

The National Nurturing Schools Programme

Assessment Report



Establishment	Virtual School Kent For the Attention of Fiona Clarke Business Support Lead - VSK & PA to Tony Doran 2nd Floor, Brook House, John Wilson Business Park, Reeves Way, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3SS
Head teacher/Principal	Tony Doran
NNSP trained staff	Extended Leadership Team
Assessment date	January 26th and 27th 2022
Assessors	Claire Wilson and Victoria Norris
Trainer	Claire Wilson
Review date	January 2025

1	Stakeholders
1a.	Children and young people
<p>1a.1 The social and emotional needs of children and young people are assessed and tracked. This is an area of strength for the virtual school. The Boxall profile has been rolled out across the school in each team following substantial whole school training delivered by nurtureuk. Small group supervision to support staff in embedding the tool into practice was undertaken and the evaluation indicated a very positive impact. The Boxall Online tool has been set up for staff and classes/groups. VSK's 'Use of Boxall Profile' document was created and shared across the school, including a FAQ – and both documents are on the VSK website. Each team has a Nurture Ambassador and these staff are part of the Boxall Task and Finish group to support the establishment of Boxall into practice across the school. The first data run from Power BI supported the target groups for the first rollout of Boxall assessments through Term 6 2020-21 and Term 1 of 2021-22. A second data run from Power BI was done before October half term 2021 and shared with the teams so they can undertake assessment group 2. A review of these assessments is done regularly to support the identification of progress and support planning for the next steps. In addition to the Boxall Profile, VSK has created 3 SEMH indicators built into the PEP and support tracking of emotional well-being, behaviour, and engagement/attendance. There is a scale of 0-5 and supports teams to identify child-level progress as well as more longitudinal tracking across the area and the school. Interventions for individuals and groups of young people are carefully targeted according to personalised needs of children as identified at PEPs and also in between PEPs at formal meetings/more informal conversations with partners. This is very established in practice and outcomes evidence very good impact. The SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) Task and Finish group have brought about a huge development in practice throughout the programme. A new online system will enable improved take up from Foster Carers and will support increased triangulation of the data which will enable improved assessment of learners' social, emotional, and behavioural strengths and difficulties. Training for VSK staff and involvement of their Young People will follow and Power BI and Liberi will enable the teams to use the data from partners in a more meaningful and integrated way.</p> <p>1a.2 Nurture principles are defined and explained to children and young people. This is another area of strength for the virtual school. Following the whole school development session on 1st September around the 6 principles, the Participation and Engagement Lead took staff suggestions for VSK's 6 Nurture Principles to their young people to ensure that they had true meaning for them. The outcome was VSK's 6 Principles of Nurture (see more information in the summary section at the end of the report) which the young people also supported by designing a VSK Nurture logo to match. These VSK Principles have been shared across the school so they can be embedded into everyday practise with pupils. The P&E team went one step further and worked with the school councils to see how they felt about the VSK principles and why they felt they were important. A film was made from this which was shared on the VSK young people's website plus at the SE Regional Meeting for Virtual School Head Teachers, ensuring that their approach is known and understood countywide. VSK then took the film to the Corporate Director asking for consideration to be given as to all practitioners working with children across Kent to be using these, which was warmly received and has contributed to Kent CC taking on this approach countywide too. VSK now uses the nurture logo at participation events for their young people, including at the 'sports day' in July 2021 where it was printed on the gazebos and all the staff t-shirts. The activity with children asking for their views at this event also included sound bites from the VSK 6 principles. In addition, there is a recorded presentation by Head Teacher Tony Doran on both the professional's and young people's websites. This shares VSK's journey to achieving the NNSP, all about their Nurture Principles and why this is important to them as a school, including reference to the Boxall Profile. Really most impressive.</p> <p>1a.3 Children and young people are encouraged to develop responsibility for themselves and learn self-efficacy. This is yet another area of strength for the school and evidence shows so many ways this is done that it is impossible to write them all here. The following are some of the ways pupils are encouraged for this standard: VSK staff encourage and support their young people to chair their PEPs and CIC reviews to help them feel more in control of their destiny and develop their life/independence skills.</p>	

VSK has created councils for their young people – Super Council (primary aged children), OCYPC (Our children’s and young person’s council) which is secondary ages and YAC (Young Adults Council). These are well established and very well attended now, including by the Corporate Director, Matt Dunkley intermittently – and enables pupils to be heard right at the top of KCC so that they truly influence service design and delivery. Challenge Cards have been developed by the pupil councils to enable them to ask their Corporate Parents to consider their requests. One example of this is the ‘no bin bag’ policy where VSK pupils explained how they felt about using bin bags when they were moving on, this led to a policy that no child in care would leave a foster carer with their belongings in a bin bag. Another example is pupils being able to have KCC as a guarantor for when they move into their accommodation.

VSK employs apprentices in Participation & Engagement, many of which are care experienced themselves. These apprentices are very involved in organising activity days for young people in care, also for adopted young people including birth children of foster carers too. The P&E team organise and run after school activities (including curriculum subjects such as science and dance), these are currently virtual but are aiming to move back to being face to face as soon as possible. Due to the new responsibilities of VS Heads to advise on Children in Need/Children with a Social Worker, the service will start to expand these participation opportunities out to this new group of young people. Several apprentices have achieved Level 2 and 3 qualifications in their apprenticeships with VSK – and one young person has been employed as a full member of staff, which is admirable and shows the level of commitment the team has to their young people. In an interview, Senior Leader Jo Carpenter spoke of the VSK Principles spreading county wise as Kent County Council start to adopt these Principles and VSK have been invited to contribute to a national Children in Care Council forum to talk about their work as an example of good practice to share across the UK.

1b. Parents and caregivers

1b. 1 Parents and caregivers feel valued and welcomed by the service.

Support for parents and caregivers is excellent, here are a few examples given in evidence:

VSK offers training to Foster Carers e.g. anxiety-based school refusal, sleep, Paired Reading, Attainment and progress, Count on Us (Maths) amongst many other topics, which gives Foster Carers a chance to engage with VSK staff and improve their understanding and engagement with educational matters.

VSK has taken part in the development of the National pilot of skilling up Foster Carers to become Education Champions. This was done in partnership with The Fostering Network. This group of Foster Carers are now able to give peer support to other Foster Carers.

VSK FELLOs (Fostering Education Liaison Officers) are employed to specifically work with and support Foster Carers in relation to educational matters. They attend Foster Care support groups and give advice e.g. around school moves, respond to requests and generally encourage engagement around Education projects or developments.

In the summer of 2020, VSK worked with Kent Educational Psychology Service)to roll out a consultation offer to Foster Carers during lockdown so they could get advice on educational issues while pupils were learning at home. This helped to contain Foster Carers concerns about how much/how little education they should try and achieve at home during lockdown whilst also keeping the balance of a positive relationship with their children.

VSK had already offered a VSK Welcome Pack for new Foster Carers, but the Task and Finish group has been refreshing and developing this so it is the same offer across the whole school/county for Foster Carers and also Social Workers.

VSK holds an annual Awards celebration and has recognised Foster Carers this year for the first time in terms of their contribution towards education, ensuring recognition of the role carers play in supporting children’s educational outcomes.

Participation events specifically for the birth children of Foster Carers also take place regularly, so that this group of children are supported – as are their parents. The take up has been very good and their views can be heard as things aren’t always easy for this group of Young People and some children of foster carers have gone on to become foster carers themselves.

In an interview Foster Carers said:

- “They are fantastic, they understand what you need even if you are struggling to articulate it.”
- “I wouldn’t have survived without them.”
- They are open to your suggestions, I cannot fault them.”
- “As an adopted parent you are your child’s advocate and parent but this can be emotional, lonely and difficult to achieve with objectivity. VSK were my advocates and problems solvers in aiding my child to

reach their potential within the school environment. There are so many services out there that I did not know about until VSK became involved. Their support and friendly demeanour have been invaluable to my daughter and my own mental well-being.”

- “I am so gratefully appreciative of their meaningful intervention delivered in such a supportive, individualistic and friendly manner.”
- They are the “Jewell in the Crown” of the support we receive.”

1b.2 Nurture principles are defined and explained to parents and caregivers.

The FELOs have been sharing VSK’s journey towards the NNSP accreditation at their local Foster Carer support groups across the county. This has included sharing information around the VSK 6 Principles of Nurture and the Boxall Profile. They have been encouraged to also go on the VSK website to find out more information and watch the films by their Young People and Tony Doran.

The Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) team have created advice leaflets for parents. These leaflets prominently feature VSK as a Nurturing School and include the 6 VSK Principles along with the nurture logo. At events where Foster Carers take part and/or their children attend, the VSK Nurture Principles are clearly on display.

The PLAC team have adopted the principle of “How you behave tells us how you feel” by bringing in the child and parent voices to the EPPLAC meetings (Education Plan for PLAC) and trying to help their schools understand things from these points of view. In addition, a parent-friendly FAQ for Boxall Profile was developed and is on the VSK website, adapted from the VSK staff version. During interviews, it was clear that Foster Carers had an awareness and understanding of the Principles.

1b.3 Reports to parents and caregivers reflect children and young people’s strengths and areas of need.

As previously mentioned, VSK holds an annual awards ceremony to recognise the varied achievements of their pupils from primary age through to post 16 ages – and it is differentiated for the different age phases. There is a wide range of categories that celebrate not just academic success, but also things such as success in supporting their community and a kindness award. Both the Corporate Director and Member of Children’s Services always attend and have key roles to play in engaging with the Young People as well as giving a speech. During interview with the Director of Children Services, Matt Dunkley, he spoke of these events and the importance of it for him, “Those celebration events allow me as a leader to see the reality and impact of what we are striving to do for our Young People, it’s a way to give an expression of corporate parenting and I like to make that connection. For me, it’s the most rewarding part of my job.”

VSK’s Annual Report to Corporate Parenting Panel reflects young people’s strengths, achievements and also areas of need/challenges going forwards. Tony Doran presents this at CPP and this is an important influence on improving issues pupils face e.g. placement stability.

At an individual child level, pupils’ PEPs reflect their strengths and areas of need. For example, in the Attainment section pupils are prompted to talk about which subjects they are enjoying and engaging well with, not just the ones they are performing well in or might need extra help with. During the interview, Sarah Hammond, Director of Integrated Children’s Services talked of the importance and impact of Pupil Voice, within VSK and Countywide,” Listening to what they say helps us in our relentless pursuit of understanding our pupils and their journey.”

1c.	Staff
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1c.1 There are systems and procedures to welcome, support and induct new staff and visitors.

VSK have a staff induction booklet that has a welcome from Tony Doran the Head Teacher followed by a timetabled structure of training and support activities are given for the first 2 weeks which includes ‘getting to know you’ sessions with members from different teams across VSK. This has become particularly important through lockdown as new staff have been employed and needed extra tailored support to help them learn their role within the service. This Induction Pack has been developed in response to staff requests to also include key information such as links to statutory guidance e.g. Pupil Premium+ so they can speak knowledgeably about these things at PEPs. New staff also have shadowing opportunities built into this programme so they attend meetings with well-established VSK staff before going to PEPs on their own. Following requests from VSK staff, photos of their Team and the Senior Leadership Team are also included in this Induction pack – including an introductory session with the Participation Team.

All new VSK staff are offered the opportunity to attend Attachment and Trauma-informed training so they can become skilled in understanding attachment and offering advice when they are in schools etc. The Post 16 team have also been trained up in this topic during the 2020-21 academic year. During the lockdown, VSK staff adapted this training package to take it online. Home start volunteers have also been trained this year – which supports the ‘edge of care’ work.

Informal ‘coffee breaks’ on Teams for different groups across VSK have become a regular feature during the lockdown. These have helped staff to meet and talk about non-work things as they would if they were in an actual building together. During the interview, new staff member Holly fed back that she had found this particularly welcoming and helpful. Some staff who have felt low have been supported by their colleagues in a nurturing way via these arrangements – and one member of staff was surprised later in the day by two of her colleagues bringing her a ‘care package’ of goodies! VSK Nurture Ambassadors are included in the routine for induction of new staff to VSK so that the ethos and 6 Principles are introduced right at the beginning of their employment.

1c.2 Nurture principles are defined and explained to all staff.

This is another area of strength for VSK. Staff had an introduction to the 6 Principles of Nurture in their Boxall training in February 2020 which was then reinforced at the 2-day initial NNSP training with the Extended Leadership Team. Following this, in September 2020 a whole school training event with a focus on the 6 Principles at VSK was held. This activity enabled every member of the VSK team to be consulted with, giving their ideas in small groups that then fed into a whole school action plan. Communications went out quickly to staff following this event with a summary of their ideas of group feedback and some quick wins “you said we did” e.g. supervision structure changed. As previously mentioned, the P&E team took these ideas to help them explain the 6 Principles to Young People and involve them in developing the VSK 6 principles of Nurture.

The Recording by Tony Doran on VSK’s 6 principles of Nurture went out to staff via email as well as being on the VSK website and Nurture Ambassadors were created in each team, including Post 16, PLAC and Out of County team so it is truly a whole- school buy-in. The Nurture Ambassadors have been celebrated on the website and have come together as a group in themselves to ensure they are included in discussions on how to develop the Boxall Profile across the school and are upskilled so they can support others with all aspects of Nurture. Boxall training took place for VSK staff who were not able to attend the February 2020 training and further Boxall training took place to support staff towards using the Boxall Online platform. Nurture Ambassadors supported staff with the new learning and continue to do this as an ongoing approach.

As part of the Nurture Group project at VSK, several staff across the school have taken part in the 3-day Theory and Practice accredited training. This has reinforced an even more in-depth understanding of nurture and enables them to give sustainability to the longer-term impact by supporting schools with advice on setting up and running their own nurture groups.

The 6 Principles posters were up in offices before lockdown. Following lockdown, senior staff had the 6 Principles poster as their background for Teams meetings. The VSK 6 Principles logo was subsequently developed and this became the copyright logo which staff were encouraged to use as backgrounds on TEAMS, at their team meetings and on any publications. This gave a strong visual image to reinforce the understanding within VSK staff as well as promote awareness with partners, parents and children.

Teams then decided to put VSK’s 6 Principles of Nurture on their team meeting agenda as a standing item so that the Principles could be reinforced in terms of their practice, recognising when these were happening and motivating staff to keep embedding.

Boxall training took place for VSK staff who were not able to attend the February 2020 training and further Boxall training took place to support staff towards using the Boxall Online platform. Nurture Ambassadors supported staff with the new learning and continue to do this as an ongoing approach.

1c.3 Staff are given opportunities to discuss, develop and review shared values.

The Extended Leadership Team have funnelled staff’s views and wishes into the NNSP days and have reciprocally fed back so that there is a continual review loop and staff can feel heard. One example of this was the discussion around the Boxall Profile where staff’s concerns were heard and the roll-out plan was subsequently adapted.

A mixture of Task and Finish groups were set up after the development days so that a wide group of staff have the opportunity to feed into and design the School Development Plan in relation to a specific area e.g. Boxall profile, PEPs, E-Learning, Social Media, Literacy etc. These groups have worked within a structure of the VSK Target Tracker which has targets and outcomes and the VSK nurture logo and Principles are on this so that the group can show how their plans align with which Nurture Principles. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) offered each group the opportunity for applying for some budget money to help them achieve their aims. SLT has

considered each of the group's Target Trackers and is currently reviewing the impact from this academic year to start planning for the next phases.

At team meetings, the VSK Principles are on the agenda and this allows staff to discuss shared values and celebrate how their own team activities contribute to the bigger picture around nurture at VSK.

1c.4 There are clear expectations of how staff relate to children and young people in all settings and events.

The Induction programme for new staff includes training on KCC Behaviours and face-to-face role modelling from experienced staff in working directly with Young People.

Values are reinforced by the Head Teacher and other Leaders through the year – and the child's voice is at the heart of what the school is about - as evidenced by the film on VSK 6 Nurture Principles.

There is a website designed by the pupils and VSK use the phrase “designed by our children and for our children.” This slogan and ethos are modelled and reinforced throughout the year by staff in numerous ways.

Staff are encouraged to be fully involved in the VSK Awards annual ceremonies (at a weekend) and also in the holiday activities e.g. water sports, art – an example of this is the recent Corporate Parent Challenge (sports day) which encouraged staff and partners to join in with the children on fun activities. Due to covid the activities, in general, had to go online, but now VSK is hoping for more face to face activities, there will be a drive to encourage staff across all teams to get involved again so there is a joined-up approach across the school.

During the last two years there has been a significant drive to achieve integration of staff across the age phases and in Kent/out of county so that children receive as equal an offer from VSK as possible with shared values evident. Achieving integration has its challenges e.g. the children living out of county cannot access physical resources as easily as pupils in Kent, but virtual resources such as Accelerated Reader and online Speech and Language assessments are supporting developments there.

The Social Media Task & Finish group is supporting developments in the Kent Cares town website (for Young People) - it has become compliant with accessibility this year and also has more age-appropriate sections e.g. the section for primary aged children has a superhero theme. The children's website also has a recording from their Head Teacher and appropriate wording for Young People on VSK's NNSP journey, including the use of the Boxall Profile.

VSK staff are embedding into their practice the use of the VSK Principles when they support children at their PEP meetings e.g. with transitions, managing change, understanding behaviour – and are always working towards improving the opportunities for their young people in this more formal context.

1c.5 Staff are actively involved in The National Nurturing Schools Programme.

VSK staff have been extensively involved in the journey towards NNSP with consultations, feedback, using a “you said we did” approach and supporting them to be part of their own School Development Plan, designing future delivery of the service.

VSK's application showed a good balance of evidence from across every team in the service demonstrating that staff are actively involved and the creation of the Nurture Ambassadors has been important in that they drive forwards change and developments in each team, supporting them to embed the new practice in an informal and friendly way.

1d. The community

1d.1 The school works with all stakeholders.

Case study - Community working to support Children in Care who have SEN

Over 400 Children in Care to Kent have an EHCP, with over 45% having a primary need of SEMH. Places at educational provisions for children with EHCPs are hard to find and lack of access to education is a well-known factor in placement breakdown.

VSK identified a need for improving cohesion and commonality with the SEN service so they felt they were part of the Corporate Parent. Bridges needed to be built between SEN and Social Services (SS) to improve awareness and understanding of pressures in the SEN system as well as knowledge of process, law and the goals of inclusion.

VSK convened Area SEN escalation meetings where Managers from SS, VSK and SEN came together to look at individual cases where there was identified drift/delay. The design was to form four communities across Kent with these three partners (i.e. one community per quadrant). The aim of having a community model was to alleviate any feelings of blame and have a productive relationship-based approach with a safe space – with the focus being on positive outcomes for vulnerable learners.

These meetings had a good impact, to begin with, but as pressures on the systems increased fewer cases were being resolved in 2020. As a result, a further tier of escalation was introduced at county level with an agreement to create a County Escalation meeting. These meetings have been attended by the SEN County manager and VSK's Head Teacher with the two Deputy Heads. To emphasise the sense of community with SEN colleagues VSK celebrates positive resolutions and works towards the common goals of prioritising CIC as Corporate Parents.

To support the concept of a community model the title of the concept was changed to SEN Partnership. This language encourages a more relational model and developed the sense of being a community together with common aims, working together to find solutions and overcome barriers.

The outcome of this approach is that the 4 area SEN/VSK/SS communities have developed a clear sense of their identity and purpose – with the county community having a sense of holding the 'parent' role to the 4 area ones. Issue resolution is achieved through joint actions with clear accountabilities and there is a greater mutual understanding of the constraints and issues faced by the different services in this community. In the interview, Danielle Babin, Manager of Integrated Child Services spoke of the success of this work, "the right people are there, we work and question collectively and get results."

1d.2 Nurture principles are defined and explained to stakeholders.

This is another area of strength. VSK has presented their journey towards NNSP at Divisional MT Meetings at KCC. These meetings include representatives from across partners including Early Help, Social Care Managers and Youth Justice. As previously mentioned the VSK 6 Principles were shared and approval was sought from the Assistant Directors as to whether these might be robust principles for all practitioners working with Young People to adopt. This led to a presentation to the Corporate Director and the film by the Young People was also shared there. The Director approved the request - and in Autumn 2021 this led to development countywide. The ripple effect of this countywide approach is impressive, during the interview Sarah Hammond talked about a meeting she had with the Highways Department engineer and her realisation that he had an understanding of stage not age and behaviour as a form of communication since the introduction of the Principles. Interviews with Fostering Services, Social care, IRO's, designated teachers for LAC and foster carers all indicated a clear awareness and understanding of the Principles.

In addition, opportunities were set up for Kent schools to attend the 3 day accredited Theory and Practice course programme or the Boxall Training. There has also been training courses from Nurtureuk in North Kent and also for the first time – Out of County schools, this continues to this day.

VSK Newsletters in 2020-21 have included articles on Nurture, VSK's 6 Principles and the journey towards NNSP status so that schools are aware of the ethos and can find out more information if they wish to undertake a similar journey. The Newsletter also goes out to all partnering agencies such as Fostering, the IRO team (Independent Reviewing Officers) and Social Care Teams so that they have a shared understanding of what VSK are striving to achieve in the way they work with children, staff and partners.

1d.3 The school is used as an established resource for stakeholders.

VSK regularly deliver Attachment/Trauma aware training to schools across the county and also to other organisations such as the Home-Start Volunteers and the Specialist Schools Alliance. During covid, this has been adapted to go online. Feedback is generally very positive and indicates shifts in thinking.

VSK recently ran a huge county project to support the development of trauma aware practice in schools. This involved working in partnership with KCA training (Kate Cairns Associates) and working with schools to help them develop their practice and embed it at the whole school level. This involved VSK working with the Timpson Project to contribute towards national data. One outcome was that 2 of their schools reached the Final of the Timpson's Attachment Awards.

The VSK Nurture Group project continues into its fourth year with further training for schools this academic year which builds capacity for supporting and including VSK pupils. VSK has been in discussion with Senior Managers at KCC about how a Nurture approach can be promoted across all learners to support inclusion in the county. As a result, VSK has been included in the commissioning team for the SEND Action plan strand on Nurture. This promotes VSK as an established resource for not only CIC, PLAC and care leavers, but also in the wider arena of inclusion for vulnerable learners. VSK has had a pivotal role in ensuring the next phase of Nurtureuk work across Kent to become a "nurturing county".

Designated Teachers know VSK as a source of support to help them achieve their role in schools – to undertake quality PEPs, to advocate for their pupils, to support their inclusion and to help them safeguard them. VSK teams engage with them all the time on an individual basis to answer queries or undertake Tracking meetings with them - as well as by running local DT Networks and training sessions for them. DTs are encouraged to influence VSK's decision making around using PP+ well in response to local needs. During the interview, DT's were very positive about the support they receive:

- “They go above and beyond for us.”
- “We are accountable but not micro-managed and I appreciate that.”
- Maria is a diamond!”
- Maria is a godsend.”
- We literally couldn’t do this without them.”
- “They are supportive, professional and nurturing to us too.”
- “They funded a Post Grad Leadership Diploma for me which has allowed me to be more strategic in my approach and I really value it.”

The post 16 team have strong links with the 18+ team so that transitions are well supported and aspirations are strong for pupils to engage in higher education, training or employment.

The Out of County team has worked on improving access to resources for their young people and helping schools at a distance to understand the VSK offer and how they can engage in projects to support their pupils. In addition, Social care staff also value their work, in the interview Claire Cannon, team manager for Thanet ICS called OOC “real advocates for challenging pupils, tirelessly and creatively investing time and tailoring the right package for each pupil.” In particular, she mentioned that Amanda Ormand had, “ a person-centred approach which was incredibly helpful amongst the chaos” and had given her social workers “unwavering support.”

1d.4 The school is responsive and inclusive to its stakeholders.

Feedback from school staff indicates they feel it is very important to develop good networking relationships so that there is open and honest communication in the best interest of the child. One school in Thanet during their OFSTED inspection stated “To call VSK a virtual school is to do them a disservice. They are a REAL service who provide REAL support when you need them.”

VSK buy in 22 days for the academic year – and as well as training projects this also includes supervision for VSK staff if needed. In the North and West of the county, there is a system (based on responses to the VSK survey and also how staff have felt during lockdown) to support staff wellbeing - this is coaching for leaders and reflective peer circles for staff groups and is delivered by an independent company. Feedback from VSK staff taking part is very positive as conformed in staff interviews on assessment day.

A Triage offer which includes complex case support when needed has been created in North and West Kent in response to staff, foster carers and schools’ wishes. Similar approaches are used in South and East Kent with Alliances e.g. Dover Alliance and children can access psychotherapy, speech and language support at the request of partners. PP+ support maps (on the VSK website) are in response to local needs and VSK encourage stakeholders to have a voice around what might be developed to continually develop the support offered.

VSK P&E team regularly respond to requests from KCC partners to help have children’s voices be heard so they can contribute to the design of policies and practice – not just for CIC but also in relation to birth children of FCs, adopted children or those who receive Early Help. This practice is also supporting the development of the Kent Local SEND offer.

Under development is a new therapeutic intervention offer in N&W Kent and Medway in response to requests from Social Care and schools. The IRO service has been consulted about their views so that this can influence service design and the offer.

A Task & Finish group for Power BI has been created so reliable information can be obtained easily from the system to enable a response to patterns/ needs being represented in the data picture. Training for staff on Power BI has been an essential part of this during the spring term. VSK is working with the Management Information unit to develop the integrity of the data. The Attendance data is already on there as are the PEP indicators on well-being, behaviour, engagement, attainment and progress. SDQ data will be on there once the new system rolls out in the next few months.

An e-learning Task and Finish group have been developed at VSK this year to respond to the technology that pupils need to do their schoolwork effectively both in remote learning/lockdown times and in the future. The Challenge card from the children on this need has supported a new strategy at VSK regarding the devices provided and also providing them to children at a younger age. Another example of pupil voice influencing policy.

2	Delivery
2a.	Meeting the needs of children and young people
<p>2a.1 Nurture principles are incorporated in curriculum planning and delivery. Children’s learning is understood developmentally at VSK who practice a ‘stage not age’ approach and use this phrase frequently at attachment training delivery to help schools understand. There are Speech and Language therapists contracted to do assessments and direct working with children whether they are in the Early Years or at secondary – this is an example of identifying and supporting children’s needs whatever their age as well as how important VSK consider language to be as a means of communication. This year the SALT offer has widened to include OOC children. Attachment training also includes teaching on how school staff need to understand that they are sometimes the ‘only safe port in a storm’ and how their classroom can represent a safe place to children; additionally for them to understand how not only children’s but also their own behaviour can tell a lot about how they feel. In response to requests from staff asking for short but frequent communications with bullet points and for face to face where possible, communications from the Senior Leadership Team have been developed in such a way. Positive compliment cards for Young People in WK have been developed and the team are using these frequently now. Other things are in place across the school e.g. thank you postcards are sent through the post to staff when they have gone over and above.</p> <p>2a.2 The social and emotional needs of children and young people are addressed. This is another area of strength, evidence showed many ways this works within VSK but here are a few examples. Most staff in post in February 2020 had Boxall Training so that the social and emotional needs of pupils in target groups or on an individual basis can be assessed and addressed. Boxall was practised on paper through the summer term of 2020 with everyone who attended the training doing a Boxall Profile assessment. These staff all took part in small group supervision sessions with a Senior EP to help them embed their practice. These sessions were very positively received and the feedback reflected this. The PLAC team and Post 16 Team have made arrangements to provide support through the use of the Boxall Profile that will best suit the needs of the specific groups of young people they support. Interviews with the nurture ambassadors indicated a passion for the Boxall from some of the staff, for example, Laura talked of the impact of using it with secondary teachers and her desire to further encourage this and Jeff mentioned that although he had been reticent to use it initially had found that the Boxall gave him a better understanding of the pupil’s needs and a framework on which to build support and strategies. However, this was not consistent throughout the whole group and will be a point to develop moving forward. (See development points below for more detail.) When VSK put in place Reduced Timetables or Flexible Learning Plans they take time to find out what the young persons’ interests are and build these activities in to support their social needs as well as help them feel heard. For example, a young lady who is school refusing has been offered work experience at a nursery as this is their aspiration to work in this industry. Another young person may love horses and so this is used, not as a reward, but because that is what VSK believe they need. Designated teachers spoke of this “creativity” from VSK, finding ways in which to engage pupils based on their strengths.</p> <p>The P&E team deliver training on Mind of my Own, an app that supports Young People to give their views to professionals in their lives. They might use this before an important meeting or more informally because their feelings have changed. When a young person uses the app the P&E team ensure this is passed on to the relevant professional so it can be swiftly responded to within a specified time frame. VSK supports and advises where a statutory assessment may be needed about the SEMH designation. This may include helping a SENCO to write an Appendix or undertaking observations, organising assessments through liaising with other partners or buying in services from providers e.g. mentoring or therapy. The Alliances projects in South and East Kent offer a variety of supports for SEMH to students e.g. psychotherapy, art therapy and play therapy.</p> <p>Projects in N&WK such as TAM and Touchbase support the addressing of children’s social and emotional needs in schools by training TAs to deliver interventions in neuroscience. At SEN Escalation/Partnership meetings VSK Leaders join with SEN Area Managers and Social Care Managers to progress cases for pupils where they have an EHCP but there may be drift/delay around getting their needs met. A Report is done for CPP on how these cases progress every few months. The development of Talk and Draw training in West Kent is now widening into other areas. This is an opportunity for school practitioners to be trained to deliver this SEMH intervention.</p>	

The PLAC team bought in KCA this year to deliver training to schools and other multi-agency practitioners across the county on trauma/attachment in regards to their cohort of previously looked after children, it has been very well received. Kent largest number of UASCYP – a large number have trauma from the journey and their home country. VSK works hard with this group, many of whom have PTSD and anxiety including a Project where using their own native voices these Young People are making a video about their experiences, what has helped them and hindered them to use this as an educational tool and also with new arrivals so that they have comfort/reassurance to convey a sense of hope.

2a.3 Consistent advice is given on supporting improvements in behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

EP Triage from an external provider working across N&W Kent and Medway provides a way of ensuring consistent advice is given to Foster Carers, school and VSK often at the same time around complex cases VSK training packages acknowledge that there is no ‘one size to fit all’ so advice and support have to be bespoke to pupils needs and schools’ needs.

Area/ phase and professional practice team meetings encourage consistent practice around how VSK respond to queries and how they respond to requests for support/advice. For example, a recent N&WK Area Meeting included an activity session on how VSK spend PP+ on SEMH so that their practice could be discussed alongside practical examples, thus aiding consistency. Leaders in the teams’ role- modelled the thought process behind decision making.

Asst Heads and Team Leads are consulted daily by their teams where queries arise in how to respond to situations and the Leaders role model consistency in practice in line with statutory guidance and KCC policy.

ESOs work with children directly in school so that their expertise can be role modelled to school staff (e.g. T.A’s) and capacity in those schools can be built for the good of VSK pupils and all learners.

VSK deliver training to Newly Qualified Social Workers so that consistent information is given to new staff FEOs support Foster Carers at area support groups across the county so that consistent advice is given from VSK.

2a.4 Children and young people are encouraged to be involved in developing and evolving their educational achievements.

VSK PEP is focused on the Young Person’s voice. VSK consulted with their Young People and co-produced questions that are relevant to them using words that they feel they understand. The PEP Task and Finish group were created during the academic year 2020-21 to further develop the Young People’s questions and improve accessibility/inclusion for those pupils with severe/complex needs.

Part of the Quality Assurance process around PEPs is that there must be evidence of the young person’s voice, whether through the questions being answered, the Young Person attending the meeting itself, or through another person they feel safe with going through their views beforehand and then bringing these to the meeting. If a Young Person has a request between PEPs this will be responded to immediately. This includes using Pupil Premium + to support a need in the interim time between PEPs and this is written in the VSK PP+ policy. VSK never stand still with their reflective practice so the Task and Finish group for the KS5 PEP is aiming to develop to give an improved and more holistic picture of the whole young person beyond whether they are NEET or EET.

2b. Wellbeing: Children and young people

2b.1 Provision and strategies promote the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people.

VSK Safeguarding duties mean that they are always mindful of promoting young people’s welfare and wellbeing. All staff are expected to read and understand their Keeping Children Safe policy, there is a form that asks them to sign to say they have done so.

There are many examples where VSK support with complex case advice at PEPs and other meetings e.g. Placement Planning Meetings, Risk Meetings, Panels and CIC Reviews – where knowledge around safeguarding and social/emotional needs of children is used to support decision making and practice.

The PLAC team at VSK regularly support at EPPLAC meetings (Education Plan for PLAC) to advise parents and schools on welfare, safety and wellbeing.

The P&E team meet Young People directly at school councils and listen to their views and feelings to help them influence policy design and practice. This is fed up to CPP and other Senior Managers, even including, on occasion, government ministers who have come to meet them at VSK offices. This strong approach to being true parents to the children being looked after by Kent supports the positive development of their children’s welfare and wellbeing.

2b.2 Children and young people feel safe and secure.

VSK is represented at a wide variety of Panels and Meetings to ensure that Young People are being kept safe e.g. Allegations Panel and children and Young People's voices are heard at the council meetings and activity days, at Corporate Parenting Panel. Focus is often on topics related to keeping other care experienced children safer and happier in the future.

A new development from the Participation team is called In Care in School. This is designed to be delivered to schools to aid their understanding of what it is like to be a child in care. The apprentices and care experienced Young People have helped to develop this and aim to help their pupils to feel understood and secure in school. VSK's children and young people have been supporting the development of the local SEN offer, making films to support change for other children in the future, this promotes their voices to be heard and aims to help them feel more secure about KCC being a truly supportive corporate parent.

VSK pupils have also made a film about the positive use of language by professionals e.g. using home rather than the term placement, visiting family instead of the term contact etc. This film has been shared with partners and the Corporate Parenting Panel as well as a Designated Teacher training by area teams.

A pre-recorded interview with a VSK pupil indicated the impact of the support, "In the Young Person Council I can say what I want and I'm not judged, it's safe to express how I feel." "I believe in myself a lot more and I can do a lot more if I put my head into it."

2b.3 Children and young people feel valued, respected, included and listened to.

VSK has designed a section of the PEP especially to capture pupil voices. Young People are supported by school staff or their foster carers at home to help them complete their section and have their voices heard about education matters. VSK staff ensure these views are considered in the PEP meeting so that they influence action planning. Asst Heads also read these views carefully as part of the Quality Assurance process to ensure nothing is missed, whether that be a strength or a difficulty. The next steps are for improved accessibility features for Young People with complex needs e.g. if they are non-verbal. VSK has rolled out the aforementioned Mind of my Own app for Young People – this is an app that can be put on to phones or other devices and is designed to help Young People get their views and wishes heard in advance of their CIC Reviews, their PEPs or other meetings. They can also use the app if there is another situation that they feel they have concerns about – and VSK has a promise to respond in a timely fashion. The app is very visual and age-appropriate for adolescents too, with accessibility features to support inclusion. The P&E team work continuously with VSK apprentices (many of which are care leavers) to hear the voices of their young people. One example is the piece of work on the aforementioned Mind your Language, a film clip that uses the views of VSK young people to influence the language professionals to use. If Young People have communication difficulties VSK try to ensure their views are still heard. Two staff members are specialising in Speech-Language and Communication Needs and undertaking accredited courses so they can offer high-quality advice to VSK staff as well as partners

VSK apprentices are trained in safe recruitment so they can support with interviewing and recruitment. Staff try to ensure they are involved in every interview panel at VSK for recruiting in-house.

2b.4 Children and young people are prepared for transitions in life.

All transitions of school are supported whether they are in year or at the usual transition times. Support from VSK can be in the form of direct working with the Young Person, advice to partners, organising admission and using PP+ to support social and emotional or academic needs/assessments as part of this. Whenever there is a transition of school being planned a PEP is organised and VSK always attend to support with advice etc. They also always attend the first PEP for a child/Young Person in any new school/setting.

Each year VSK organises a positive transition support package for children going into years R, 7 and 12. This includes useful equipment to support them with their learning as well as positive messages and offers of help from the service. VSK recognises the importance of transitions in children's lives and delivers a training package on transitions to partners each year ranging from EY settings to post 16 and this uses attachment theory as well as ACES to emphasise trauma-informed practice. The P&E team meet Young People directly at their school councils and often include food as part of a nurturing approach.

During several lockdowns, ESOs and EWOs have supported transitions from home learning back into school and have reinforced good practice around trauma-informed approaches. Exclusions are at an all-time low this year because of their nurturing approaches, including promoting the understanding that "how you behave tells us how you feel". In addition, The P&E team run a Young Adults Council (YAC) and children can progress from the OCYPC (secondary aged council) to YAC when ready. YAC discusses more adult topics and aims to form a supportive network in the group. The P&E team worked with young people to produce a film about reintegrating

back into school. This was very well received by professionals and children. Additionally, other Heads of Virtual Schools used it to help their children.

2b. Wellbeing: Staff

2b.5 Provision and strategies promote staff welfare and wellbeing.

VSK staff have been given a lot of support during lockdown and managers have used the nurturing approach to build the well-being of their teams. Events such as online coffee breaks (“fancy a cuppa”), staff yoga sessions, mindfulness sessions were bought in, meeting away from homes for lunch/coffee when this has been allowed. This has created safe spaces for staff at VSK. Training from KCA (Kate Cairns) was arranged for VSK staff through the summer term to promote a nurturing approach to supporting their welfare and wellbeing, The sessions focused on welfare through covid and had time for reflection included Staff have regular supervision and there have been requests for improved consistency so a new supervision structure and plan was developed for the academic year 2020-21. This is typical of VSK with their “you said, we did,” approach.

As the new supervision structure expanded to include supervision for ESOs (Education support Officers) by SESOs (Senior Education Support Officers) the Deputy Heads set up group supervision for the SESOs to support them with taking on this new responsibility. The book Nurturing Peer Supervision by Tina Rae was used as a basis for ideas and 3 sessions were held during 2020-21. The group are feeling more comfortable now and have requested some training, this will be put into place for them going forwards.

Business Support Officers (BSOs) have started to be included in Teams Meetings, some pre covid and some increasingly so during the lockdown, also in team events and activities. This is improving integration, welfare and wellbeing. Taking regular breaks from online meetings has been encouraged through lockdown – in updates from KCC Directorate and also from VSK Head Teacher and Senior Leaders to promote health and safety as well as good mental health. During the interview, many staff members commented on how much they appreciate the recognition of the potential stresses the job involves and how SLT emphasise the systems in place for their wellbeing and encourage the use of them.

2b.6 Staff feel valued, respected, included and listened to.

Linked to staff voice and wellbeing, VSK undertook a whole school survey to ascertain how staff felt about their jobs post restructure 6 months after it occurred. The results indicated some specific requests for improvement around wellbeing and being involved in the school development plan. Task and Finish groups were created last year as part of School Development Planning. The concept was for cross-county/age//phase groups to come together to be heard and influence development in practice at VSK.

VSK has been focusing on increased integration across the service as requested by staff, especially with Post 16 and the School Years Area Teams and this work continues. Through Lockdown VSK made adjustments for staff so they could work more flexibly according to their family’s needs e.g. fitting working around school drop off/pick up, changing working hours to help them look after their children whilst learning at home Actions from 1st September 2020 development day activities were included in a summary with the ‘you said we did’ approach. These actions contributed to the NNSP Self-Assessment and Action Plan.

Asst Heads requested opportunities for informal network meetings and these started in September 2020.

VSK developed a version of the CYPE newsletter in response to staff requests for increased and regular communication from the Senior Leadership Team. Work has started on the development of workshops around attainment and progress (A&P) so all staff understand national standards and the associated language so that PEPs hold good quality A&P data and the RAP forecast can be as accurate as possible as well as an effective working tool for the school.

2b.7 Staff access relevant professional development.

The new supervision structure has aimed to bring about improved and more consistent performance management target setting in conjunction with staff and with improved opportunities for CPD discussions to support the achievement of these. This year VSK has put forwards all Asst Heads, Transition Lead Officers and SESOs for Kent Manager for Future Manager programme.

Staff fed back that they would like more cross-county working and so the refreshing of Task & Finish groups supported this. A brand new CPD offer across the whole school launched on basis of ‘you said we did.’ Each member of staff is in charge of creating their own learning package and they can select from several sources. There is a new library for staff to co-produce and evolve – called ‘Our ideas for reading’. Staff are asked to put aside in their diary 2 sessions per short term to achieve this so they have protected time. At 1-1s each member

of staff is asked about what they have been learning. Certificates from online learning are being collected centrally to support evidence. This CPD offer to be further embedded and developed in 2021-22 with a review of staff's feelings and development about it.

2b.8 There are opportunities for reflective collaborative problem solving for staff

Area Team meetings help to support reflection and collaborative problem solving, developing self-efficacy and building capacity within each team. Extended Leadership Meetings involves new layers of staff in influencing VSK practice and school development planning e.g. through Task and Finish groups. A significant number of staff across the school are now included in Task and Finish groups which drive whole school change. This has enhanced their voice in the creation and development of the SDP.

Asst Head meetings for networking and problem solving were re-established in the academic year 2020-21 as a response to their requests for this.

2b.9 Virtual School staff feel supported and part of a team when lone working

Use of the DSE assessment tool has been used to support home working safely and healthily through lockdowns. The creation of informal opportunities through lockdown for coming together informally as well as for meetings has been encouraged and supported by Senior Leaders.

VSK uses a 'Network' approach with all professionals supporting the Young Person so there is collaboration and support with professionals to encourage an ethos of peer support. This can be a challenge when things are difficult or there are disagreements, but supervision for staff / reflective peer circles is helping them to feel more supported with these situations.

Most teams have a WhatsApp group so staff can feel regularly supported with check-ins and light-hearted ways to keep morale and well-being high. For example, the OOC team raised money for a charity by doing a daily mile – and were using their WhatsApp group to motivate each other and celebrate success. Tony shared his particular favourite event, which was a beard-growing competition. With only 2 men on the extended leadership team, one would expect a clear outcome but reportedly it was in fact a female colleague who won! This is a good example of the camaraderie that is encouraged and this comes from senior leaders and filters to all staff.

2c.	The environment
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2c.1 Nurture principles are reflected in the development of the workplace environments.

Before lockdown, the 6 Principles posters were on the walls in the office to remind staff and raise awareness with partners. Staff were able to use break out areas for making drinks and sitting comfortably to chat/network. VSK desk areas had information posters and children's work displayed, also VSK staff's creative work such as the VSK bunting at Worrall and the 3D models made at a CPD day run by the EP team. There is currently a model of flexible working - a mixture of working from home and booking a "hot desk" within VSK office spaces and staff can decide between themselves how to work this to fit their team's needs. During the interview, staff reported that they appreciated this choice and support.

2c.2 The environment is safe and welcoming for all stakeholders.

When VSK buy in services from external providers there is guidance that helps Team Leads know what precautions and preparations must be done to keep children safe. (VSK Internal PP+ Guidance). This includes checks of DBS, insurances and qualifications as well as annual reviews. This year it has been developed to support Post 16 financial processes too.

VSK are aware that the new flexible working policy needs to be done in such a way that feels safe and welcoming for visitors to VSK at the offices and are taking a reflective stance on this as it evolves.

3	Leadership and management
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3a.	Policy
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3a.1 Organisational processes and service development policies reflect and support nurture principles.

As a service within KCC VSK is actively encouraged not to write policy but to work within KCC generic policy. However, VSK processes are the key to embedding the 6 Principles, which are evident in many aspects of VSK

such as induction, supervision, whole staff training and CPD, team meetings, direct work with stakeholders and commissioning of services.

VSK has developed a new supervision structure to support the welfare and wellbeing of staff plus learning/CPD. A tool for supervision has been created using the “Good Conversation Tool” and the VSK Nurture logo has been added as a reminder for the supervisor plus the supervisee. Top of the page in this tool is the section on wellbeing, which kick starts conversations in the 1-1 session in the most nurturing way. This has been particularly important during covid when the Senior Leadership Team have encouraged all the leaders to be supportive of staff who need to pick children up, who need to care for relatives, need time to go and get their vaccinations etc. An SLT Action Plan was developed so that the Head Teacher could have an overview of actions completed and gaps needing to be addressed to support towards completion of the NNSP Award.

3a.2 Stakeholders are involved in the development and review of policies.

Much of the evidence previously mentioned throughout this report indicates clear involvement of stakeholders in many different ways and policy is no exception. The P&E team ensure that young people are fully included in the development and review of practice e.g. with the SEND Local Offer at KCC, Challenge Cards, development of activities for young people in care and those previously in care. This will develop for Children in Need in the academic year 2021-22.

The VSK Lead for Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP) meets regularly with the Social Care Team Manager for UASYP to support the development of practice and policy. VSK staff asked for adaptation of the Plan for using Boxall based on covid and workload, so this was adapted in both method and timescales. Yet another example of reflective practice, a strength for VSK.

3b. Partnership

3b.1 Partnership working reflects a nurturing rationale.

Case Study - Virtual School Kent (VSK) & Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS)

VSK has worked with the Kent Education Psychology service for over 5 years and has developed partnerships within the VSK area teams and the VSK Previously Looked After team. The partnership aims to improve the outcomes for Children in Care (CIC), whether they be via academic achievement or the improvement of wellbeing (SEMH).

Each VSK area has an individual link Educational Psychologist and they have together brought their knowledge and understanding of their children, what the local needs/systems are and how the EP’s skills and interests can marry up to create a positive project plan for each academic year which best uses the allocated time. There is an emphasis on proactive preventative work so it is not just assessment based. Each VSK team meets with the link EP in August / September to develop a plan for how to effectively use the allocated time, which has been developed with the knowledge of the needs of the VSK cohort and the EP’s knowledge of interventions, innovations and other services offers in the local area.

A plan is then agreed between VSK and KEPS which sets out the overall needs of VSK, timescales and required joint outcomes. The good relationships, practice, communication and trust; built on both sides of the partnerships; allow for innovative practice, as well as flexibility and adaptability when needed to meet the unplanned needs of the cohorts. The breadth of the offer to the various stakeholders involved with VSK work has included: VSK staff, social workers, foster carers, parents, school staff and Young People.

In addition, other examples of partnership working were included within the application, too numerous to mention all but here are some examples directly from the self-assessment:

- VSK has been working hard to create a nurturing partnership with SEN Area Managers and at the Senior Manager level within KCC. This is starting to bear fruit with a relationship-based approach (rather than “Escalation”) on the common theme of corporate parenting responsibilities and we are starting to see improved outcomes for our young people. Our P&E team have been extensively involved with supporting the children’s voices being heard to develop the Local Offer.
- VSK works collaboratively with the Fostering Service and the people within it as well as with individual Foster Carers as we value the support they give our children. Recent collaborative projects have included Sense of Belonging, Education Champions and Letterbox all of which focus on improving learning and well-being for our children - and training for Foster Carers. We also sit on the Allegations Panel run by Corporate Parenting AD with a focus on the Fostering Service. The training programme we offer Foster Carers is based on feedback from their FCs as well as what the Fostering Managers

think is needed to support their skill development around Education ie we hear their voices and respond accordingly.

3c. Partnership

3c.1 There are clear development priorities regarding nurture principles and practice.

As evidenced throughout this report staff were all included in the initial stages of the journey towards NNSP and their ideas contributed towards the action planning which formed the SDP/self-assessment journey.

Training and Consultation for the Extended Leadership Team for NNSP took place over the period February 2020 to July 2021. Briefings from Leaders fed this learning back into teams and reciprocally into subsequent NNSP training/consultancy days – and this supported development priorities being clear re nurture principles and practice. Visuals such as the logo and staff being encouraged to use these as email signatures, backdrops for TEAMS meetings, adding to agendas and t-shirts etc at activity events – all helped to reinforce the concepts and priorities.

Boxall Profile training for the whole school took place in February 2020 over 1 day; this was followed up with small group supervision sessions, the online tutorial for the Boxall Online system, Boxall workshop for Nurture Ambassadors (NAs), Boxall workshops for teams from the NAs cascaded further learning and support.

A guide for VSK school staff (How we will use the Boxall Profile at VSK) was produced, this was reviewed at the NNSP day in March and adapted based on feedback. Interviews during assessment gave a clear picture of a team working together using reflective practice to develop the programme.

3c.2 Resources are deployed to develop nurturing principles and practice.

VSK has committed a huge proportion of its budget to ensure that the school and its stakeholders are well supported and resourced.

This includes (taken directly from self-assessment evidence):

- individual and whole staff training
- Posts for the P&E Team, PLAC, OOC, UASC Team, new advisory service for September 2021 to fulfil the CIN responsibility)
- Lead for P&E and 2 SESO posts created and committed to without any additional funding.
- SLAs with providers reflect how we deploy resources from budgets such as PP+ to support the social/emotional needs of our young people.
- Other budgets are used to fund participation events and activities for the children, and their councils.
- Training is funded using PP+ and other budgets to help schools and other partners understand the needs of our young people, that their voice is heard loudly – and that there is a prompt response to meet needs.
- An significant weight of priority has been placed on this area for development across the whole service and beyond.
- VSK Staff time has been spent on supporting our NNSP journey through the T&F groups, through the Nurture Ambassadors and film-making. Also for the development of the use of Boxall Profile ONLINE across the school and embedding this into practice

3d. Monitoring and evaluation

3d.1 Monitoring and evaluation protocols include evidence of planning, reviewing and evaluating processes for the National Nurturing Schools Programme

Attendance is reported every month by the EWOs and there is a clear and well-established VSK process around collecting, tracking and monitoring attendance, how VSK teams work with their EWOs to support positive attendance and how monthly reporting takes place. In summer 2020 VSK built from scratch its own Attendance Administration Service to collect attendance data directly from their children's schools. This replaced a commissioned service and is much better value for money as well as enabling them to deliver a much-improved service for their children, schools and partners. It also provides the school with improved data that links directly from their Register and Liberi to Power BI in addition a new attendance dashboard has been

developed to enable teams to track their own children's progress/needs and attendance themes across their ages/areas.

NEET reporting is built into VSK processes as are Progression reports for year 11s through the year.

Reporting from BPO is built into timescales and School Development Planning, with data reporting schedules built-in. The SLT Action Plan schedules timeframe and actions towards completion of the NNSP Award, this has been a regular agenda item at SLT Meetings and supported tracking of progress.

Assessors Summary

This report cannot reflect the work that goes on at the school every day. A comprehensive evidence file and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process.

In summary, we recommend Virtual School Kent because:

- Extended Leadership Team** - VSK is passionate and driven by their unwavering support for their children and Young People. Led by Headteacher Tony Doran, and developed initially by Jo Kelly and Amanda Ormand, this pilot National Nurturing Virtual Schools Award Programme (NNVSP), the first for a Virtual School has seen adaptations by the extended Leadership Team and the programme and its framework has evolved through reflective practice, collaboration and sheer determination. This has resulted in an inspiring version of the NNSP programme, the result of which has empowered not just the VSK's pupils and staff but also their stakeholders such as Fostering Services, Kent County Council and Social Care services, to name but a few. The ripple effect of VSK's hard work is tangible across the whole county of Kent and is a testament to their understanding of the power of the 6 Principles of Nurture. This pilot NNVSP was developed during a pandemic with all the extra issues and challenges that this had created and still creates. This is really most impressive and the commitment, creativity and passion involved shine through.
- Adaption of the 6 Principles** – VSK took nurtureuk's 6 Principles of Nurture and working with their children and Young People, they created their own set of VSK 6 Principles. These VSK 6 Principles are relevant and meaningful to the children and Young People in their care, as they have had a part in creating them in their own voice. The use of the watering can as a symbol of nurturing and growing shows a deep understanding of the concept of nurture. Please see the final version below:-



The result of this is that the message has spread far and wide and has resulted in a pupil created nurture logo which is used as a backdrop in all virtual meetings, used on email signatures, is on their website, incorporated into their leaflets and booklets, on their headed paper and in as many places as they can find, ensuring anyone who works with the VSK, in any capacity sees and learns about their approach. The Young People's video about nurture and their VSK Principles is admirable and shows the extent to which VSK's Young People relate to this approach and that they have been part of the VSK's journey from the start. The interviews with stakeholders during the assessment confirms that this form of awareness-raising has been successful, as both stakeholders in and outside of the VSK know these VSK Principles and understand them in a meaningful way. Matt Dunkley described the use of the VSK Principles as "a glorious inkblot, spreading across the county" and we couldn't have put it better ourselves.

- Relationships with stakeholders-** The extent to which VSK supports their pupils' needs is commendable. VSK has committed a huge proportion of their budget to ensure that the Virtual School and all of its stakeholders are well supported, resourced and the evidence in this report gives examples of the many programmes, events, training and activities that have been made available. One of the key

factors noted when working with the VSK has been the emphasis on relationships. Pupils, parents and carers, outside agencies, and designated teachers all commented on the positive regard, positive approaches and creativity within VSK. VSK work from a strengths-based perspective and have the wellbeing of their pupils, staff and partners at the heart of everything they do, recognising that the nature of their work is often challenging and sometimes in traumatic circumstances. Their desire to inspire, engage and support their pupils, often thinking “out of the box” in a creative way has resulted in successful outcomes, which are tangible and commendable.

- **Reflective Practice-** Ultimately, the success of this programme has been down to the high level of reflection and a willingness to admit when things are not going well, a solutions-based approach and also just as importantly, an ethos of celebrating the things that they are proud of and successful with. There is a good balance within the VSK that creates an ethos of openness, support and positivity, even in extremely challenging times.

During our final meeting for this award, Tony said that he saw the achievement of this award, not as an ending to the programme, but as the beginning of a new phase for the VSK. Nurtureuk has no doubts about that commitment to continue to grow and reflect over the next 3 years when working towards their reaccreditation. It has been an absolute privilege to get to know the staff of VSK and nurtureuk wishes you all the very best of luck for your next phase. Well done to each and everyone involved in the Virtual School Kent and their successful application to be awarded the first National Nurturing Virtual School Programme Award. Congratulations.

Recommendation

We recommend Virtual School Kent for the (First Ever) National Nurturing Virtual Schools Award

Areas for development	Timescale
<p>The Boxall Profile;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VSK has put a lot of time and effort into introducing the Boxall Profile, training staff and planning for developing further. Interviews with staff indicated a high level of engagement with the Boxall Profile on the whole but this was not consistent, with some members of staff still being reticent to use or misunderstanding its use. Continue to reflect on the use of the Boxall Profile for the whole virtual school and provide support for staff members who need further understanding. Nurture ambassadors Laura and Jeff may be a good fit for that role. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture Ambassadors on the whole were committed and passionate about the approach and mentioned a plan for a regular meeting with a focus on keeping the VSK 6 Principles and nurturing approach alive for their regional team members. This is a good plan and should also include making sure all of the nurture ambassadors are on message as small inconsistencies in understanding were apparent during the interview. It may be worth reviewing other members of staff to add to this important group. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VSK 6 Principles work is outstanding. Continue to keep these principles alive in all that you do and review and reflect on their impact regularly. 	Ongoing

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Virtual Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.	Ongoing
Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Virtual Schools Programme.	2025