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Dear Member

## **COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2025**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Thursday, 6 February 2025 meeting of the Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

<b>Agenda No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Page</b>
5.	<b>Communications</b>	(Pages 3 - 16)

Yours sincerely

June Gurry  
Clerk

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## Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report for Academic Year: 2023 – 24

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## 1. Introduction

### Purpose of the Report:

This report is intended to give an overview of the last year's activity in the Virtual School and the Extended Duties team. The aim is to generate enquiry and discussion to improve the services, direct the next year's work and secure better outcomes for the children within the expanded remit.

To assist in this, it is appropriate to share the cohorts who are now supported:

- a) Cared for Children and Young People. (Looked After in DfE terminology)
- b) Care Experienced Children and Young People. (Previously Looked After)
- c) CYP with a Social Worker. (or who had one in the last six years)
- d) CYP with formal Kinship Care arrangements.
- e) Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

Most of the data in the report refers to cared for and care experienced children rather than across the areas of disadvantage in the extended duties. This is for 2 reasons:

1. The team can secure information regarding these children as Torbay Council have a parental responsibility. Other, larger, cohorts' data will only become available as DfE releases whole year information.
2. The reporting systems for the Extended Duties Cohorts are less mature on a national and local level, making reporting inaccurate.

### Chair of Governor's Foreword:

I am delighted, as Chair of the VSGB, to write this introduction to the 14th annual report of the VSGB. The purpose of the VSGB is to take the lead in ensuring that schools fulfil their responsibilities to Cared For Children and Young People and maximise their attainment and achievement and narrow the gap between our Cared For Children and their peers.

This report captures the legacy of the previous Headteacher, Jane Inett, and the subsequent leadership of Dan Hamer and Tracey Powell and shares the strategic aim to reflect on our work and build on the solid foundations laid over the last fourteen years.

This is particularly so in the attachment and trauma informed practice but also in that relentless focus on championing the educational outcomes of our Cared For Children and Young People.

I hope you get from the Annual Report how determined we are to ensure our Cared For Children get the very best experience from their early years providers, schools and post 16 providers to ensure the best outcomes they can achieve. The members of the VSGB are very clear that schools need to ensure that our most vulnerable



learners are given every opportunity to succeed. This isn't about equality of opportunity but equality of outcome.

The Virtual School works in a very inclusive way. It also looks at the empirical evidence from research about where pupils learn and achieve best. It has a determination to have our children in the very best schools and to keep them in those schools no matter what.

The Virtual School in Torbay provides a tremendous amount of support to our schools both in and out of area and as a result receives a tremendous amount of support from the schools and very positive regard. We can never underestimate the power of relationships and partnership working. This is fundamental to the work, and ultimately, the success and effectiveness of the Virtual School's work.

I trust that the Annual Report will demonstrate our commitment and passion to our children.

Stuart Heron  
Chair - TVSGB

#### Headteacher's Foreword:

This is the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and the first since the retirement of Jane Inett. Jane led the school with an exemplary strength of purpose, and I aspire to match her drive and determination in securing the best for our children and young people.

Most of the data in the report refers to cared for and care experienced children rather than across the areas of disadvantage in the extended duties. This is for 2 reasons:

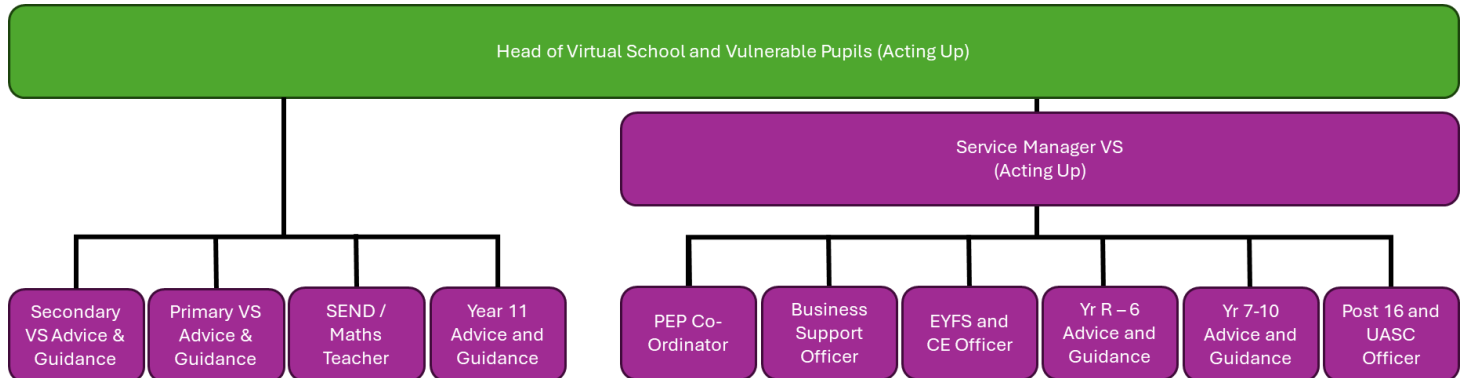
- The team can secure information regarding these children as Torbay Council have a parental responsibility. Other, larger, cohorts' data will only become available as DfE releases whole year information.
- The reporting systems for the Extended Duties Cohorts are less mature on a national and local level, making reporting inaccurate.

The year has been very busy, with staff and children moving in and out of the school. Numbers of cared for children continue to decrease over time. This is welcome for obvious reasons yet the team and settings need to be aware of the impact this has on resources.

There is also the new extension to the Extended Duties with the inclusion of Kinship Care arrangements coming on scope and including the expectation of direct advice to families on request. This has the potential to be a significant extension as individual advice is explicitly not in the extended duty expectations for other cohorts.

## 2. Virtual School Structure

Organisational Chart:



Staffing Overview:

**Jane Inett** retired from the role of Virtual School Headteacher at the end of 2023. She created this team and led area wide improvements for the benefit of all our children. I wish to place on record my thanks for the exceptional service she has developed.

**The school staff** have continued to work hard. It has been a pleasure to work with them, observing their industry and determination to improve the experiences, attainment and achievement of both, the children and young people in our care and their peers in the schools they attend.

To ensure this work is effective and that we have continuity after Jane’s retirement, we have appointed **Tracey Powell** as Service Manager. Leading on operational work and across our relational and inclusive practice and expectations.

**Becky Somers** is on maternity leave, and we were delighted when she welcomed her son into the world in the Spring. Her probable return date is in March 2025.

**Valerie Bailey** has joined as maternity cover for Becky and has made a fabulous start, building exceptional, trusting relationships with the children in her care and the colleagues that support them.

We have two colleagues who have left the service:

**Lyndsey Pengelly** has left the post of Secondary Phase Virtual School Extended Duties Officer. She has been appointed to lead on extended duties for Plymouth and we wish her every success in this arena.

**Katie Cavanna** has left the post of Primary Phase Virtual School Extended Duties Officer. She has been appointed to the post of Family Time Service Manager for Deon County Council. We wish Katie well in her new endeavour.

### 3. Key Strengths and Achievements

Academic Performance:

*Key Stage 2 Results (CC Cohort)*

Reading	Exceeded	Expected	WT	Below	Disapplied
Number	0	7 (63%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	4
Writing	Exceeded	Expected	WT	Unrecorded	Disapplied
Number	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	4
Maths	Exceeded	Expected	WT	Below	Disapplied
Number	0	7 (63%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	4
SPAG	Exceeded	Expected	WT	Below	Disapplied
Number	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	1 (9%)	4

The disapplied children all attend specialist provisions and were disapplied on grounds of their special educational needs. One child is cared for in Wales so does not have access to English national testing.

Writing continues to be an area of concern, as it is nationally, and the children have a gap in grammar, punctuation and spelling that correlates to this.

Using national 2022/23 data (the latest available), there is an approximately 10% gap with national norms in Maths and Reading. This will be reassessed when 2023/24 data is available.

*Key Stage 4 Terminal Qualifications for the continuous care group.*

	5A*-C or Grade 4+ including E&M	5A* - C	EBACC	Grade 4+ (C+ pre-2017) in E & M	Grade 4+ (C+ pre-2017) in English (Lit or Lang)	Grade 4+ (C+ pre-2017) in Maths
Torbay 2024	16.7% (5)	13.3% (4)	0	16.7% (5)	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)
Torbay 2023	25% (6)	25% (6)	1 (4.2%)	25% (6)	33.2% (8)	25% (6)
Torbay 2022	13.1% (3)	18.1% (4)	0	13.6% (3)	31.8% (7)	18.1% (4)
Torbay 2021	24.2% (8)	27.2% (9)	3.03% (1)	27.2% (9)	42.4% (14)	30.3% (10)

<b>Torbay 2020</b>	25% (5)	30% (6)	5% (1)	20% (4)	40% (8)	25% (5)
<b>Torbay 2019</b>	14.3% (4)	14.3% (4)	7.1% (2)	14.3% (4)	32.1% (9)	21.4% (6)
<b>Torbay 2018</b>	33.3% (7)	33.3% (7)	0	38.1% (8)	42.8% (9)	38.1% (8)

90% of the children and young people gained a qualification with 3 not doing so. Nationally, figures from the Fischer Family Trust suggest an attainment gaps of 20% in good passes in English and Maths to other disadvantaged children that needs to be addressed as a priority.

12 children matched their expected number of GCSEs and a further 14 exceeded the estimated number of GCSEs as reported by their schools at the end of the Spring Term.

### Extracurricular Activities:

Throughout the year the Virtual School has run, Get Musical, Get Bowling and Get Gritty to engage children and carers, improve opportunities to mix with peers and develop a range of skills.

Get Gritty has a particular focus on Key Stage 2/3 transition.

### The BUSS Model: Torbay LEAPlets School Readiness Program for TVS 2024

#### Outline:

- TVS commissioned TouchBase CIC for 10 session project
- Staff Team: 1 TouchBase staff member with BUSS Level 1 Practitioner certificate, 1 VS staff member with Attachment Lead status, 1 independent practitioner with Attachment Lead status
- Took place in a gymnastic space for children who are cared for, or were previously cared for and foster carers or guardians (grandparents).
- Child Social Workers, foster carers, guardians, and Fostering Social Workers felt sessions would benefit the children.
- Foster carers and guardians completed BUSS initial screening measures.

BUSS is a relationally based model, understanding that children need consistent, attuned care to enable bodily growth and development as well as the development of a child's personality. The foundation of bodily and emotional regulation are necessary for children to be in the best position to benefit from formal education. The emphasis of BUSS is on supporting parents and carers to provide the kind of relationship in which bodily regulation can develop and give them the understanding of how they can support their child's development. These systems are amenable to growth throughout childhood.

#### Objectives:

- To assess the development of children's foundation sensorimotor systems
- To use activities to build each child's underdeveloped foundation sensorimotor systems



- To upskill foster parents and guardians to continue to use these activities at home.
- To build caregiver/ child relationships and improve caregiving skills and confidence in understanding their child and communicating effectively with them.

**Attendance:****Individual Attendance:**

- Child A had 100% attendance
- Child B had 80% attendance
- Child C had 80% attendance
- Child D had 90% attendance
- Child E had 50% attendance
- Child F had 40% attendance.

**Group Attendance:**

- In week 1, 6/6 families attended = 100% group attendance.
- In week 2, 5/6 families attended 100%, so 83.3% group attendance
- In week 3, 100% group attendance
- In week 4, 5/6 families attended 100%, so 83.3 group attendance
- In week 5, 3/6 families attended, so 50% group attendance
- In week 6, 5/ 6 families attended, so 83.3% group attendance
- In week 7, 4/6 families attended, so 66.6% group attendance
- In week 8, 2/6 families attended, so 33.3% group attendance
- In week 9, 3/6 families attended, so 50% group attendance
- In week 10, 5/6 families attended, so 83.3% group attendance

**Pre and Post Measures by BUSS Trained Staff:**

Progress was measured by observing incremental changes as we tried to build capacity in different areas of the sensorimotor systems.

**Areas we measured which relate to the vestibular, proprioceptive and tactile systems:**

1. Able to lie in a straight line on their tummy for a few minutes
2. Able to commando crawl, powered by arms, with alternating arms
3. Able to crawl in a good position; with a stable core, good head position, hands under shoulder, arms straight, flat hands, fingers facing forward
4. Confident jumping with both feet off the ground and jumping off things and landing on both feet (rather than falling forward or landing on bottom)
5. Able to do things slowly without losing balance
6. Able to move quickly with their body working as an integrated unit – arms and legs working together in sequence, even when tired
7. Has a good body map – knows where their body is without having to use eyes

8. Able to modulate their movements, knowing how much pressure or force to use when doing things
9. When eating, has a strong chewing action and doesn't dribble
10. Moves their lips when talking or singing to form the words
11. Is able to settle to a task and stay there for a while
12. Is able to tune into the signals from their body, like feeling hungry, tired, hot or cold
13. Can manage a noisy environment
14. Can listen to and follow instructions
15. Can 'be in the moment' and enjoy things
16. Turns to parent when they need help or support and lets them help

**Progress:**

- 100% of children made progress in at least 4 areas
- 67% of children made progress in 10-12 areas
- 83% children made progress in at least 7 areas

**Individual results:**

CHILD	Progress in areas	% of progress	Attendance
A	10/16	62.5%	100%
B	10/16	62.5%	80%
C	12/16	75%	80%
D	10/16	62.5%	90%
E	7/16	44%	50%
F	4/16	25%	40%

**Carer/ parent/ guardian comments from 3 evaluations:**

**What was enjoyed:**

- Nice to meet others in the same situation.
- Children looked forward to coming and enjoy themselves. They have improved.
- [I have enjoyed] watching the children grow in confidence

**Has program been positive impact on your child's development:**

- Out of the 3 evaluations, 2 adults said the program had been positive for their child's development, and 1 answered no.

**Carer/ parent/ guardian comments on improvements:**



- Possibly changed the circuit
- Possibly changed the equipment about to keep up the interest
- Maybe more weeks as CHILD masked a lot of the time as he started to get used to the coming his behaviour started to show but then his course ended.

**Conclusions:**

The attendance data suggests that attendance was good, despite some families finding it hard to attend consistently. We invited 8 families to take part. 6 families attended the project. Despite either agreeing to attend or being asked to by social care, 2 never arrived. Out of the 6 families who attended, 2 struggled to attend every week. 4 families attended regularly. Weekly contact was made to remind adults of the group. The reasons for absence were other foster children having appointments, meeting clashes, sickness, waiting in for workmen, changing care status and moving from a granny to a foster carers, and also an SGO being granted, so social care no longer having PR.

By the end of the program, 67% of the children who took part had over 80% attendance (4/6 children). For 7 weeks, group attendance was 66.6-100%, so overall the majority of the children attended the majority of the time.

All children made some progress across their sensorimotor systems: 100% of children made progress in at least 4 areas. 67% of children made progress in 10-12 areas. Children who attended the group more regularly, made more progress in more areas. Some brief feedback has been sent to the carers and grandparents in the autumn term 2025 about their child to encourage continued practice of the activities.

If we run the project again, ensuring that caring adults know that progress can be correlated with attendance will be crucial next time.

**Louise Kilshaw**

Strategic Attachment Lead Teacher

BUSS Level 1 Practitioner

## 4. Contextual Data

Demographics:

Torbay Cared for Children

Year	Out of Area	Torbay	Total
0	3	5	8

1	4	8	12
2	5	5	10
3	5	11	16
4	6	3	9
5	4	7	11
6	9	7	16
7	8	10	18
8	5	7	12
9	6	13	19
10	7	15	22
11	11	19	30
12		32	32
13	8	19	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>242</b>

Other LA Cared for Children

LA	Year Group					
	2	3	7	8	9	13
Hertfordshire		1			1	
Luton						1
North Somerset					1	
Somerset	1	1	1	2		
Tower Hamlets	1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Attendance and Inclusion:

There were no exclusions of Torbay’s Cared for Children in the last academic year. That said, 47 children were suspended across the academic year from 32 settings. Thirty-five of these children are within the continuous care cohort. This is a marked increase year on year but is sadly in line with the national, regional and local patterns.

Peak periods for suspension are, the beginning of the school year and towards then end of each term.

The most common reasons for suspension are persistent disruption across all phases of education followed by assault on an adult in Primary phase and verbal abuse of and adult in secondary phase. This is consistent with local patterns and often reflects the trauma derived responses our children have towards feeling unsafe or anxious.

School attendance continues to improve at Primary phase but has slipped at secondary.

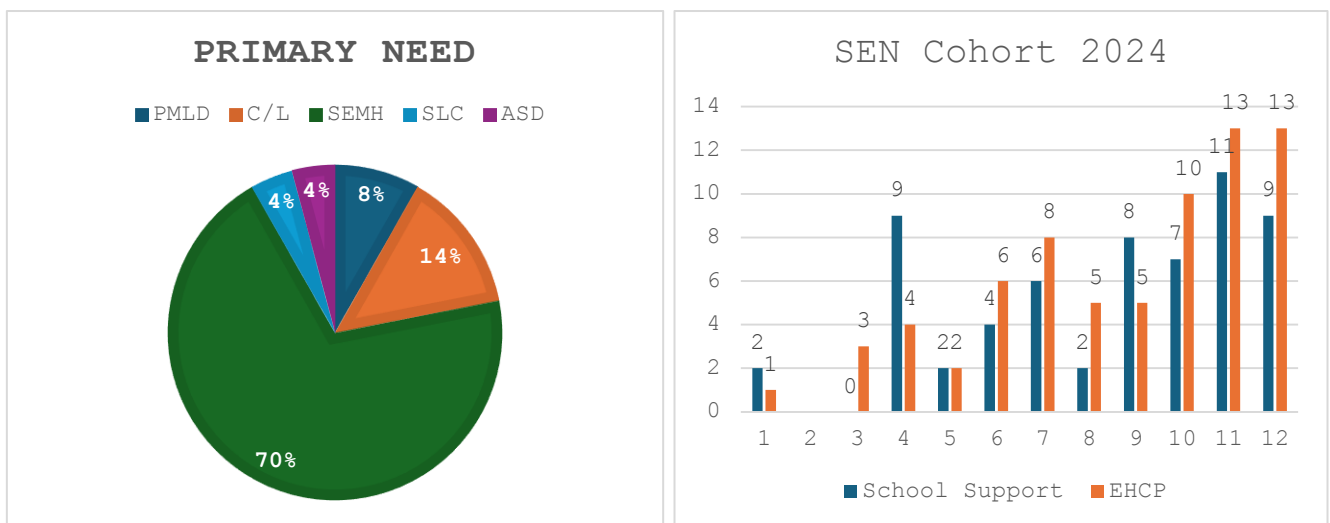
C4C	Primary	Secondary	Overall
Attendance 2024	<b>96.2%</b>	<b>85.42%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>
Attendance 2023	96%	87.5%	92%
Attendance 2022	94%	87%	90.54%
Attendance 2021	93%	82%	85%
Attendance 2020	95.3%	94%	94.8%

Although unsatisfactory, the data compares well to disadvantaged children in Torbay as indicated by free school meals. For these children the attendance level was:

FSM	Primary	Secondary	Overall
Attendance 2024	91.0%	80.3%	84.2%

### 5. Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Cohort:



The SEN cohort is sizeable with the most prevalent primary area of need being Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Most of our children with EHCPs are taught in mainstream settings.

Twelve children are waiting for placement in out of area LAs, none within Torbay. This is a significant challenge as we have limited levers to use to hasten other LA processes. In area, I meet with SEN colleagues each fortnight to resolve any barriers to provision and plan for foreseeable moves.

To allow targeted work by the VS SEN qualified teacher, children with 'stable' EHCP placements are now overseen by the member of staff leading on the relevant age group.

Support Provided:

Outcomes:

### 6. Pupil Premium and Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Description	Total Spend	Over / (Under)
VIRTUAL SCHOOL	£	£
Staffing	£357,338.00	-£5,762.00
Staff Support	£1,184.00	-£14,916.00
Central Services	£4,917.00	£4,917.00

**PUPIL PREMIUM CARED FOR CHILDREN**

Staffing	£85,129.00	-£1,671.00
Staff Support	£22,955.00	£22,955.00
Central Services	£17,214.00	£32,389.00
Direct Spend on Support	£574,781.00	-£53,673.00

**With carry forward and T/F to/from Reserves**

**£0.00**

## 7. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Identified Challenges:

1. Close the gap at Key Stage 2.
2. Focus on English and Maths at Key Stage 4.
3. Ensuring PP+ spend leads to better outcomes for individuals and groups.
4. Reducing the 'step' between Virtual School and other services as children move into and out of being cared for.
5. Recruiting to the Extended Duties posts to re-establish this work.
6. Establish a permanent leadership, governance and staffing structure.
7. Ensuring the wider team delivers elements of the extended duties.
8. Developing consistent reporting of Extended Duties outcomes.

Action Plans:

Action Group	Action	Intervention	Target Date
Academic Progress	The focus on reading must continue with an expectation of, and support for, carers reading regularly with their children.	Training for carers around reading at home. Support for social care staff in maintaining this expectation	
	Virtual school staff will be conducting more direct work with Yr11 children around English and Maths.	Identify the cohort with greatest potential impact and allocate to staff.	
	PEP targets will be more closely focussed on academic outcomes in Reading, Writing, English and Maths.	Monitoring – staff already aware of the focus.	

Trauma Informed and Relational Practice	Support to schools around relational practice	Ongoing through TouchBase, Modelling, Paul Dix, Shekinah and Mayfield Outreach	
Tracking	Better data systems to understand and identify the cohort	Power BI Dashboard data warehouse complete. User interface in development.	
	Develop better tracking of Care Experienced NEET/EET engagement	Liaison with the CE team to better track. New NEET contract to have greater ambition of OOA tracking.	
VSED	Widen the range of staff engaged in delivering the VSED	Remodel the service to have a VSED lead and 4 staff with VSED elements in their role.	
	Develop the offer for Kinship Carers and children with these arrangements.	Ongoing. First stage will be web based. Seeking better management access to SGO records.	

## 8. Conclusion

### Summary:

In summary, the Virtual School is well placed to continue it's improvement journey and the challenges of Virtual School Extended Duties.

Key Stage 4 results were pleasing but we still have work to do to understand why many of the care experienced children and young people in Torbay are NEET.

Reading remains a focus.

### Acknowledgements:

I would like to acknowledge the support and challenge offered by the team as I have settled into this post. Their unfailing patience has been of great assistance and ensured that I have developed my understanding rapidly.

The steady presence of Tracey Powell as Service Manager has been pivotal in assuring continuity and consistency.

None of the work we do would be possible without the professionalism and dedication shown by the designated teachers. Day to day they intervene quickly and



effectively for our children. They are a valuable resource for their schools and the community whose contribution cannot be overstated.

Finally, our colleagues in social care provide the placements and support that allow the children to access education. I would like to formally recognise this and express the team's thanks.