with discipline and motivation. Mainly focused on those with lower attendance or NEET. Positive impact has been seen so far.

Building connections and relationships with Virtual Schools across the UK to assist with sourcing opportunities out of Borough.

Virtual School attend a NEET meeting on monthly basis which initially focused on 18+ but will shortly include 16-18. Aim is to have higher collaboration between Family Services, Onwards and Upwards, Virtual School and Post 16 Team to reduce NEET figures.

Post-16 Pupil Premium has also meant greater flexibility when it comes to funding short courses in areas of the young persons choice e.g. CSCS course, Forklift training, Food Hygiene etc.

11. Engagement with Stakeholders

a. Children

Enrichment Activities

Barnet Virtual School, in conjunction with John Lyons Charity and three other virtual schools, offer a variety of enrichment opportunities. These have included:

- Reading Clubs
- Brunel Urban Scholars at Brunel University The aim of the programme is to increase engagement with learning, increase academic achievement, enhance aspirations and support to fulfil potential.
- Visit to the Houses of Parliament and Downing Street
- Half term Element Creative Project for UASC
- Critical thinking skills
- Jamie's Farm Residential

The Virtual School also sends out 100 book packs via The Book Trust's Letterbox club which aims to provide children with parcels full of high-quality books and resources, to help encourage reading and learning. Letterbox Club helps looked-after students to:

- Build their confidence in reading, maths, and their self-esteem.
- Feel remembered, valued and excited about receiving their parcels.
- Spend time with their carers/families and peers to share stories and play games.
- Have continuity through receiving their parcels despite any placement moves.

Each child registered received six parcels, with a total of up to 14 fiction and non-fiction books, 10 maths games, around 40 items of stationery and other resources.

We also fund music lessons in school through Barnet Educational Arts Trust, We have referred over 20 young people and they have currently arranged music lessons for piano, clarinet, Djembe drums, violin, and recorder.

Stepladder

The total amount paid out in incentive payments has increased to £34,700.

Total number of young people registered since the introduction of Stepladder Plus – 67
Of these 67

- 16 young people have completed the programme
- 19 young people has achieved step 5

- 23 young people have achieved step 4
- 26 young people have achieved step 3
- 33 young people have achieved Step 2
- 39 young people have achieved step 1

Total number of young people under 18 who are active on the programme – 24

b. Family Services

The Virtual School continues to work collaboratively with family services to ensure that the education needs of our young people are at the forefront of planning and decision making and to ensure that the support we provide is contextually relevant to the needs of the service. Examples of collaborative working include attending and participating in the following meetings:

Children’s Resource Panel (weekly) – Ensuring that our Children In Care (CIC) are picked up by the Virtual School at the earliest opportunity.

Permanency Tracking Meetings (weekly)– Allowing for joined up thinking and planning around young people who are not in long term placements.

Thinking Spaces (as needed) – To ensure education is championed and considered when planning and problem solving.

Tackling Violence and Exploitation Panel (monthly) – As appropriate to support and share information.

Youth Justice Service Operational Management Meeting (monthly) – To ensure joined up planning.

CPOG – Supporting the coordination and advancement of the Corporate Parenting Plan in Barnet to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

BOP – To support in ensuring that all of our young people have a voice and a say about their education.

Monthly meeting with Kate Jeffrey, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting

Tier 4 Specialist Inpatient Surgery Panel (monthly) – To support joint planning around CIC young people in tier 4 mental health provisions and specifically in relation to their discharge plans.

CIC/I&P/DAT/Reach Team Meetings (annually) – To ensure all teams understand the roles and responsibilities around CIC and the Virtual School and how we can support each other.

Expectations around the Social Worker’s (SW) role in completing PEPs and changes made to the PEP document itself have been shared in team meetings across CIC, I&P and REACH.

c. Designated Teachers/Safeguarding Leads

The Virtual School has continued to send out two newsletters a term and to offer a range of training. Training has included:

- Trauma Informed Schools Conference
- Is it EAL or Language Difficulties?
- Lies, Stealing and Fantasy Worlds
- EBSA
- Purposeful PEPs – best practice approaches for Personal Education Plans
- Emotion Coaching
- Workshop on Aces and the impact they can have on a child’s communication, behaviour and emotional development.

Feedback on training is positive e.g.

“Excellent training supporting the team to think of different ways to overcome difficult situations.”

“It was really interesting and informative. I’m looking forward to having a proper go at it and improving my practice. Thank you for the resources too as these are really helpful.”

The Trauma Informed Conference was particularly well received:

Life changing, thank you

Inspirational speakers, very knowledgeable.

Inspirational, theory and practice alongside real life experiences

Brilliant speakers, very inspired.

It was great to see have some research based training.

Literally ALL of it, I have never been on a more important course in 15 years of working in education

It was a great conference. The speakers were interesting, thought provoking, relevant, engaging and entertaining. I especially enjoyed Mick /Steven and would love to hear more about how they implemented their no punishment system and the day to day realities of using it

Some of the best speakers I’ve ever heard

Just wanted to say that this conference was amazing. I haven’t stopped thinking and talking about it to others and it has really made me think about how we can improve our provision for our most vulnerable children in school. Thank you so much for finding such inspiring speakers (even if they did make me cry!)

d. Foster Carers

A termly newsletter was sent to foster carers and training offered which has included

- Narrative Skills – what are they and why are they important
- An introduction to the EHCP assessment process
- How to support Key Stage 4 study skills and revision
- EBSA

e. Educational Psychology (E.P.)

The Virtual School has two days of EP support per week over the term. This has allowed for support in a variety of ways including:

- Individual **casework** (41 C/YP in total): Consultations, attendance at network meetings & PEPs, supervision with key adults around the C/YP, facilitating Circle of Adults, individual therapeutic work, gathering young people’s views, 1:1 assessment.
- **Training** to the Virtual School Team and schools: Topics have included: supporting anxiety, EBSA within college population, body-based approaches to trauma, lies stealing and fantasy worlds, working with stuckness.
- Input to termly **Pupil Progress** meetings.
- **Systemic** development of the Virtual School via research, training, and workshops e.g. Supervision Skills, development of EBSA research specific to CiC experiences.
- Offering weekly **reflection** and problem-solving drop ins to VS caseworkers.
- **Supervision** for the Virtual School Team (individual & group) and Designated Teachers (group).
- Providing content for Virtual School social media platforms and school & foster carer **newsletters**.
- Attendance at specialist interest group for EPs working with CiC.
- Participation in monthly project supervision to support continuing professional development.

Case Study of EP individual work - JD (Y5)

Educational Psychology involvement was initially sought to identify ways to support JD's social interactions and learning, and later to support the network in understanding and responding to his sexualised behaviour in school. The focus of EP input has changed over the year in response to JD's changing needs.

Over a 12 month period EP involvement has included

- Observation of JD in school
- Consultation with school staff and his foster carer to explore his relationships and learning within school, develop a greater understanding of his needs and how this links to his early childhood experiences, and identify suitable provision.
- Multi-professional work, including attendance at Team around the Child meetings, PEPs, and contributing to referrals to specialist services.
- Informal consultations with JD's social worker and VS caseworker.
- Monthly group thinking spaces (informed by Dyadic Developmental Practice) with school staff to reflect on displays of sexualised behaviour, explore ways of responding to these behaviours, and minimise secondary trauma/burnout for staff.

"We really appreciate your support with JD. We don't often get a chance to really sit back and think about a child for an hour. It's good to have this space to think about his behaviours, make connections, and consider how we can use PACE (something we use elsewhere in school) in response to concerning behaviour" (Teacher).

"I'd never thought of that before but it makes sense" (Foster Carer)

f. Working party - Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

The Virtual School has continued to facilitate termly meetings of a working party to look more closely at the issues for UASC young people. It now has a wide range of attendees including representatives from Barnet and Southgate College, social work, the Refugee Council, social workers, educational psychologists, and members of other Virtual Schools. Recent attendees have been UK Trauma Council. Currently, as part of this group, Barnet Virtual School are collaborating with other virtual schools and organisations on a video-based induction programme for UASC. Plans are to record sessions and release as podcast or be made available from Barnet Virtual School website. The group is also connecting with ESOL provisions across the UK to share expertise and insight. The group continues to grow and expand and will revisit the original purpose (SEN and UASC) soon to refocus and examine progress since group first started.

12. Post-16 Pupil Premium Funding

This academic year Post 16 Pupil premium funding was rolled out to all local authorities. To date it has been spent on:

- Increased provision of tuition
- Increased provision of funding for ad-hoc training/opportunities e.g. CSCS cards, forklift truck training
- Funding of twice weekly ESOL sessions at Onwards and Upwards
- Training for Barnet and Southgate College
- Provision of interpreting service for D.T. at Barnet and Southgate

13. Extended Duties – all children with a social worker

From September 2021 Virtual School Heads (VSH) were asked to become **strategic** leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the

Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker. It covers all children who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan. This includes children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings.

The non-statutory guidance advises three ways to implement strategic leadership:

- Enhance partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together
- Identify the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress
- Offer advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions

CWSW cohort as of 28th March 2024	
No of children (4yrs+) subject to child in need plan:	378
No of children (4yrs+) subject to a CP plan:	165

Strategic Group

The CWSW Strategic Group was set up and meets half termly to coordinate and advance the extended duties to improve outcomes for all children with a social worker. Work is underway to try and unblock issues around data so teams have access to all information and can understand the needs of the cohort and teams are aware of who is on a CIN/CP plan e.g. SEN, Elective Home Education (EHE) etc. Work is currently being completed by the Family Services data team to provide a dashboard identifying the cohort and key characteristics to be used by BELS teams so that further work can be carried out around identifying need for this cohort.

Education Support for Children in Kinship Care

In December 2023, the government announced improved education support for children in Kinship Care under new guidance: [Championing kinship care: the national kinship care strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1214217/championing-kinship-care-the-national-kinship-care-strategy.pdf) . The Virtual School Head strategic role will include:

- Raising the visibility of the distinct needs of children in different types of kinship care arrangements and the disadvantage that they can experience.
- Promoting practice that supports attendance and engagement in education.
- Promoting practice that improves children in kinship care's outcomes to narrow the attainment gap, so that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In addition, there is an extension of the Virtual School Heads' provision of advice and information, on request, to all kinship carers with Special Guardianship and Child Arrangements Orders as part of their non-statutory role. The Virtual School has begun initial discussions with partners across the authority to look at staffing and how it can work with existing groups to address the extended role.

14. Speech and Language Project

The Virtual School has commissioned one and a half days of Speech and Language therapy. This is separate from the therapy time that is commissioned by the local authority. The focus of the project is to:

- Increase other's (including schools, social workers, foster carers) awareness of how Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) present in Looked After Children (LAC) to enable them to better identify and provide support.

- Training for schools, social workers and foster carers on SLCN in LAC and vulnerable children and provision of practical strategies to support SLCN in LAC.
- To follow up on screening carried out by school staff.
- Provide a programme of activities for schools to implement and include on PEP targets.
- Trial a screening pilot project in one secondary school. Support staff in use of screening tool to identify SLCN in LAC and other vulnerable children. Set up language intervention for identified students.
- To support identification of children and young people in the virtual school who have SLCN
 - To provide training for schools either in groups or individually to screen for SLCN.
 - To support screening of children in care for SLCN.
- To carry out on-going individual specialist casework (including assessment and intervention) as identified by the Virtual School Head.
 - To carry out screening for children without a school place who require urgent screening.
 - Develop a screening database.
 - Provide more specialist intervention if needed.
 - Carry out specialist casework and intervention when required. May include joint working with Education Psychologist.
 - Pilot direct work with 3 foster carers to support development of their interaction and communication skills within their relationships for those they care for.

Schools have been requested to carry out screeners for any new to care children up to the age of 15 and particular year groups have also been targeted. They are not requested for young people who have EHCPs or are new to the country. Once the screen is completed, it is rag rated and if necessary a programme given to the school. Schools are also offered support. The SLTs are also following up on programmes given a year ago. The next step is to make sure that targets are integrated into the PEP.

15. Priorities for next year

1. Training for social workers around school attendance – attending team meetings
2. Auditing of attendance targets on CIN/CP plans
3. LA approach to monitoring wider CIN group for attendance and suspensions
4. Continued focus on Emotionally Based School Avoidance across all cohorts
5. Develop approach in relation to new responsibilities in relation to kinship care
6. Continue with Trauma Informed Schools project
7. Continue to address issue of NEET young people – possible role of 'Achievement Coach'

Sarah Deale
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 Barnet Virtual School
 April 2024