



Harrow Virtual School Newsletter

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Harrow Virtual School

Summer 2020

Letter from the Virtual School Headteacher

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to our Summer Term newsletter.

Following the Government's advice and recommendations to close schools except for vulnerable children from the end of the day Friday 20th March, I emailed all schools asking for contingency plans with regards to supporting our CLA. Schools had already begun to inform us if our CLA would be attending school or if carers were keeping them at home during this time.

With the additional announcement that all exams have now been cancelled, HVS have advised pupils in exam classes to engage in the resources provided to them by their schools. We will continue to work with Designated Teachers via the PEP process, albeit remotely, to ensure all educational progress is reflected. If not already arranged, please contact child's VS lead and their social worker to arrange this term's PEP meeting.

Our Virtual School [website](#) now has supplementary links to free learning resources, for additional support and encouragement, targeted at pupils, carers, social workers and teachers. We also have a dedicated learning platform to support and supplement student's learning. See [page 3](#) for further details. If you have any further suggestions for our website, please contact Anu Jain on virtu-alschool@harrow.org.uk.

Some good news! In partnership with AC Education we have extended our range of online training. Please see the latest list on [page 2](#) and get in touch with us to sign up.

And finally, the release of our Ofsted Report coincided with and was, sadly, overshadowed by the COVID-19 lockdown news. However, I wanted to thank you for working with us and with our social care, health and education partners in securing a strong good. Links to the report are on [page 2](#).

Warm regards and stay safe.

Mellina Williamson-Taylor
Headteacher Harrow Virtual School



“Highly ambitious and resolute professionals work extremely well together to help children in care and care leavers to remain safer and achieve well in life.”

Harrow Inspection of Children’s Social Care Services

Harrow Children’s Services received the expected call from Ofsted and were inspected from 10 to 14 February 2020. The overall judgements were good in all areas.

The report is available on the [Ofsted website](#).

Sections 21 and 22 are where the VS feedback features. In summary:

- Education, training and employment outcomes for children in care and care leavers are good, and children achieve well across all key stages.

- Schools are complimentary about the support offered by the virtual school team (VST). They believe the team to be approachable and efficient.

- School leaders say that, often, the VST staff will go ‘over and above’ to support the pupils.

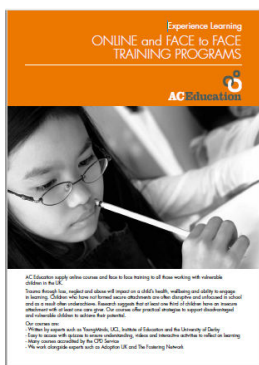
- Electronic personal education plans are detailed, focus on the key areas, and include pupil targets and the pupils’ perspectives.

- A range of extra-curricular activities are available to support and enrich the lives of

children in care.

- The virtual school carefully tracks the progress of all pupils and is quick to intercede should a child’s attendance start to reduce.

We would like to thank all our schools for it is this positive partnership with schools that allows us to work in the best interests of the education of all our CLA.



Click on above image for direct link to learning programmes

Support for School Staff Mental Well-Being and Online Training

AC Education have compiled short videos of their face to face trainers sharing their thoughts on coping with COVID-19. These videos are free to access on their YouTube site.

All of the other free resources can be found by accessing their YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCc_5iBjps4p0Jtspgzllw/ [videos](#)

AC Education will be adding to this compilation regularly and would like to know if there is a topic you would like them to cover or if there are questions you are being asked that you feel would be beneficial for other videos. Do get in touch with the VS and we will pass that message on.

HVS are continuing to offer AC Education’s Online Training modules free to schools. For the latest available courses, click on the picture to the

left of this article to direct you to the courses running this term. HVS are hoping to fund at least 2 modules per school. Simply email Michelle Tyson at virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk.

There is still time to sign up for these.



Department for Education

Click on above images for direct link to websites

Exams 2020

Following the latest update by the Government that GCSE and A Level students will be awarded grades this Summer based on a combination of teacher predictions and other calculations made by Ofqual, teachers will take into account the progress made by students since their mock exams up until school closures were enforced.

HVS is confident that our network of DTs, as advocates of our CLA, will work with us

to arrive at the best possible outcomes.

As for vocational and technical qualifications this summer, Ofqual has announced that calculated results for these will be used for progression to higher and further education.

Arrangements for other qualifications such as BTEC Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and UAL Diplomas, for example, will be announced after Easter. Here again, HVS will

be working with DTs to support this process.

Keep up to date with DfE guidance and Ofqual announcements via their websites.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Virtual School Leads:
[Sarah Moriarty](#) Years 6 and 11
[Kat Robinson](#) Years 12 and 13

Support for Pupils during COVID-19

In order to ensure that every CLA is given the opportunity to continue to engage in learning, HVS has funded a set of digital cross-curriculum learning licences through our partnership with Nimbl and Anspear Learning.

Children from Foundation to Key Stage 4 can get access to the appropriate curriculum and life skills resources within hours, helping to minimise any interruptions to their

schooling. The system allows offline access via mobile phones and tablets plus online access via the web, with each learner's devices synchronising to ensure that all efforts are recorded and credit given. Tracking takes place in the background and we will receive regular reports to monitor engagement, achievement and progress for all early years and key stages in nursery, primary and secondary sectors.

Children will have access to key curriculum areas including PSHE and GCSE revision guides for English, Maths and Science.

Carers and parents have been contacted regarding this.

For further information contact Anu Jain at virtu-alschool@harrow.gov.uk



Mobile learning for primary



Mobile learning for secondary

“Interactive resources tracking progress, performance and engagement of children in care away from school.”



Support for Pupils and Carers during COVID-19

Sara Dawson, HVS's Clinical Psychologist has been calling to check in with carers who have been identified as needing extra support during this time. She has also been working on creating resources related to emotion regulation that can be provided to families. She has also written a letter for our network of carers to share some thoughts about supporting

their child's mental health through this time:

- Safety first
- Look after yourself
- A little compassion and - validation go a long way
- Encourage the healthy expression of emotions
- Routine and boundaries are still important, but so is play

- Where appropriate, involve children in decisions and problem solving

- You're not alone

Through pre-arranged appointments, Sara has been available to chat through any particular difficulties by phone or video.

“The current changes and stress can re-awaken past trauma for our young people and lead to significant setbacks in their recovery. However, there is a lot we can do to help get them back on track.”

An Update from Dr Brian Murray, Lead Therapist Harrow CAMHS

CAMHS are continuing to provide MH services and are still accepting mental health referrals. For routine work they are trying to do things remotely (phone calls or zoom sessions) with young people where possible. They are also letting young people and families know they might have to pause or space out regular appointments if the

service has to support urgent work.

In some urgent or high risk circumstances, they are seeing young people face to face at the clinic with full PPE. In these cases they will ask the young person to wash their hands, and see in a large room.

time during business hours to gain advice or support. It is still recommended that young people present to A&E if they are in crisis (e.g. suicide risk) but as previously, this is only when the risk is very high (e.g. the YP is actively suicidal or has attempted).

“So CAMHS is limiting face to face support but otherwise running as usual.”

“Duty person is still available during office hours and A&E if still needed outside of this if worried.”



Civic Centre
Station Road
Harrow

Office Telephone Line
temporarily closed due to
COVID-19

virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk

**We are now on the
web:
[www.harrow.gov.uk/
virtualschool](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/virtualschool)**

***Acronyms used in this edition:**

HVS: Harrow Virtual
School
VHT: Virtual Headteacher
VS: Virtual School
CLA: Children Looked
After
DT: Designated Teacher
CP: Clinical Psychologist
MH: Mental Health
YP: Young Person



Achieving Excellence Together

Meet The Team

Headteacher: Mellina Williamson-Taylor E: Mellina.Williamson-Taylor@harrow.gov.uk

Assistant Headteacher: Sarah Moriarty E: Sarah.Moriarty@harrow.gov.uk

Senior Education Officer: Joanne Tortipidis E: joanne.Tortipidis@harrow.gov.uk

Education Support Officer: Michelle Tyson E: Michelle.Tyson@harrow.gov.uk

Advisory Teacher: Kat Robinson E: Kathryn.Robinson@harrow.gov.uk

Clinical Psychologist: Sara Dawson E: Sara.Dawson@harrow.gov.uk

Teaching and Learning Consultant: Anu Jain E: Anupameya.Jain@harrow.gov.uk

The Impact of School Closures on Care Experienced Children

Home Learning during COVID-19 lockdown was always going to be a concern for adoptive families where previous research has shown that children who have experience of living in care, including adopted children, face particular challenges in education.

Adoption UK conducted a week-long survey in April 2020 for parents and carers of care-experienced children

who would normally be in school to find out about the impact of school closures on care experience children. They received 674 responses from which a report was compiled in order to look at the challenges of supporting vulnerable children's learning during this time. It also makes recommendations for the next few months. You can access this report [here](#).

Enrichment

Jamie's Farm February 2020

HVS continues its partnership with Jamie's Farm as we want our young people to develop their resilience, confidence, team working and independent life skills as well as learn about the environment, caring for animals and growing crops.

Activities include farming, cooking, and gardening, log chopping, working with horses, playing games, daily walks and exploring the country side. The group prepare and eat healthy nutritious food which is all homemade and where possible home-grown. The day starts with a cooked breakfast, a hearty lunch, a tea time snack followed by a hot dinner.

Reports are shared from staff at Jamie's Farm following the residential trip outlining the qualities of each young person in addition to observations and recommendations for the schools, carers and other significant people and services to support these students. These reports are detailed and helpful in identifying further interventions such as equine-assisted therapy that was later offered to some of the young people during the summer holidays last year..

This year, Joanne Tortipidis and Kat Robinson from HVS accompanied six Harrow CLA, along with students from Barnet Virtual School, to attend a residential trip to Jamie's Farm in Monmouth, Wales during February half-term. Sadly, the group had to return a day early due to the flooding and weather warnings at that time. All the students were really sad to have lost out on the final day as they had been having such a great time.

