

# The Education of Looked After Children

## London Borough of Croydon

Report on achievements for academic year 2005/6

January 2007

## **Summary**

This report summarises the educational statistics from the OC2 return completed in the autumn of 2006. All figures were completed on children who had been looked after for at least one year previous to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006 and who were looked after by Croydon ( many of these are educated in other authorities). The purpose of this report is to:-

- Provide explanation and context to issues surrounding the educational attainment of looked after children in Croydon.
- Provided comparisons with other data
- Look at developing trends and strategies for working more effectively.

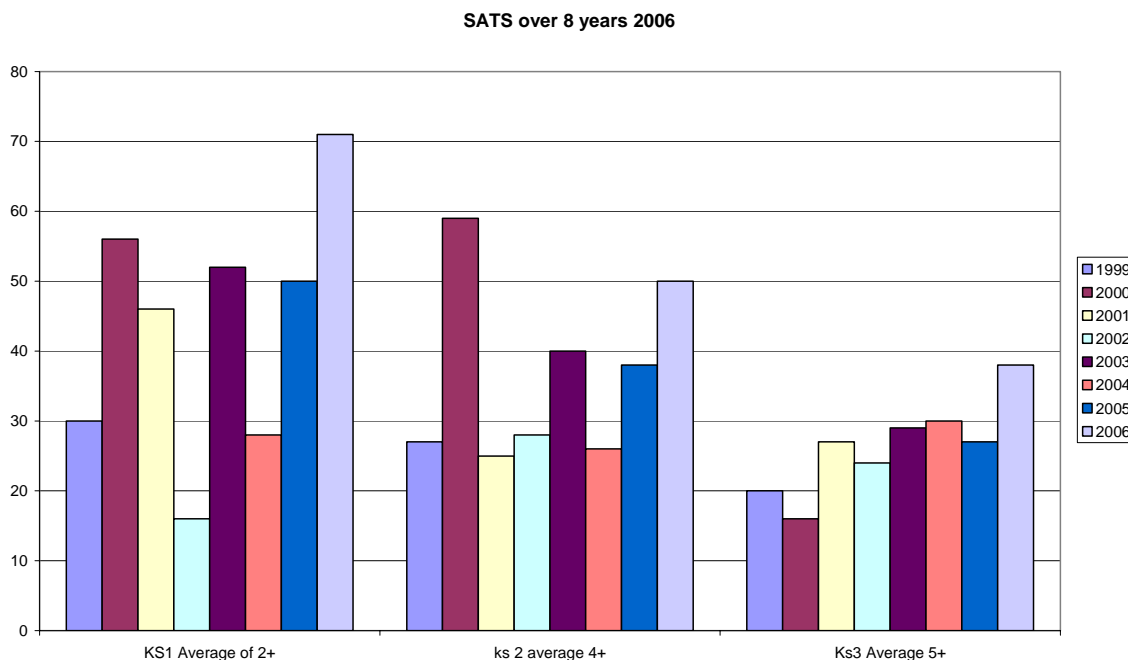
The statistics presented here need to be interpreted with caution, as SATs and GCSE results are only one way of looking at children's achievement and progress. Children who are looked after sometimes have so many other issues in their lives that they are not able to demonstrate achievement in terms of national examinations, but nevertheless make good progress in relation to their circumstances.

There were 368 children of school age that had been looked after for at least a year (as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006) an increase of 33 children. 160 were placed out of Croydon though some of these were placed in nearby authorities. 208 were placed in Croydon. Numbers increase in each school year group, with 14 children in year 2 and 129 children in year 11. Numbers go up considerably in years 10 and 11 due to the admission of unaccompanied minors and significant numbers of year 11 children had been in the care system for less than 2 years. In most cases this was the date that they entered the country and in many cases shows exceptional educational achievement and determination to succeed. 66% of the year 11 group were unaccompanied asylum seekers.

## **Key stage 1, 2 and 3 performance**

Reliable data is available from the last five years. The following chart shows children achieving average or above results at each key Stage. Key stage 1 SATs are taken at the end of year 2 at Infant school. Key stage 2 SATs are taken at the end of Junior school in year 6, and key stage 3 SATs are taken at the end of year 9 in secondary school. The main measure of performance in key stage 4 is G.C.S.E taken at the end of year 11. Achievement for looked after children remains low compared to the general population, but it needs to be remembered that this group contains large numbers of children with significant issues in their lives that make progress in education very difficult. Local authority figures for the

general population are collected on a different basis that makes comparison difficult.



## Key Stage 1

Number of children in group	14
Number stated	2
Number achieving an average of 2+	10 (71.4%)
Percentage nationally achieving 2+	(86%)
LAC nationally achieving 2+	(58%)
Male	7 (50%)
White British	6 (42.8%)
White /Caribbean	2 (14.29%)
Any other mixed Background	4 (28.57%)
Caribbean	2 (14.29%)

## Comment

Due to the very small cohort of children at this age the number of children achieving level 2 or more swings widely from year to year, and depends on the cohort of children in this group. The results look very pleasing this year with 71.4% of children achieving an average of at least level 2 across all subject areas. This is approaching the national average for the general population.

There are two children statemented in this group. One has severe learning needs and is disapplied from the National Curriculum. As the numbers in different ethnic groups is very small, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the comparative performance of different groups.

## Key Stage 2

Number of children in group	16
Number statemented	1
Number achieving an average of 4+	8 (50%)
Percentage nationally achieving 4+	80%
Percentage LAC nationally ach. 4+	44%
Male	12 (75%)
White British	10
Caribbean	2
White and black Caribbean	2
African	1
Any other Asian background	1
Asylum seeking children	2

## Comment

This group has been monitored intensively by the Primary Secondary Transition Specialist within the LACE team. The results achieved are higher than last year. This is largely due to the level of statementing- there was only 1 child with a statement of educational need in this group compared to 4 last year. There are some schools with high numbers of looked after children, and the LACE team exploring ways of concentrating support in these establishments.

## Ethnicity

Numbers are too small to provide meaningful analysis, but it can be noted that both asylum seeking children in this group obtained level 4+. Of the 10 children from white British background 50% achieved level 4+ as opposed to 33.3% from other backgrounds.

### Key Stage 3

Number of children in group	38
Number stated	6
Number achieving an average of 5+	15(38%)
Percentage nationally achieving 5+	73%
Percentage of LAC nationally 5+	27%
Male	63%
White British	14
White and black Caribbean	3
African	11
Any other black background	3
Any other white background	4
Caribbean	3
Asylum seeking children	18 (46%)

### Comment

There has been good progress made with achievement at this key stage over the last five year, and the percentage achieving an average of 5 across their SATs has improved this year and is significantly above the achievement for looked after children nationally. A number of these young people have had considerable input from the LACE team, and all of these children have been tracked.

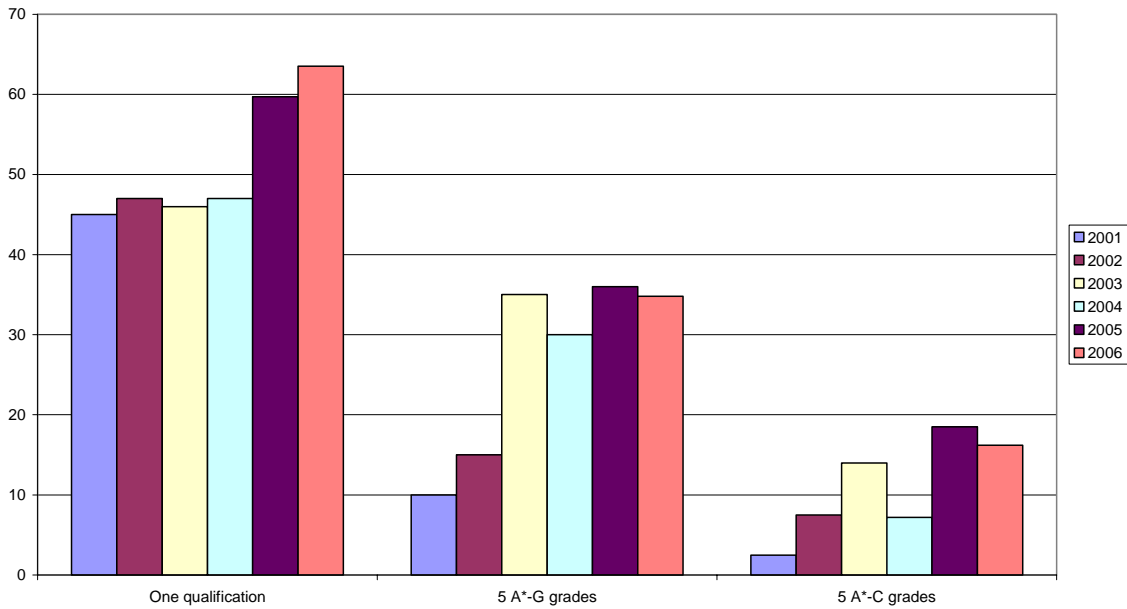
### Ethnicity

From the ethnic data it would seem that some unaccompanied minors are coming into the country at an earlier age than in previous years. It was noted in last year's report that African asylum seeking children were achieving well and this is born out with this years results. 45% of the African asylum seeking group achieved average levels of 5+ (as compared to 28% for other asylum seeking groups, and 40% for indigenous children). Many of the African children have good understanding of English and have had a good education in their country of origin, whereas other asylum seeking groups often come with poor English language skills. The indigenous children often have a range of complex needs that make progress in education difficult.

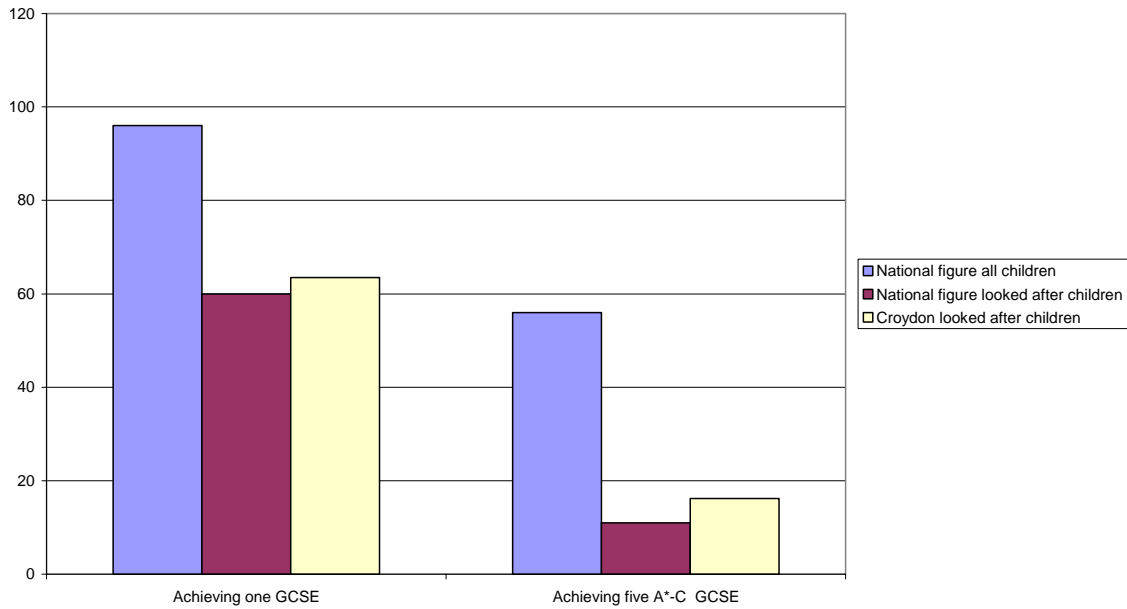
### G.C.S.E Results

The following table gives results at G.C.S.E for the last 6 years. There has been significant progress with exam results over the last six years.

**GCSE results over 6 years 2006**



**National comparisons GCSE 2006**



Number of children in year 11 ( 2004/5)	129
Number stated	13 (10%)
Percentage nationally achieving one G.C.S.E (all children)	96%
Percentage nationally achieving five A*-C G.C.E.(all children)	56%
Percentage national LAC achieving one GCSE	60%

Percentage National LAC achieving five A*-C GCSE	11%
Croydon LAC achieving one GCSE	63%%
Croydon LAC achieving five GCSE A*-C	16.2%
Total number of unaccompanied asylum seekers	86(66%)

There are significantly more year 11 children than last year with 129 children as opposed to 95 last year. The results this year were pleasing particularly in view of the increased number of statemented children in this years year 11 ( 4% in 2005 year 11 cohort as against 10% this year)

### Analysis of achievement by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Total number in year 11	Average number of GCSE passes
African U.minor	51 ( 39% of total cohort)	4.2
White/European U.minor	35 (27% of total cohort)	0.77
Other U.minor	6 (4.6% of total cohort)	5.8
Indigenous children	37 (28% of total cohort)	3.2

There is some difference in the performance of different ethnic groups. In general some of the African children have been taught in English, and a bigger proportion of the White/ European unaccompanied minors arrive with no spoken or written English skills. In view of their disadvantage most have done well. It might be expected that the indigenous group achieves higher results but some have significant mental health issues that prevent successful engagement with education.

The LACE team often find unaccompanied minors the easiest to support, as many of them are highly motivated and willing to accept help with school work.

### Gender analysis

There were far more boys in last years year 11 than girls as the following table shows. The girls also outperformed boys in terms of GCSE's passed, but it need to be remembered that far more of the unaccompanied minor boys came into the country with no English skills. Most of the girls were from the African group mentioned before who had good educational standards and in many cases good language skills.

Boys	85	Average GCSE score	2.67 passes
Girls	44	Average GCSE score	4.09 passes

## General comments

The following should be noted:-

- of this year 11 group 105 ((81%) had achieved at least one qualification of some sort that reflected their achievements to date.
- Three had been put back a year but were doing well in education but had to be included in the statistics.
- 13 children were statemented with severe learning difficulties.

Overall the group had done well and official statistical returns do not do justice to the achievements of Croydon's looked after children.

Of this cohort 24% had received support in their education from the LACE team and Get Connected, ranging from monitoring to individual support at homework club school or foster home (though not necessarily in year 11). The LACE team's intervention was also instrumental in getting an educational place for looked after children particularly the unaccompanied minors.

A number of children did not achieve any qualifications- this was almost entirely due to social and emotional problems that prevented the young person from achieving their potential. A few young people had achieved well in education and were due to achieve results but dropped out of school during the spring term of year 11, as they couldn't cope with the extra pressure. (This problem has been noted by colleagues in other authorities). There were some unaccompanied minors that did not engage with education for a variety of reasons.

## GCSE Results looked after children educated in Croydon

In January 2007 there were 462 looked after children of school age educated in Croydon. Of these 285 (61%) were the responsibility of Croydon. Others were either placed in Croydon by other boroughs, or moving over the authority boundary for their education. The highest numbers from other boroughs are from authorities that are nearest to Croydon, with Southwark and Lambeth being the highest.

These results have been collated by Croydon education department and include children looked after by any borough and educated in Croydon. Not all children are included as is the case with GCSE statistics for the normal population (e.g. children who have come into the country in the last two years). It therefore forms a direct comparison with Croydon's general population.

## Results for children educated in Croydon

Number of looked after children	37	Not looked after	3393
Number achieving One GCSE	91.9%	Number achieving One	98.4%

		GCSE	
Number achieving five GCSE A*-C including English and Maths	16.2%	Number achieving Five A*-C GCSE including English and Maths	41.4%

### **Permanent Exclusion**

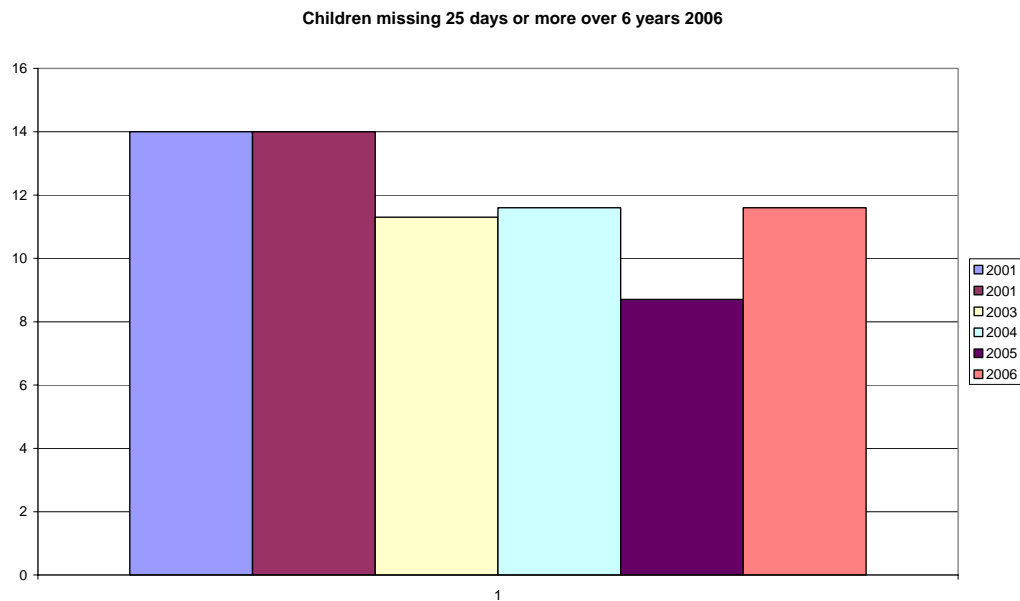
This is recorded as being 4 children- a higher proportion than the general population, and the same as recorded last year. These children had received input from the LACE team to either try and prevent this or arrange alternative education. For many of these children a Pupil Referral Unit placement is more appropriate for their needs. In these cases a member of the LACE team has provided support to the child, carer and social worker.

### **Children with a Statement**

There were 14% of children with a statement of education need (16% in 2004). Of the national population about 3% of children have a statement. This is reflected in the low educational achievement of looked after children. Most of the asylum seekers coming into the country during Key stage 4 do not go through the statementing process. If year 11 are removed the level of statementing is 17%.

### **Attendance at school**

Those missing 25 days schooling is now 11.6% and has moved up from last year (8.5% in 2005). This group are almost entirely in years 10 and 11 at school. The reason for the poorer figure on attendance this year is partly due to an increase in the number of older unaccompanied asylum seeking children who do not see educational attendance as a priority, and a number of our indigenous children who have significant social and emotional issues that make engagement with education hard for them. Professionals continue to try and engage these young people, and these children are generally well known to the LACE team. This has not impacted on key stage achievement overall, as the many the unaccompanied minors missing 25 days or more were not of a level to take GCSE level qualifications.



## Admission to School

No specific data is kept on children and how long it takes to get a school place. There have been increasing numbers of asylum seekers entering the country, mainly in key stage 4, and there has been considerable work on placing these children. Since September 2006, 78 unaccompanied young people entered the country and required school place, and most of these obtained school places within the 28 day limit set by statutory guidance on looked after children. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, LACE team and school admissions have worked together to place children as soon as possible. At the time of writing there were very few requiring a school place. Extra capacity has been sought for year 11 children in a number of secondary schools, with the ethnic minority achievement service and LACE providing support. There will be increased problems in terms of admissions after January 18<sup>th</sup>, the PLASC deadline as schools will be unable to claim funding for year 11 children joining the school after this date. This means that it will be very hard to place them.

## Summary

These statistics need to be treated cautiously as there are small numbers particularly in the earlier key stages, but it would seem that there has been good progress has been made with the education of looked after children. Some of the reasons would seem to be:-

- Well motivated unaccompanied minors coming into the country, many of whom are academically able in key stage 4. African asylum seekers in particular seem to be achieving highly.

- LAC having a higher profile in terms of school admission, and support from school.
- Action from the LACE team schools and other professionals, including training, direct support for children social workers schools and carers and other activities to support education.

### **Future Action**

I would suggest that the following needs to take place:-

- Explore ways of enabling very disaffected key stage 4 children to succeed, In particular looking for signs of disaffection and other educational problems earlier, to address later attendance problems.
- Looking at ways of supporting the increasing number of asylum seekers in terms of education.
- Education provision for year 11 children entering the country after the PLASC deadline.

Mike Johnston, Manager LACE team

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