

**Annual report
Medway Virtual School academic year 2017-2018
Publication date: January 2019**

Purpose of report

This report provides details of the educational outcomes for children and young people who are in the care of Medway Local Authority for the academic year 2017 - 18. This includes those who are educated outside of Medway.

Confidentiality

Where children or young people could be identified from the data this will be suppressed in any public reporting. The data and information within this report is for use by the Medway Corporate Parenting Board and Medway Virtual School

Limitations

Data is provisional until it has been published as part of a statistical release. This is because there may be appeals or 're-marking' against some results. National outcomes for the local authority and national picture is usually released in the March following the point of assessment (usually summer term). The information for the performance of children and young people who are looked-after is released much later than the overall performance of pupils as at a national, local and school level.

In Medway, some cohorts of pupils within a year group are small, particularly for younger pupils. Where a data set is less than 11 pupils this may be suppressed as it is not statistically significant and could also enable a pupil to be identified. As a result it may be that this data will not be publicly available. It must also be recognised that when cohorts are small, the differences between cohorts year on year will make some comparisons of data unreliable. That said, it is important to recognise that we must become much more effective in ensuring that children and young people make at least good progress in their learning and their readiness for learning whilst in the care of Medway Council.

Context of Medway Virtual School (2017-18)

Not all children and young people were or remained in care to Medway Council for the entire academic year. The role of the virtual school headteacher (VSH) is outlined in the updated DfE guidance: "Promoting the education of Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local authorities" February 2018
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>)

A key element also draws on the Key Corporate Parenting principles outlined in The Children and Social Work Act 2017:

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>)

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

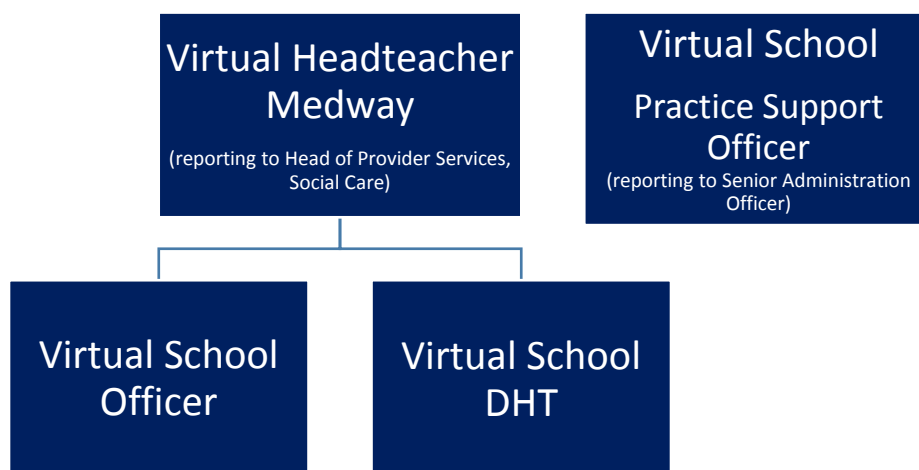
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- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

This was a challenging year for the school in terms of staffing and capacity. Due to the retirement of the VSH and the in-year resignation of the Virtual School Officer, capacity in Medway was significantly reduced. This resulted in drift and delay in the undertaking of the duties of the VSH and, in particular, the allocation of pupil premium funding.

The Corporate Parenting Board and the wider council recognised this and acted to expand the capacity of Medway Virtual School so that these children and young people, alongside the Corporate Parenting board, would be served more effectively. By the Easter of 2018 a new structure had been agreed and had been designed to incorporate the new responsibilities. It was also agreed to utilise the additional funding available to support the delivery of the new responsibilities.

The new structure is detailed below; the posts of deputy headteacher and practice support officer have been developed to add much needed capacity and to ensure that, going forward, there is succession planning and development built into the service so that at any time of transition the service for children and young people is maintained.



The location and management of Medway Virtual School within the Social Care directorate has meant that relationships with social workers, foster carers and other agencies have begun to develop much more quickly. It is likely that the full impact of this will be seen beyond the academic year 2018 -19 as the school becomes fully staffed and the training for schools, social workers and foster carers becomes more readily available.

Social workers have presented at designated teacher briefings to raise awareness of different roles, such as supported accommodation. Links with other services, such as the inclusion team, have continued to be well maintained. There is a weekly school support group (SSG) which is chaired by the Inclusion Manager to which pupils who are at risk of exclusion are identified by schools and discussed across a range of professional services. If ever a child that is looked after is raised for discussion the virtual headteacher will review the submission and prepare some suggestions and prompts for possible next steps; if the pupil is looked after by another local authority then contact is also made to the virtual school to discuss whether there is any other action that could be taken to further support the pupil.

Example:

Pupils (siblings) special guardianship order to another local authority. Supported school in contacting the local authority, discussed strategies used and how these could be further developed engaging the carers and resources provided to the school to further their understanding of attachment and trauma.

Medway Virtual School - Cohort 2017-18

- School profile / general pupil characteristics
- Including SEND
- *Moving forward this will include how many are educated in other local authorities, any that are identified as children missing education (CME) or not in employment or education (NEET) and will be available in future updates.*

Pupil profile and distribution (snapshot June 2018)

MVS June 2018	Below N1	N1	N2	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	count
All looked after children		age 2-3	age 3-4	age 4-5	age 5-6	age 6-7	age 7-8	age 8-9	age 9-10	age 10-11	age 11-12	age 12-13	age 13-14	age 14-15	age 15-16	age 16-17	age 17-18	
cohort	59	4	x	x	16	13	18	16	28	20	33	33	29	28	41	31	33*	423

PEPs

A weekly digest is sent to area managers regarding the status of a PEP as to whether it has been completed. These documents are not currently a strength of the service and as such further work is currently being undertaken as to how to improve this, such as through the use of an on-line document. The implementation of this is unlikely to be before April 2019. Targets for pupils are not sufficiently specific to promote effective tracking of progress. Greater emphasis needs to be given to the closing the gap rather than the provision of resources which could, arguably, be something that any parent would aim to provide. For example, the provision of a laptop because there has been a significant shift in the last few years on each child / young person in a home having ready access to a device for completion and submission of homework via an online classroom. Whilst most schools make provision for access through an lunch or afterschool club this can then mean that a pupil or student is not then able to engage in other activities which promote physical development, other interests and social skills.

Attendance, absence and exclusions (using data from Looked after Call)

2017 – 2018 (n° students)	Sept - Dec	Jan - March	April – July	
Excluded students	18	16	19	35 students across the year
Unauthorised absences	24	41	32	66 students across the year
Authorised absence	153	148	131	

Attendance (n° students)	Sept - Dec	Jan-March	April-July	2017 – 2018
Below 85%	15	15	15	15
85% – 90%	14	14	14	14
90%-95%	36	36	36	36
95%	213	213	213	213

The data is sourced through the contract with Looked After Call. There has been some delay in ensuring that the information is fully up to date across the year due to vacant posts. The data also includes the attendance of pupils who joined the Virtual School mid-year. This means that for some pupils the positive impact of this move has not been fully reflected in the whole cohort data.

Example:

Y6 pupil became looked after on 8th March 2018. Attendance across Autumn 2017-18 88.9%, across Spring term 71.7% and across the summer term 97.5%

Too many children were not attending regularly and further analysis will need to be undertaken to consider absence patterns, for example, in relationship to year group, setting, distance from placement. This analysis will be undertaken as the start of the spring term once the deputy headteacher is in post. In the interim, social workers have been reminded of the need to consider education when considering any change of placements and liaise directly with the virtual school. A similar exercise will be undertaken regarding fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions so that best practice may be identified and shared so that these are reduced. The data does not reflect those students who are opting not to attend school due to factors, such as lack of emotional and mental health wellbeing.

There was a rise in absence in the spring term; there were a number of snow days at the end of February contributed to this meaning that although a school may have been open, some pupils were unable to travel to the school. This was up to 4 days for some areas across Medway which is 8 sessions. The higher proportion of exclusions at the start of the academic year were noted and further consideration must be given to transition arrangements across academic years and key stages. *For the summer 2018 the virtual school is working closely with the inclusion team and youth service to support activities across the holidays and either end of the school year to support students and staff with this transition. There were 2 x 1 week projects to which Y6 pupils were invited and encouraged to attend as part of a team and self-confidence building opportunities.*

Legacy issues have also impacted on attendance. Examples included carers moving house, social workers not fully equipped to challenge any ‘unofficial’ exclusions.

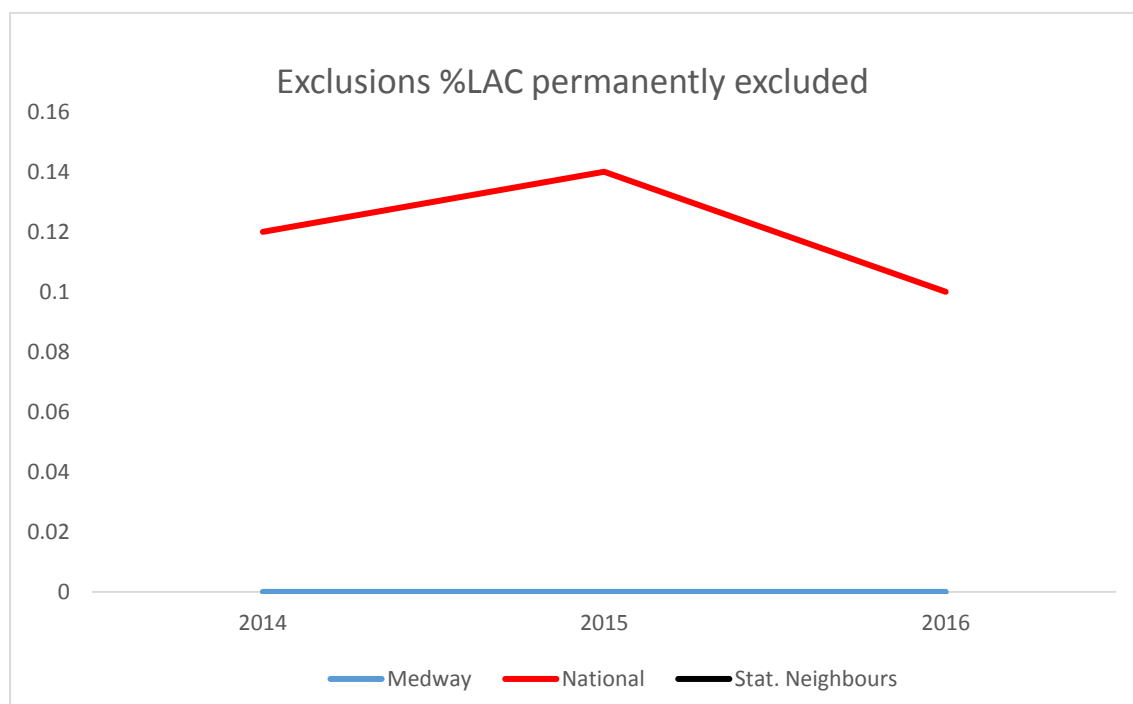
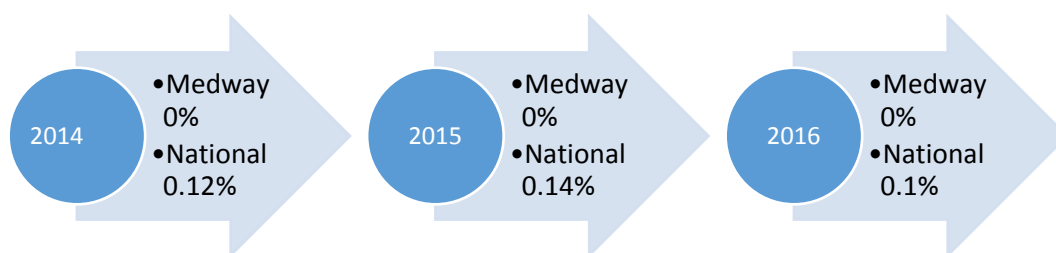
Example:

Following the request for a child to be taken home there was a professionals meeting with the school to ascertain what had happened; subsequently the school has strengthened internal practice to ensure that all the leaders were fully aware of legal requirements when acting in the absence of the headteacher

Children have been placed without sufficient consideration to any impact on the educational placement (current or planned). Where individual cases are presented to the access to resources panel (ARP) the virtual school is now providing a commentary against individual requests where information is known. Where there is no information it is evident to the panel that other questions would need to be asked to ensure that the provision requested also meets the educational needs of the child or young person.

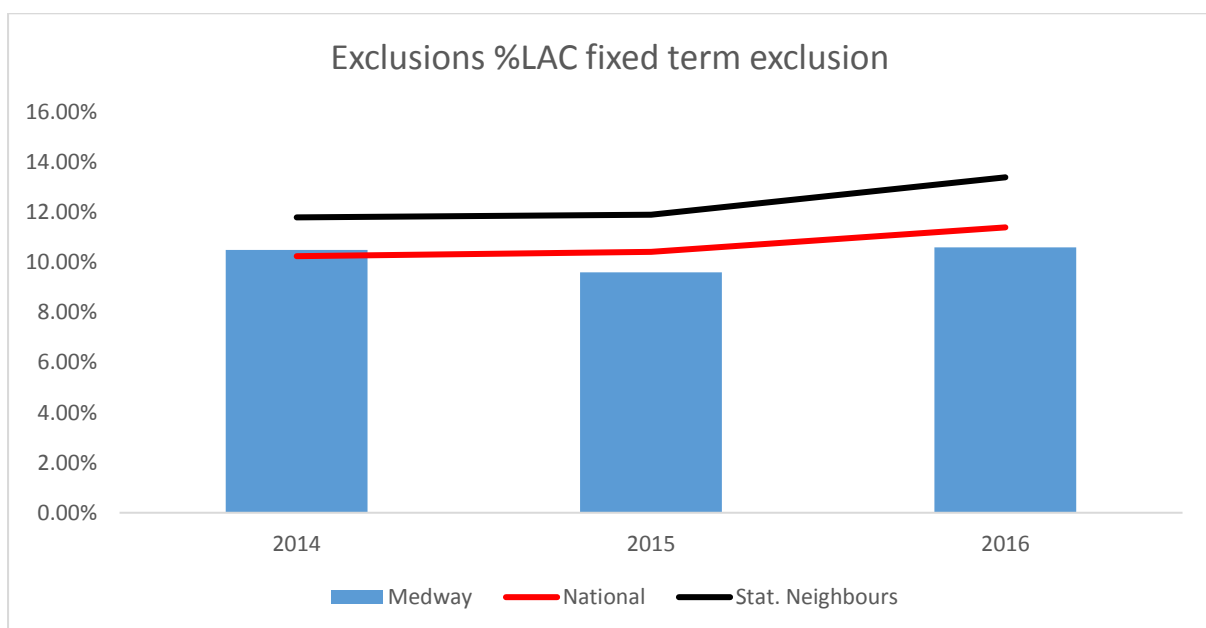
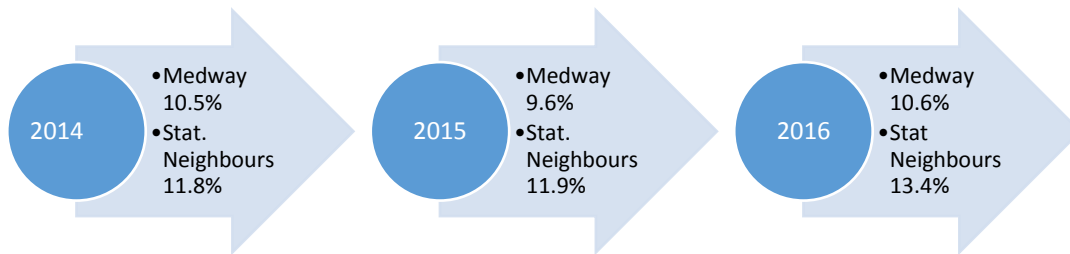
Historical data (using published information)

Exclusions-%LAC Permanently Excluded



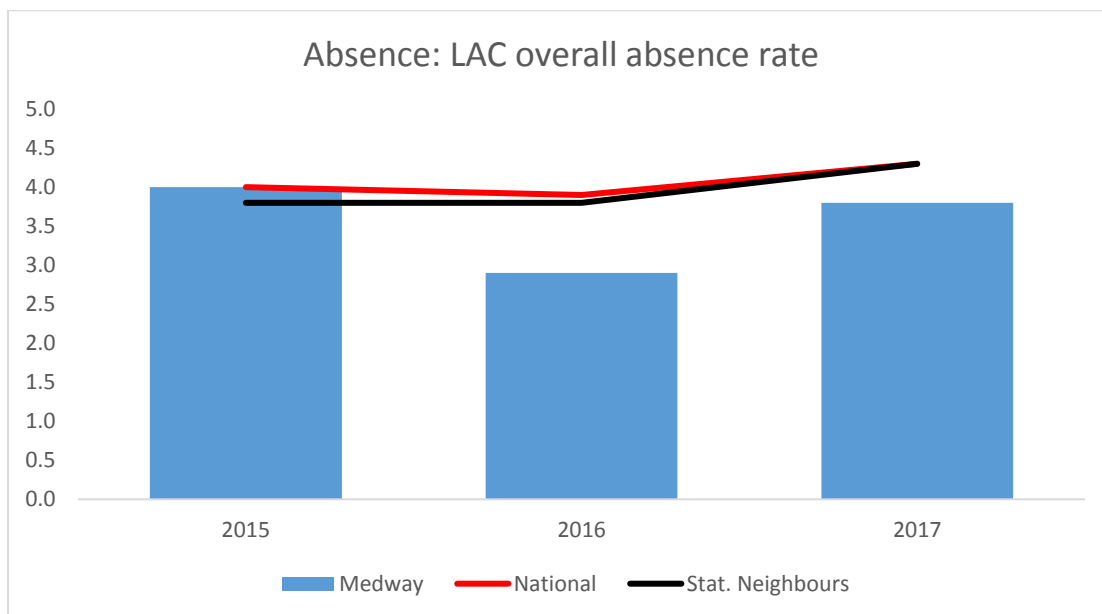
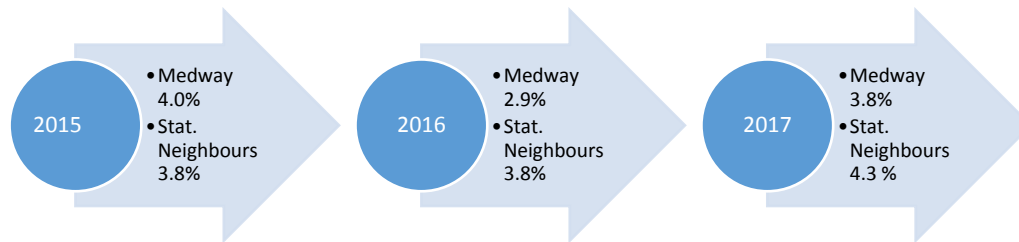
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Exclusions-%LAC with at least 1 Fixed Term Exclusion



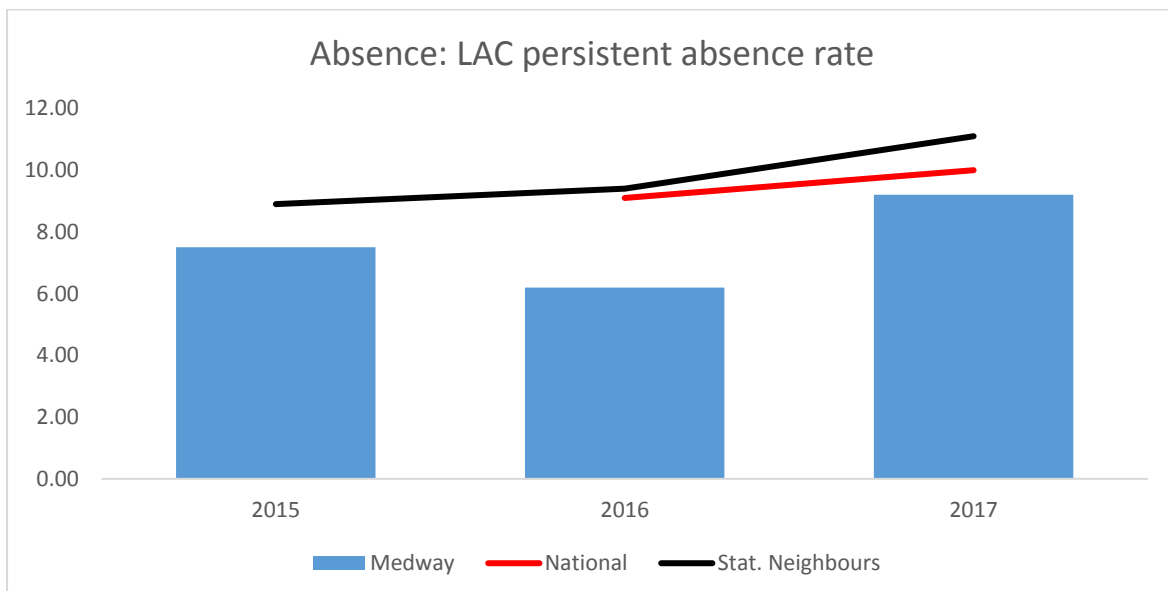
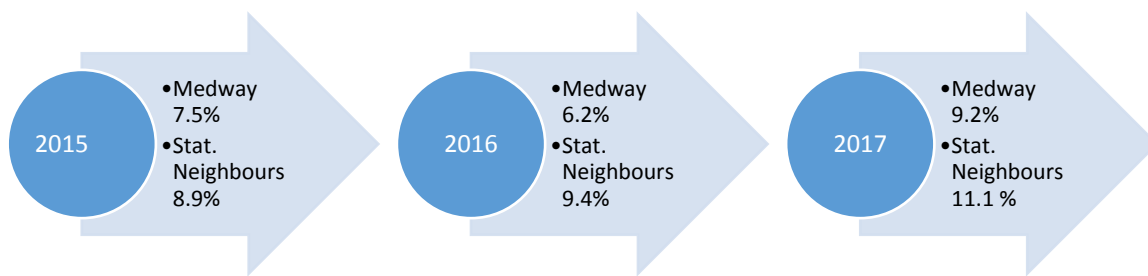
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Absence- LAC Overall Absence rate



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Absence- LAC Persistent Absence rate



Admissions

The virtual school works very closely with Medway admission team to ensure that pupils are placed in the best provision to meet their needs. There has been no cause to direct a school to admit a pupil in this academic year.

Example

The strength of this partnership working was the admission to Y11 of a student that had previously been out of education prior to coming into care, Easter 2018. Focussed discussions ensured that there was a clear provision for this student, maximising her time at this school and in preparing her for her next steps. This included the development of some work experience at a local nursery to further develop her confidence and her skill in managing a sustained commitment.

Academic Year 2017-18 Achievement (data) Progress

Whilst rates of in year progress do increase slightly across KS3, overall far too few children and young people who are looked-after are making good progress. This means that the gap between their educational attainment and their peers continues to decline and therefore widen as this decline is more rapid when compared to the previous national picture. This has a significant impact on their future life chances and the options open to them.

Below is a cross section of data from this academic year, focussing on pupil progress.

Progress across KS1 2017-18	Below		Expected		Above	
Subject	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	83%	63%	8%	31%	8%	6%
Mathematics	71%	69%	21%	25%	7%	6%
Reading	67%	56%	27%	38%	7%	6%
Writing	73%	69%	20%	25%	7%	6%

Progress across KS2 2017-18	Below		Expected		Above	
Subject	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	59%	50%	32%	46%	5%	4%
Mathematics	54%	46%	41%	46%	5%	7%
Reading	59%	55%	36%	34%	5%	10%
Writing	59%	50%	38%	46%	3%	0%

Progress across KS3 2017-18	Below		Expected		Above	
Subject	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp
Employability	0%	-	100%		0%	-
English	60%	52%	35%	31%	5%	17%
Mathematics	52%	61%	38%	28%	11%	11%
Science	55%	51%	38%	38%	8%	11%

Progress across KS4 2017-18	Below		Expected		Above	
Subject	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp	Aut	Sp
English	67%	0%	0%	100%	33%	0%
Mathematics	67%	0%	33%	100%	0%	0%
Science	67%	100%	33%	0%	0%	0%

The quality, consistency and accuracy of the information has not been formally moderated and given the multitude of internal assessment systems in schools it can

only be a headline interpretation. That said, Medway schools participate in regular moderation and consensus activities which supports and secures robust teacher assessments of pupils and their progress. It is reasonable to interpret this information as indicating that children are not making good progress therefore the gap between their attainment and that of their peers will not close.

In order for our children and young people who are looked-after to succeed we must ensure that they make good or better progress in their learning across all subjects and year groups. This not only requires good or better teaching, this must be supported by improvements in all aspects surrounding the individual.

These will be delivered through the development and implementation of an improvement plan. This is currently being written following the securement of the substantive post of virtual school officer and the proposed expansion of the resource within the virtual school to include a deputy head and a practice support officer. The priority outcome is to improve the education outcome of every pupil in the school. The headline themes to secure this are outlined below:

- improved practice for all staff in school in engaging and sustaining pupils who have experienced trauma, developing attachment awareness and strategies to support pupils
- effective use of pupil premium plus funding to close the gap in educational achievement, making use of research findings (EEF, Sutton Trust)
- full consideration for education and learning needs when considering placement
- improved attendance and engagement by pupils and those supporting pupils
- effective transition in year, across years and across schools
- developing effective practice with partnership organisations to support learning and re-engage individuals who are not attending

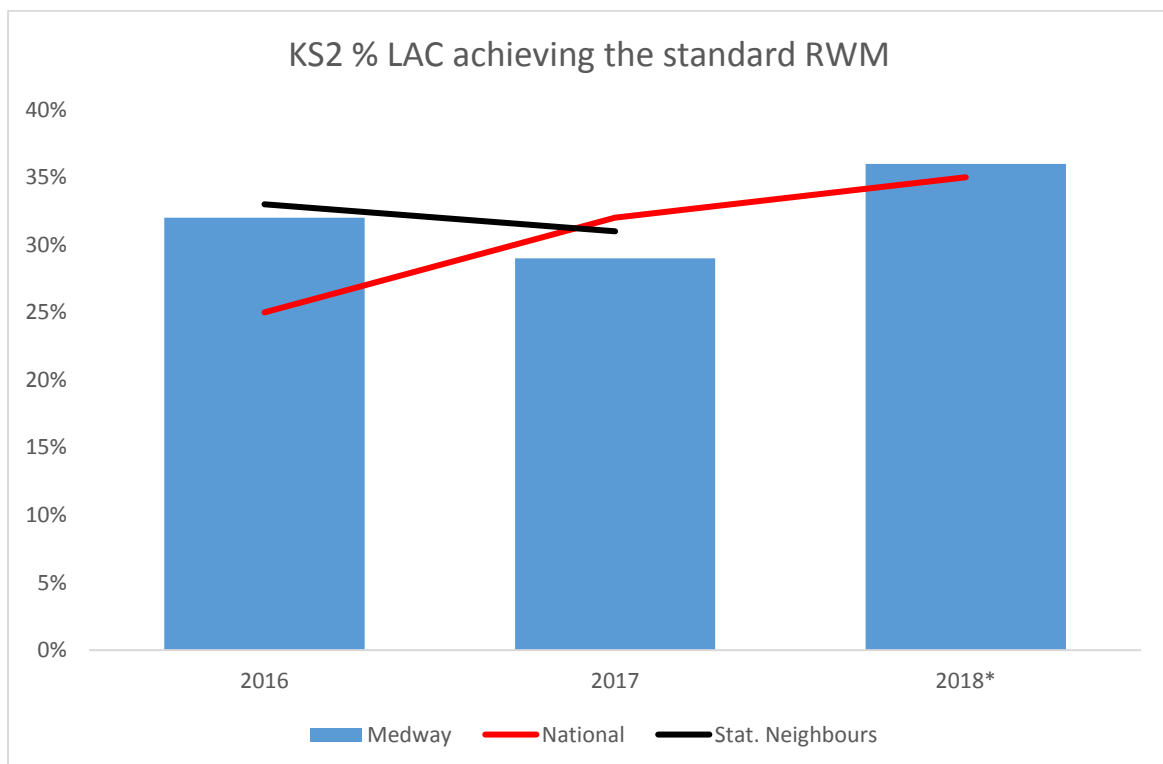
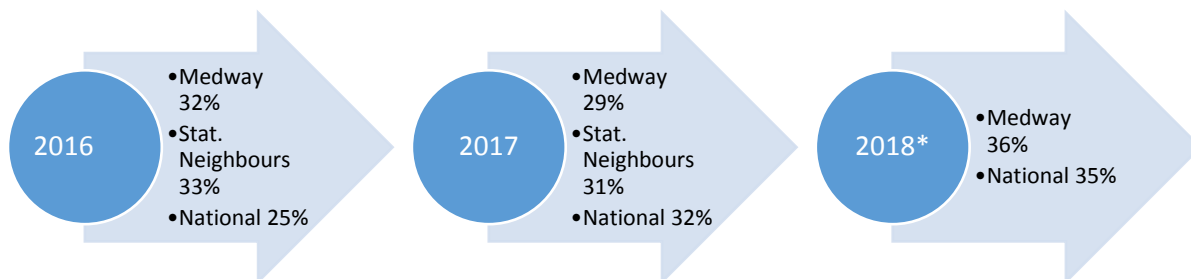
Attainment provisional 2017-18

The counting cohort (cc) is defined as a 'looked after child' is a child who has been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2018. This definition is used by the DfE because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible association of being looked after on educational attainment. However, note that a child may not have been in the care of a local authority for the whole of a key stage period.

The data below is provisional and some may not be published due to cohort size. Published data will be drawn from the statistical first release scheduled for March 2019. Further detail may be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

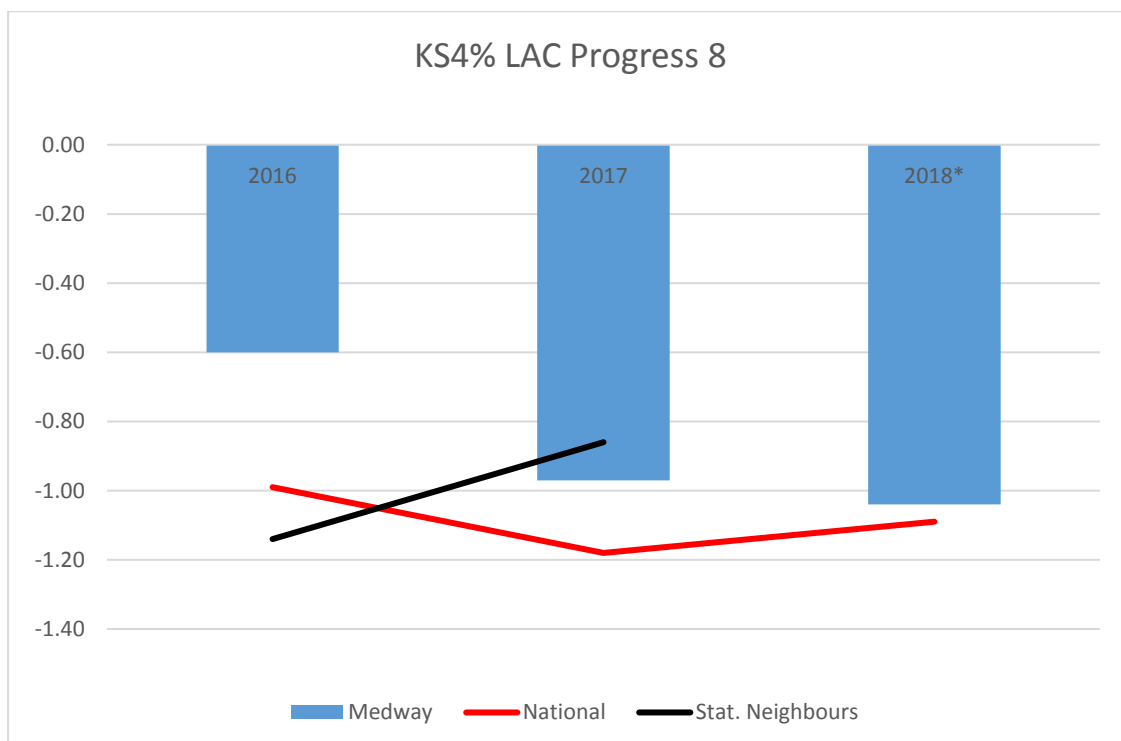
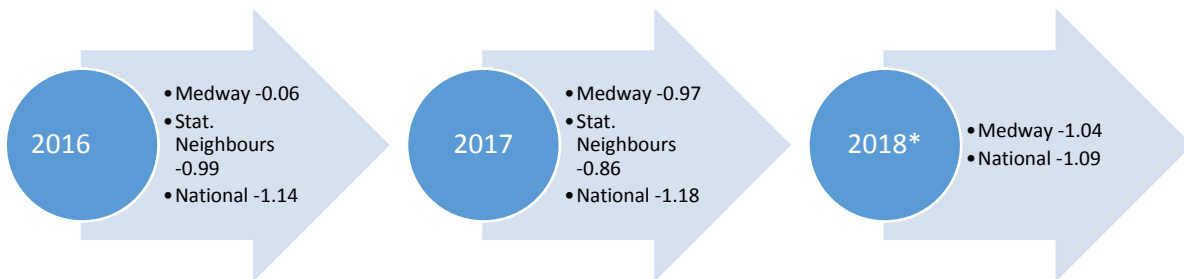
Note: 2018* provisional data drawn from NCER December 2018

KS2 % LAC achieving the standard in RWM



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KS4 LAC Progress 8



Recommendations

To consider the content of the report and the implications for the work of the Virtual School and Medway Corporate Parenting Board so that:

- pupils and students in Medway Virtual School make better progress than previously recorded and the gap between them and their peers ceases to widen and begins to close
- the voice of the pupils and students in the virtual school are heard and accounted for
- the work of the Medway Virtual School more effectively supports the Medway Corporate Parenting board through the timely provision of data and information
- the impact of the additional staffing is evaluated against educational outcomes for children and young people.

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