

## Previously Looked After Children: The Voice of Young People



# THE ADOPTABLES

In October 2021, The Kent Adoptables group met to feedback about the following points:

- ⇒ Returning to school after COVID
- ⇒ What teachers should be like (Teacher Traits)
- ⇒ What support should be in place in school

Adopted young people in Bexley, Kent and Medway can get their voices heard about the issues that matter to them and make positive changes by joining the Adoptables Group.

If you want to find out more about the group, its purpose and aims, please contact [VSK\\_AdoptionParticipation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_AdoptionParticipation@kent.gov.uk).

# Returning to School

## What were you looking forward to this year at school/college/ university?

- Seeing friends, spending time with them, catching up, socialising
- Taking part in clubs e.g. singing
- Not being online and on a screen all day
- Learning in a fun way (online is not fun!)
- Face to face teaching
- Meeting new people
- Being able to be proactive, make decisions and move forward again
- Pastoral support in place if needed
- Offsite passes

## What were you worried about returning to school/college/ university?

- Just being back at school
- Catching up on schoolwork and gaps in learning (feel that many students missed content and the lack of face-to-face teaching disadvantaged them)
- Regular covid testing
- Not feeling prepared for GCSEs (not as prepared as previous year groups!)
- Exam stress and anxiety rocketing randomly
- Seeing friends after a long time (will they still be my friends?)
- Anxiety about whether things will have changed e.g. lunchtimes
- Not fitting in
- Too many people!
- Meeting new people
- Seeing people that I don't get on with (benefit of home learning)

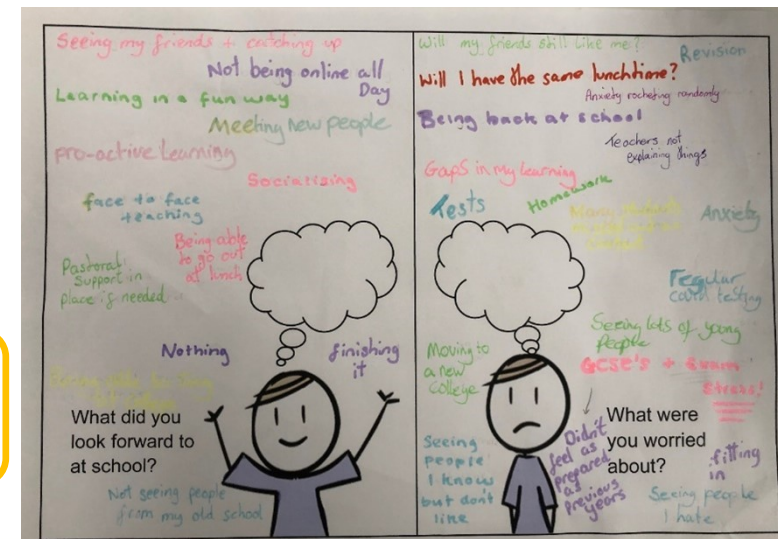
No one in the group was worried about COVID 19 when returning to school. One young person said that they were testing regularly so they were not worried whilst others thought it was time to return to normal.



## Some young people in the group explained that they don't enjoy school for a variety of reasons

- \* Other students being unkind (examples given about bullying suffered at school due to being adopted)
- \* Very strict teachers and rules that don't allow them to make mistakes; give them space/time to cool down or change their behaviour before being told off / given punishments
- \* Over emphasis on maths and English rather than PE, music, art or other subjects

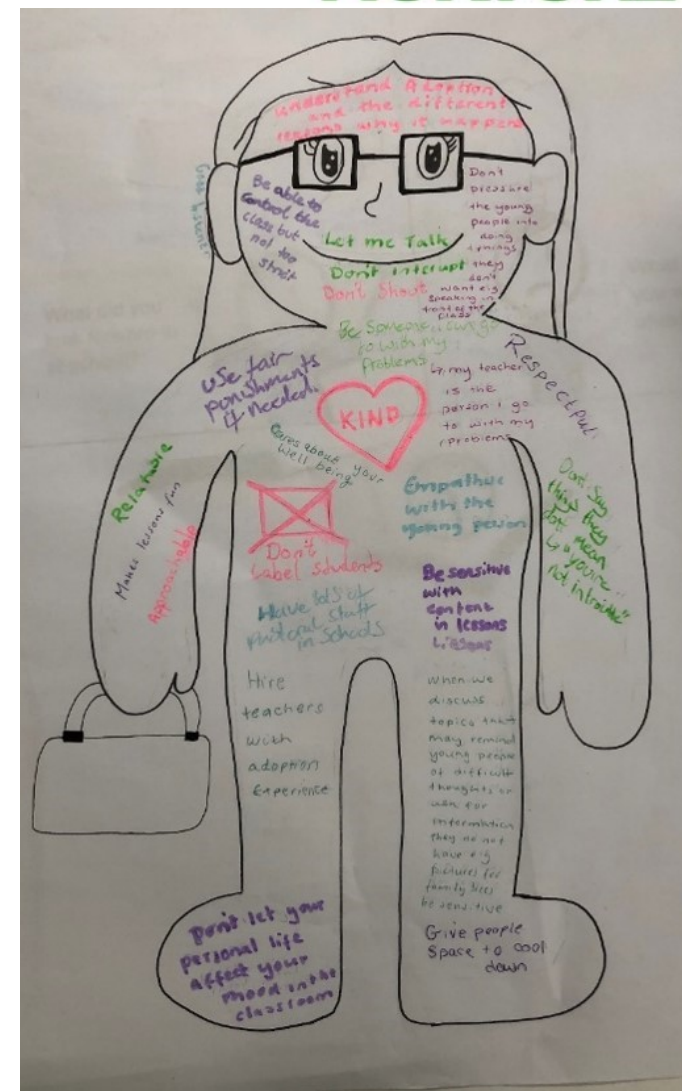
Those that did enjoy aspects of school were very pleased to be back in real life as most did not enjoy online learning. They said that they did not learn as well, get enough individual support or enjoy lessons as much. Some did not like seeing themselves on camera and also disliked being muted and unmuted by teachers.



# Teacher Traits

- \* Respectful
- \* Kind and approachable (“My teacher was the person I went to with my problems”)
- \* Fun / funny / plan fun lessons
- \* Allows pupils to talk and listens to them; doesn’t do all the talking!
- \* Keeps you involved in decisions about you and your learning
- \* Gives fair punishments; doesn’t shout!
- \* Is truthful
- \* Doesn’t label you
- \* Cares about your wellbeing and is there for you
- \* Gives good advice and explains learning well
- \* Recognises effort not just achievement
- \* Doesn’t pressure you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable (e.g. acting in front of the class)
- \* Gives pupils space
- \* Not too strict but keeps control of the class
- \* Respectful of my adoption and whether I want to speak about it / share it with others
- \* Is sensitive to me and my adoption e.g. thinks about the curriculum / syllabus and discussion topics. Examples given when there is no sensitivity— in PSHE lessons that look at relationships that they don’t recognise or can’t identify with, looking at baby photos or early childhood which can be difficult.

Support needs to be in place for us to access this.

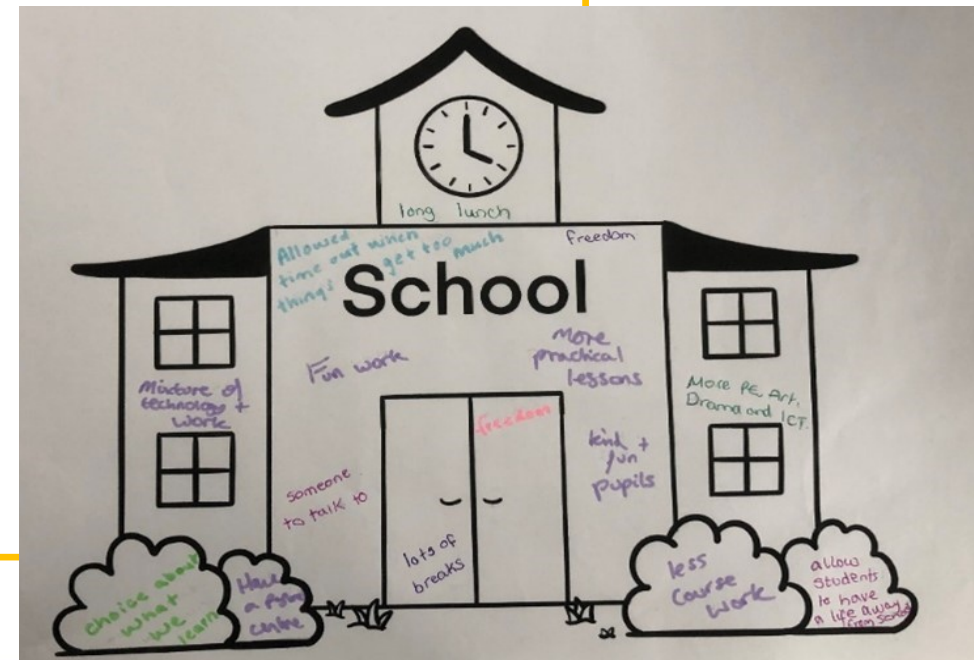


# School Support



## What support should schools put in place?

- ◇ Well-staffed and resourced pastoral team to support all students
- ◇ Good support for SEND and additional needs that doesn't stop suddenly e.g. when move to sixth form
- ◇ Cool down rooms / spaces
- ◇ Staff that understand adoption and how it can affect young people throughout their lives
- ◇ A named member of staff you can go to with any problems or issues
- ◇ A fair behaviour policy that is not too strict and cares about pupils and why they are behaving like they are
- ◇ Training courses for teachers and young people around adoption
- ◇ One member of the group spoke about the support she had received at college since starting and how much better it was than at school, where she didn't feel that she got any help with bullying or work.





# What can you do?



- ◆ Make sure that their voice is heard. What they would like to see happen/change so that they can remain happy in school. Who are the staff members in school that they trust and feel are the ones that understand them and help them the most.
- \* If you need further advice please contact Virtual School Kent where I team can support you:

[Welcome to the Virtual School Kent Website:Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](http://lea.kent.sch.uk)

For additional resources to create a trauma and attachment aware behaviour policy, visit [Resources \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](http://beaconhouse.org.uk)

Beacon House is a team of professional, compassionate and highly experienced chartered psychologists, psychotherapists and occupational therapists. As a service they have a special interest in repairing the effects of trauma and attachment disruption.



Whatever changes you face we are here to guide you  
No matter what age, everyone is at a different stage  
VSK can help you find your voice

How you behave tells us how you feel  
VSK can be your safe space  
Nurture helps you feel happy and healthy

A high-quality education is the foundation for improving life opportunities and fulfilling career aspirations. Virtual School Kent act as a local authority strategic leader in championing the educational attendance, attainment, wellbeing, and progress of children with a social worker and within Kent education provisions; so that these young people can achieve their full potential.

