



VSK NEWS

Kent's Virtual School for Children in Care and Young Care Leavers Autumn Term 2018

Welcome

As Christmas fast approaches, I would like to send you all our very best seasonal greetings and to thank you all for all your hard work in Terms 1 & 2, as I am aware transition times are always a busy time for you and a difficult time for some of our Young People.



Term 1 saw Canterbury Cricket Ground again host successful Pre-16 and Post-16 VSK Awards Ceremonies. We had a record number of nominations this year, in addition to which it was also an extremely successful year with one of our Young People becoming a published author and illustrator and another becoming a World Champion at Karate.

I would like to welcome Paul Manning, our new Deputy Head for Post-16, who has made an extremely positive start and now leads us in reducing NEET to below 10%.

Please take time to read this edition thoroughly and find out what we are doing in your part of Kent from our fantastic Assistant Headteachers. Also please be aware of some of our amazing work that is being done by our Participation and Engagement team including the development of our new Young Person's website.

All that is left to say now is have a Merry Christmas and an even Happier New Year from all of us at VSK.

Best wishes

Tony Doran

Headteacher, Virtual School Kent

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ePEP NEWS

The start of the new academic year has been a busy time for the ePEP team with particularly high numbers of school transitions, changes on the system of Designated Teachers, social workers and VSK staff.

Progress and Attainment

As we move nearer to the end of 2018 it is time to reflect on the Progress & Attainment of our young people since the start of term. To this end please ensure you have completed the Progress & Attainment section in ePEP 'Section B Attainment' for all your learners. The deadline for this is the end of term 2 (19/12/2018).

We are asking schools to enter the following data: -

- EY Foundation Stage ~ Prime Areas (within the PEP)
- KS1 & KS2 ~ Reading, Writing, Maths and SPAG
- KS3 ~ English and Maths
- KS4 ~ English, Maths and all other subjects being studied for GCSE or other qualifications including vocational ones.

Here is some guidance for you on completing the fields in the Attainment section on ePEP: -

a) Current Level – Internal Measure

1) a free type box that asks school to record attainment level according to their own data tracking system e.g. terms such as 'developing' or points might be used

2) a RAG* rating that reflects attainment according to 'age-related expectations' against national standards e.g. attainment for a Yr4 learner who is on track within the Programme of Study for Yr4 might be considered as working at 'on target'.

b) Progress against in year expectation

1) a free type box that asks school to record rate of progress according to their own data tracking system e.g. terms such as 'developing' or points might be used

2) a RAG* rating that reflects progress against in-year expectations using the school's own tracking system e.g. a Yr7 learner might have progressed beyond targets and this might be considered as 'above target'. *RAG Rating = Significantly above target, Above target, On target, Below target, Significantly below target.

Information around SEN Learners attending a specialist provision might be attaining below 'age-related' expectations but could still be making good progress using school's own measuring data systems e.g. upper quartile progress could be considered as making 'above' expected progress.

c) Information around new arrivals e.g. UASC

We understand that pupils may arrive with incomplete data and may be working below age expected levels, but please record the subjects they are studying and add data as it becomes available ready for the next data collection.

Detailed guidance on entering the Progress and Attainment data can be accessed through the 'Noticeboard' link on the left side of the menu. Alternatively, this can be downloaded from our website at:

<http://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/perch/resources/downloads/epep-how-to-enter-progress-and-attainment-data-using-epep.pdf>



The deadline for PP+ applications is 11th January 2019

Agreed amounts of PP+ will be paid to schools in the February 2019 advance.

Contact

As ever, please do contact our team directly should you have any questions or queries and we shall be happy to help. Thank you for your hard work and we both wish you a fantastic Christmas break.



03000 415353 - Rico and Linda



VSK_ePEP@kent.gov.uk



<http://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/vsk-resources/personal-education-plan-epep>

VSK AWARDS 2018

Matt Dunkley CBE, KCC Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Education) attended our 8th annual awards ceremony honouring the outstanding achievements of our children on care and had the following to say....

I was privileged to attend on 16th September, the Virtual School Kent Annual Awards ceremony to celebrate the academic and wider achievements of our children in care. I understand that more nominations than ever were received from Schools, Social Workers, KCC staff and foster carers, which resulted in 320 children in Early Years, and Key Stage 1 to 4 being given awards. VSK were delighted to receive nominations for children from Early Years for the first time this year, and our youngest children were rather weighed down with their prizes of medals, certificates, arts and crafts packs, books and balloons!

The theme of the ceremony this year was to celebrate Literacy and to encourage young people to fall in love with reading. The ceremony was attended by children and their carers, elected members and key KCC staff. The day started with the Awards Ceremony for our KS1 and KS2 students which was led by Tony Doran, Headteacher of Virtual School Kent with awards presented by Roger Gough and myself. This was followed by a BBQ lunch and fun entertainment for the children to enjoy which included a Surf Simulator, Wrecking Ball, Total Wipe-out Inflatable, Archery, Sumo wrestlers, giant inflatable slide, Craft stands and several Birds of Prey displays. The ceremony for Key Stage 3 and 4 followed in the afternoon.

Our guest speakers were Neil Arksey, an author, screenwriter and performer, the VSK Participation Team who spoke about the Children in Care Councils and some of the fun events that took place during the summer break and Emma Jenkins from Kent Children's University.

The Award Ceremony to celebrate the achievements of our Post-16 young people will take place next month and again I am sure that I will be blown away by their achievements and their individual stories.



VSK POST16 AWARDS 2018

Virtual School Kent held their fifth annual Post 16 Awards Ceremony on October 17th. This event recognises and celebrates the achievements of looked after Post16 young people and there were some amazing success stories.



As in previous years, lots of nominations were received and 88 awards were presented to young people, many of whom attended the awards ceremony. It was a truly fantastic evening with over 50 young people attending, supported by their friends, carers, social workers and personal advisers. The event had a red, black and gold theme with red carpet, balloons, photo screen, sports activities and a delicious buffet. The evening also included an entertaining quiz about the Young Adult Council led by the VSK Apprentices (some tables were very competitive!) and a talk about the National Citizen Service by Ben Powell.

There were some really inspiring stories from these young people and they rightly deserved the recognition of their achievements! Well done again to all the winners!

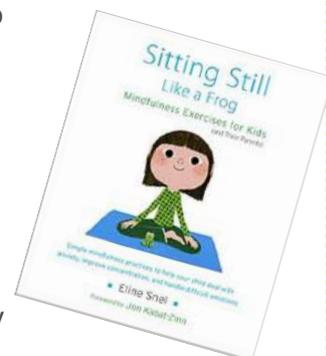
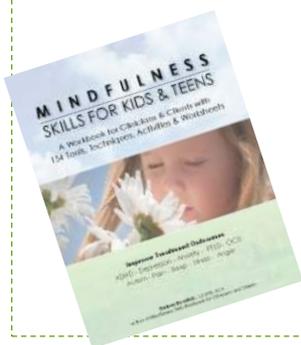
THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a type of meditation practice that uses simple techniques to focus on the here and now. We all have moments where our minds feel cluttered and busy, and for our children and young people they can sometimes become very overwhelmed by thoughts and emotions very quickly. The ultimate goal of mindfulness is to 'observe' your thoughts rather than act on them.

There is now good evidence from neuroscience that mindfulness can profoundly alter the structure and function of the brain to improve the quality of thought and feeling. It can improve mental, emotional, social and physical health and wellbeing, and improves sleep, self-esteem, anxiety and anger. It can be practised with young children, right up to adulthood! Best of all, it can be easily integrated in to the classroom.

We recommend two books which have simple practices and guided meditations:

- For younger children - 'Sitting Still Like a Frog' by Eline Snel
- For older children - 'Mindfulness Skills for Kids and Teens' by Debra Burdick.



Hopefully these resources will help guide you and your young people towards a more mindful and calm sense of wellbeing!

Paul Manning, Deputy Head (Post16)

Tel: 03000 416463 or Email: paul.manning@kent.gov.uk

First, a little about me. I have been in post since the end of August 2018 having spent the previous sixteen years working in Further Education in a variety of roles from Lecturer to Principal. I am hoping my background and FE experience will be invaluable in continuing the good work that my predecessor Rachel Calver and the team have achieved during the past 4 years.



Well the first term has flown by; the Post 16 Team have been working incredibly hard to support our young people with their plans for the new academic year. They have been confirming enrolments and supporting those where plans have changed, working in close collaboration with the Designated Members of Staff in the Colleges and Training Providers. The team have been able to quickly identify where our young people are, and the level of qualifications they are studying, however, some young people still need support to identify the best possible option for them in education. I have been pleasantly surprised at the diverse range of provision that is available across Kent outside of the usual routes of College, Sixth Forms and Apprenticeships.

It was an enormous pleasure to attend the Post 16 Awards Evening held at Canterbury Cricket Club on Wednesday 16th October. This year we received nearly one hundred nominations for young people. On the evening cheered on by over 100 guests we presented 5 gold award, 8 silver and 37 bronze awards, 4 DMS awards and 24 prizes to Key stage four young people for achieving outstanding GCSE results. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thanks Jo Carpenter, Jane Charlton and the Post 16 Support Officers for their attention to detail and skilful planning that ensured the evening was a huge success and enjoyed by all that attended.

The Post 16 Team has also recently taken on an additional remit of tracking and monitoring year 12 and 13`s that are attending sixth form, this was previously the responsibility of the locality teams. These additional young people have obviously increased the Support Officers caseloads, so we have had to make a couple of very small changes to ensure we provide the best possible service that supports our young people. Caseloads are as follows:

- Sam Sharkey: Medway, Maidstone College, Milbank, schools in Medway and LSEC Colleges.
- Vicky Crompton: Thanet, Dover, Folkestone, schools in Thanet and OOC Colleges.
- Catherine Burton: Canterbury and Coastal plus schools in Canterbury.
- Jade-Amora Fray: Ashford, West Kent, Hadlow, schools in Dover, Folkestone, Ashford, Maidstone and West Kent and OOC EET.
- Tracy Hunt: North, Swale, YOI, long-term missing, schools in Swale and North Kent plus OOC sixth forms and OOC NEET.
- Paul Manning: OOC Special Schools and OOC Residential Units

And finally, please feel free to contact me to discuss any potential ideas you might have to improve our service and work in collaboration.

Simon Fosse-Collins, Assistant Head (Thanet)

Tel: 03000 418601 or Email: simon.fosse-collins@kent.gov.uk

Hello from the Thanet team! We hope that the first term back has been a good one for you and the children you support. As the days get shorter and the heating goes on I am sure you will all be involved in Christmas preparations soon.

The stork has been busy in our locality, with 3 new arrivals! We would like to congratulate ESO Maria Bishop on the birth of twins Noah and Joy, and ESO Keira Kinsella on the birth of baby Emmy. We look forward to them re-joining the team during 2019.

A huge well done to all of those students who worked hard to gain qualifications this summer. We saw an increase on last year in the number of pupils who received 5 grade 9-4 GCSEs, including Maths and English, which is fantastic. One young man gained 4 9's, 4 8's and 3 7's and another an 8, 2 7's, 2 6's and 4 5's! We are also extremely proud of a Y12 pupil who achieved the best A-level results in their school and is now at university.

We also saw great results from the year 6 cohort this summer in the KS2 SATS, well done to these students too.

The **paired reading** programme was a great success in Thanet. Carers have worked hard to support their young people and the results speak for themselves. Accelerated progress in reading was seen across the board. Feedback from the children themselves showed that they enjoyed it and thought it had helped improve their reading. A celebratory event was held in July for the young people and their carers where children's author Cliff McNish was guest speaker. All children who attended got to choose one of his books to take home. A big thank you to those carers who took part, your commitment and enthusiasm has really had a positive impact. We are looking to roll out the next phase with new students soon.

Another initiative we are leading in Thanet is the setting up of **Nurture Groups** to improve our Young Peoples' social and emotional health and tackle some of the learning barriers they may have. During the summer term, VSK provided training for schools that came on board and we will continue to work closely with them as the groups take shape.

We have just finished sending out this years' **Letterbox** parcels to pupils who were in Years 1,3,5,7 last May. One final Christmas parcel will be sent in December. Agreement has been made to continue this popular and well received scheme next year which is fab news.

Young people in Early years, reception, Year 2 and Year 4 received **Storytime** magazines each month and this scheme too will continue. Our next cohort will be identified in the New Year.

We are again offering our **Attachment training**, completely free of charge. This can be either held within schools, as INSET/twilight sessions, or for individuals to attend at Greenbanks. Please contact Laura James (laura.james@kent.gov.uk) for further details. Laura can also provide dates for Designated Teacher updates and EPEP training which are both valuable ways of sharing information and good practice.



Gina Turner, Assistant Head (Canterbury)

Tel: 03000 419420 or Email: gina.turner@kent.gov.uk

A chilly greeting from the Canterbury team here at VSK! I would like to start our Newsletter by congratulating our Year 11 students for surviving their GCSEs and celebrate with them their achievements and progress. We are thoroughly proud of you all and what you have achieved! I would also like to thank the schools in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable for the amazing work that has been done to support these students through a stressful Key Stage 4.



I would like to give particular congratulations to Samuel Murphy, who despite the many challenges he has faced during his time in education, has whizzed through Functional Skills qualification and is currently obtaining his Level 2 in both maths and English, whilst working with a tree surgery organisation. From where he was a year ago, what he has achieved since is most worthy of separate congratulations – well done Sam!

In other news, we welcome back Debbie Briant to the Canterbury team who is now leading the VSK StudyPad scheme for Kent. Those of you who worked with Debbie before she left VSK will know how dedicated she is to our vulnerable learners and how supportive she is to schools. Glad to have you back on-board Debbie!

We would also like to welcome Emma Wills to the Canterbury team. Emma is an experienced Education Support Officer who has been working in South Kent but has now moved to East. Emma is a qualified teacher and has just gained her SENDCo accreditation, so well done Emma, and an official welcome to Canterbury!

Sad news however - Karen Wood, our Year 11 progression advisor has left us. She is very much missed by all who worked with her and she has left a very large hole in our team. We are hoping to appoint our new Year 11 progression advisor soon, so watch this space.

The Paired Reading project will be running again this year. This has had a significant impact on reading levels of all children who have participated so far. There will be the initial training for foster carers on the 19th November at Brook House.

Finally, we are again offering our Attachment Training, completely free of charge. This can either be held within schools or there will be dates where individuals can access it at Brook House. Please contact Amanda Roback (amanda.robback@kent.gov.uk) for further details.

Myself and my team wish you all the best of luck in the year ahead, and look forward to working with you all!

Joanne Hayes, Assistant Head (Swale)

Tel: 03000 415679 or Email: Joanne.Hayes1@kent.gov.uk



The children and young people of Swale have been impressing us again with their determination and hard work. We had some fabulous outcomes for our children in the summer.

Our children and young people have shown themselves to be able to come back from set-backs – which present themselves in many different ways – both in school and out. Of course our DTs and foster carers have helped them to embrace the challenges that they face, supporting them and advocating for them in a world which can change and be very difficult and we thank them for that. Helping our children to believe in themselves is the first step for many of them in achieving their successes, both in formal qualifications and in other skills, sports, theatre, volunteering, building relationships.

It is really important that our children recognise that their ability is not fixed. Intelligence is fluid. Effort is rewarded, intrinsically and externally. Sometimes our children find it hard to accept rewards, including simple words of praise, but it really is important that they are told that we recognise what they have achieved, and how hard they have worked to get there.

We are sure that our children and young people this year, some who have new beginnings, wither at home or school will do their very best again and we are looking forward to working with the teams of people who are supporting them to do just that.

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT FOSTERING?

Open your heart and you could help to transform the lives of children and young people in Kent by becoming a foster carer.

KCC are especially looking for carers for:

- older children – aged 13 to 18
- siblings
- disabled children



Open your heart

kentfostering



If you think you can provide children with the stability and routine they need to flourish and develop then please give KCC Fostering a call on **03000 420 002** or come along to an information event <http://www.kentfostering.co.uk/events> to find out about the benefits, payments and all the great support KCC can provide you.

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH EAST

Carole Bailey, Assistant Head (Dover & Folkestone)

Tel: 03000 417216 or Email: carole.bailey@kent.gov.uk

As always, it has been a very busy time for us in South Kent. We have received several children new into care in the area, and various members of the team have been supporting their entry to their new schools. September / October is also a busy time for the first PEPs of the year !



My team continue to extend their areas of expertise, and this term have furthered their skills in the a range of areas including greater awareness of cognitive behaviour therapy, mindfulness, speech and language development, and supporting emotional well-being during school transition. Our emotional and mental health county wide project, working with Purple Octopus, Eden and Kate Cairns Associates is now also underway. Further details to follow during the year.



You will be aware that each VSK locality has a diverse team of practitioners, and it is helpful to share their respective roles with you. In this newsletter I wish to share the work of our South Kent Fostering Education Liaison Officer (FELO), Julia Griggs. The FELO's role is very varied. Primarily the FELO is there to support carers with any education issues that may arise, as well as taking the locality lead on Early Years, liaising with The Early Years' team to ensure pre-school children are attending a suitable provision that meet their needs. Julia attends fostering support groups to update carers on VSK, and changes in education. Over the past year Julia has worked alongside an education psychologist to support training in literacy, maths and metacognition for carers. This was a great success and as detailed in a previous newsletters, we saw significant improvements in reading ages for the young people who took part. In term 3 we will be organising a whole day's foster carer training to develop this work, so watch this space for a date soon ! The Book Trust Letterbox scheme also falls on VSK FELOs to organise and distribute, the response from our young people has been fantastic - they really enjoy receiving the packs. You will be aware the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire initiative (SDQ's) is a government lead statutory requirement for Children in Care. Julia monitors the returns of these ensuring an SDQ is completed for all young people between 4-17 yrs. You will see a day in the life of a FELO covers a range of varied tasks !

Finally, we are delighted to share the news that 4 of our year 6 young people have secured places at local grammar schools for next September. Congratulations to them!

Jen Kemp, Assistant Head (Ashford, Romney Marsh & Tunbridge Wells)

Tel: 03000 415685 or Email: Jennifer.kemp@kent.gov.uk



Welcome again to a brand new academic year – I'm sure it comes round faster every year! South West team welcome our newest member to the role of KS4 Progression Adviser, Keith Bowley. Keith, previously an experienced Designated Teacher from Folkestone, has hit the ground running working with our new Year 11 cohort supporting them in their chosen pathway to post 16 success. Keith will be visiting our Year 11 students and attending PEPs so please make him welcome in your schools and please ensure he is familiar with your school's offer of providing independent support and careers guidance so together our young people get the best support they can.

The SW Kent Locality Raising Attainment plan is keeping the whole team busy with projects and initiatives across the area, and we have identified some key priorities for development as we move forward throughout the year:

- Schools who have completed the Nurture Group Network Practitioner Course are well underway in setting up their individual inhouse provisions and I have been please to visit some where they already have pupils accessing this specialised support. Look out for more updates on this work stream locally as I encourage the schools involved to share their good practice and offer advice to other schools interested in Nurture Principles.
- Having looked at our cohort of exam sitters this year I have identified a particular focus on Maths as an area of improvement with our young people. The literacy projects we have championed such as Pared Reading will still continue and not be at the expense of this new area of focus, but I have got the team motivated to explore creative ways in which we can support both our KS2 - KS4 pupils and foster carers in Maths mastery. Watch this space!
- I'm excited to hear that our Participation team are now going on the road with their children in care councils and I would like to further our children and young people in care's opportunity to share their views and influence change by promoting areas such as Romney Marsh and Tunbridge Wells to get involved and meet with our friendly and enthusiastic apprentice care leavers.

Alongside these new initiatives the team is still here to ensure that all our pupils have high quality PEPs and transition well into new schools if the need arises. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff we work with in schools across the whole locality who have taken the time to give positive feedback about our work. In a time of every increasing scrutiny regarding PP+ spending and LA support for Looked After Children and previously looked after children, the team really does value your ongoing support and co-operation as we work together to better meet the needs of our children and young people in care.

Sarah Howell, Assistant Head (North Kent)

Tel: 03000 410392 or Email: sarah.howell@kent.gov.uk



Maths Project

North Kent are continuing to work alongside our colleagues in West Kent, in order to support Key Stage 2 pupils' Maths' attainment and progress, and to diminish the difference between them and their peers. Most of these pupils are accessing 'Times Tables' Rockstars'. This programme helps to engage the pupils in learning their multiplication facts in an engaging manner. The results are monitored by Education Support Officers – who occasionally challenge the young people to 'battles' too! Many of the pupils are having targets set in their PEPs around their use of the program. This could be linked to the amount of times it is used, improvements made or 'coins' earned. The focus has been led by the county-wide development plan for Maths, the DFE development of the Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) Assessment Framework, as well as North Kent's continuing Maths project with Kieran Mackle.

The project continues to look into furthering engagement of the young people and their carers with the project. Look out for some exciting events happening in the New Year, as well as broadening Maths' interventions for pupils in other year groups and supporting those older young people to attain qualifications in Maths, before they move on to Y12.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) Project

In September, representatives from Gravesend Grammar and Whitehill Primary schools met to discuss their involvement with the county-wide SEMH project. The session was led by Kate Cairns from KCA, who brought an amazing amount of knowledge, flexibility and inspiration on how the project may develop during the course of the next year for the two schools. We look forward to seeing the ideas shared with other localities across the county too.

Criminal Exploitation & County Lines

We are continuing to support the safeguarding of the young people we work with, by developing the knowledge and understanding of risks they may encounter. We have met with Colin Green from Early Help & Preventative Services to discuss his work for the Troubled Families Programme, amongst other initiatives. He was able to help signpost us to many initiatives currently taking part in Dartford and Gravesend.

We are also planning an information session for to take place in the new year, in the Medway area, so please keep an eye out for further information.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Meet the Team

Since the summer term, there have been a couple of changes to the staffing of North Kent & Medway. In case you are new to North Kent & Medway too, let me introduce our team:



Jo Kelly
Deputy Head



Michelle Matthews
Education Welfare Officer



Jenny Finch
FELO



Lisa Thistlethwaite
Education Support Officer



Lisa Millgate
KS4 Progression Advisor



Amanda Lihou
Senior Education Support Officer
(Medway and Out of County)



Angela Courtney
Education Support Officer



Amanda Ormond
Education Support Officer



Wendy Richard
Education Support Officer

Jemma Page, Assistant Head (Tonbridge, Maidstone & Malling)

Tel: 03000 412777 or Email: jemma.page@kent.gov.uk

Hello all and wow where has that first term gone! Won't be long now until we are all full steam Christmas planning. We in the West Kent team have been busy setting up the projects for our area trying to ensure our children/young people, carers and schools have the access to a wide range of extra support. In order to highlight some of our wonderful projects and work that is going on in the area I am going to pass you over to the West Kent team.....



Karen Stephens, Education Support Officer

We are pleased to confirm that our project with Dandelion Time will continue for the next school year offering young people, carers and schools the opportunity of Systemic and environmental therapy. Dandelion Time is a charity for children and their families in Kent fragmented by trauma, abuse and neglect. Dandelion Time provides troubled children/young people and their carers with an individually focused therapeutic programme. Given time and space in the natural environment and support from therapeutic practitioners, children and carers work together to find ways to restore trust, gain strength and make positive and sustainable changes in their lives. Dandelion also offer schools accredited training which is aimed at helping schools to understand attachment difficulties, how this can affect young people and the school professionals supporting them.

Melissa Baker, Fostering Education Support Officer

The West Kent team have recently started using a new riding school provider called '**Squirrels**' who are based at the top of Bluebell Hill so a great location for West Kent, North Kent and Medway foster carers.

They have both indoor and outdoor riding schools and run a variety of different sessions, pony camps, hacks out and holiday clubs throughout the year. Currently they are providing us with a Saturday pony club which several West Kent and North Kent young people are attending and they love it! The pony club involves a riding lesson, grooming, tacking the horses up and helping to clean out the stables. The young people are also given the opportunity to sign up to the Pony Club Membership which encourages them to earn badges and certificates in Horse care and Riding.

Feedback received from Foster carers:

'Our young people are doing well and enjoy every session. They are looking forward to it every week and gaining confidence. They are always beaming and very excited to tell me all about their experiences when they get home'.

'We were all made welcome on our arrival at Squirrels, both children absolutely loved it they had a beaming smiles on their faces all the time they were riding. The staff are professional, kind and helpful and the instructor's interaction with children is most definitely bringing out the best in the children'.

Wendy Richard, Education Support Officer

We are excited to have renewed our project work with Sarah Post and Mark Aitken who are the speech and language therapist and support worker that we fund to work with children and young people across West and North Kent.



I am also excited to share that I am working on an online training programme for Speech Language and Communication skills. Once training is complete I will then work with schools to support identification of need and strategies to support our YP across West and North Kent. We will then be able to ensure that skills learnt are used daily and will assist in building capacity within all our schools.

Tyler Johnson, KS4 Education Support Officer

I hope this year will be another successful year for our year 11s in West Kent. Over this academic year I will be working with our year 11s to make sure they achieve the best results possible and have a positive transition to post 16 education. I will be meeting with our students to give them advice on possible onwards destinations and making sure additional support is in place to help them on their journey through year 11. The lead up to Christmas is a crucial time of year and we will be working together to ensure as many students as possible have applied for a suitable post 16 place. I look forward to meeting you all'.

Welcome to our team Helen Humphrey, Education Support Officer

In September I joined VSK and already feel I have settled into the role. I support children in Tonbridge and Malling area as well as parts of Maidstone and I feel privileged to be able to provide the opportunities to support children in care as they access the education they deserve. My background is education having worked in schools in various roles supporting and working with children either as a teacher, teaching assistant or a Special Needs Coordinator.



All is left to do now is say have a happy and merry Christmas from the West Kent team!

PARTICIPATION TEAM UPDATE

Kent Cares Town has a New Look!

The website, **Kent Cares Town** provides children in care and care leavers with information about what it means to be in care and how Kent County Council supports them as their corporate parents.

Over the past year, it has been substantially redesigned to make it more appealing to young people, easier to navigate and more up to date. A key innovation is that young people can now choose one of three portals – Primary, Secondary or Moving On - to access age appropriate information about the things they've told us they want to know. In fact, throughout the redesign process, young people were consulted to ensure the website reflects their needs.



So what's different?

- Works on all devices – laptops, desktops, tablets and mobiles
- 3 separate portals with age related content
- Capable of hosting surveys
- Includes an easy way for young people to contact VSK
- Includes contributions from young people – artwork, writing or poems
- Regularly updated Latest News section
- Information about some of the young people's corporate parents
- Space for vlogs, blogs and podcasts
- An app is also in development



Please do have a look at the re-designed website at www.kentcares town.lea.kent.sch.uk and share it with young people who attend your school and their carers. We hope that it proves a useful resource for young people who want to find out more about what being in the care of Kent County Council means.

If you have any questions or feedback or know a young person who would like to contribute to the website, please contact: Joanne.Carpenter@kent.gov.uk, Sarah.Newman@kent.gov.uk or Andrea.Wood@kent.gov.uk

Super Council, OCYPC and YAC Update



Our three Children in Care Councils (Super Council for 7 - 11 year olds, OCYPC for 11 – 16 year olds and the Young Adult Council for 16+) continue to go from strength to strength. Recently, all three councils discussed their experiences of Children in Care Reviews and what would make it easier for young people to share their views. They devised some really fantastic recommendations that will be shared with Independent Reviewing Officers this term. Being a member of a Children in Care Council really does give young people a chance to shape the services they receive!

October Activity Days

During the October half-term, the VSK Participation Team held two very successful arts and crafts activity days at the Turner Contemporary in Margate and in Kings Hill. It was fantastic to see so many budding artists! The young people created wonderful canvases around the theme of Hobbies and Interests, beautiful Autumn inspired wreaths and stunning sparkling pumpkins.



If you know a young person who wants to have their say or would like to attend an activity day, please contact VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk.

Mind of My Own Update

In our last issue, we told you about a fantastic app, Mind of My Own, that helps young people structure their thoughts and feelings about a range of scenarios and send them to the professionals they work with. Scenarios include 'Sort a Problem', 'Change Something', 'Prepare for a Meeting' or 'My Worker is Visiting'.

Recently, MOMO got a major update to make it more user friendly for young people:

- **A quicker sign up for young people** so they can now create their new account in 3 easy steps!
- **A mood slider** so young people can more easily communicate how they are feeling
- **Fun emojis** to accompany the text throughout the app to improve accessibility
- **An improved link to Childline** so young people can contact the 24hour help line more easily if they need support immediately

You can help young people over the age of 8 sign up for their own account at <https://one.mindofmyown.org.uk/> or by downloading the app on to an apple or android device!

Want to find out more? Visit <https://one-demo.mindofmyown.org.uk> to try out a demo app and see how it could be used by the young people you work with.

VSK Contact Information



virtual.school.kent@kent.gov.uk



Virtual School Kent



www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/

North & West Kent	03000 412777	Worrall House, 30 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, Kent ME19 4AE
East & South Kent	03000 421157	Brook House, John Wilson Business Park, Reeves Way, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3SS

VSK Senior Leadership Team



Tony Doran
Headteacher



Marian Smith
Deputy Head (East & South)



Jo Kelly
Deputy Head (North & West)



Paul Manning
Deputy Head (Post16)



Jo Carpenter
Participation & Engagement
Manager