

VSK WEEKLY UPDATE

6 May 2026

Thinking of our VSK community during exam season!

As exam season gets underway, we're thinking of all our children and young people, their families and carers, and the staff supporting them every step of the way.

This can be a demanding time, filled with hopes, pressures, and lots of hard work behind the scenes. Please remember that exams are just one moment in a much bigger journey. Kindness, encouragement and reassurance make a real difference.

We wish everyone a calm, steady exam period and want to thank our families, carers and colleagues for the care, patience and commitment you continue to show. You are not alone — we're in this together.



Steady Hearts, Bright Minds

The paper waits, its silence deep,
but you have climbed a thousand steps.
Each page you've read, each sum you've kept,
is treasure stored, not lost in sleep.
The clock may tick, the hands may race,
yet time is yours — you set the pace.
Breathe in the calm, let worries go,
your mind's a river, let it flow.
For Year Six dreams and Year Eleven aims,
these tests are chapters, not the whole of your name.
You are more than marks, more than scores on a sheet,
you're the courage to try, the will to complete.
So lift your head, let your pen take flight,
you've trained for this — now shine your light.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026



The **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026** received Royal Assent on **29 April 2026** and introduces changes across education, safeguarding and children's social care. For children in care and care-experienced children, this legislation reinforces the importance of stability, well-coordinated planning and shared responsibility across services.

Virtual School Kent will continue to work alongside schools, social workers and foster carers to help translate national changes into practical, child-centred support, particularly where this affects education planning, safeguarding arrangements and Elective Home Education.

What this means for:

Schools:

Continued emphasis on stability, inclusion and safeguarding for children in care, with clearer expectations around collaboration with social care and VSK.

Foster carers:

Greater recognition of the role in providing stability and supporting education decisions, particularly where alternative education or Elective Home Education is being considered.

Social workers:

Reinforced responsibility for joined-up planning and clear communication across education, care and safeguarding to ensure decisions are proportionate and in the child's best interests.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 – summary briefing (PDF)

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/236103/Childrens-Wellbeing-and-School-Act-2026-Royal-Assent.pdf



Closing gaps through relationships and high expectations

There is renewed national focus on closing attainment gaps, with growing evidence that children make the best progress when strong relationships, targeted support, regular attendance and high expectations are consistently in place. Work highlighted this week reinforces the importance of relational practice, confidence-building and family engagement.

These principles sit at the heart of Virtual School Kent's work — supporting children in care to belong, thrive and achieve.

What this means for:

Schools:

Continued focus on attendance, high expectations and relational approaches that help children in care engage confidently with learning.

Foster carers:

Ongoing encouragement to support routines, attendance and positive attitudes to learning, reinforcing children's confidence and aspirations.

Social workers:

Supporting stability in placements and education as key protective factors for progress and long-term outcomes.

Case study: narrowing the attainment gap

<https://www.impactgroup.co.uk/case-studies/evaluating-the-harpur-trust-accelerator-programme-supporting-bedford-schools-to-narrow-the-attainment-gap>

PEP reminder:

Please ensure upcoming and overdue PEPs are prioritised and completed within statutory deadlines. Timely PEPs are essential to securing the right educational support for our children and young people.

HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR SPACE?

ATTENTION ALL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS!

We hope you've saved the date for this year's **VSK No Limits Conference**, taking place on **7th October 2026** at the **Detling Showground, Maidstone**.

This will be a **full-day event**, and we are incredibly excited about the inspiring programme we have planned.

This amazing day will start at 09:15 and finish at 14:45 with workshops and talks all planned between 10am -2pm to allow you to plan transport for your young people.

The event is for school staff and young people (academic yr 8 -13) who are care experienced from any local authority, children who have been adopted, children who are/ have been in kinship care or are being cared for by someone other than their parents.

To help us with early planning and to get an idea of how many schools may be attending, we kindly ask that you complete the expression of interest form below.

Please include the approximate number of young people in academic yr 8 – 13 that you may wish to bring along, if any. School staff can attend with or without students.

As the event approaches, we will be in touch to confirm further details.

Please fill out the form below using the link.

Attendance at No Limits Conference and Careers Fair (2026):

Expression of Interest Form- <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/nypC72J21t>

WEDNESDAY 7TH OCTOBER 2026
 09.15- 2.45pm – with workshops between 10am and 2pm

GUEST SPEAKER: ALFIE WATTS – Winner of Race Across the World and ambassador for Young Minds.

Interesting and interactive, with workshops, opportunities to speak to universities and explore career options for young people and interventions and ideas for school staff.

This event is for all Designated Teachers, Senior Leadership Teams and the young people they support

NO LIMITS
 Virtual School Kent Conference
 DETLING SHOWGROUND, MAIDSTONE

Scan the QR code or go to <https://forms.office.com/e/nypC72J21t> to register your interest





Trauma-informed support for children – funded training opportunity

Supporting children’s **emotional wellbeing** is central to helping them feel safe, belong and attend consistently. **Innovating Minds** is offering **60 fully funded training places** for schools and VCSE organisations across Kent and Medway to become **accredited Healing Together facilitators**, funded by the Kent PCC.

This training supports professionals working with children affected by **trauma, domestic abuse and mental ill□health**, offering practical tools alongside ongoing coaching and CPD.

What this means for:

Schools:

An opportunity to strengthen trauma-informed practice and build staff confidence in supporting children with complex emotional needs.

Foster carers:

Reassurance that schools and practitioners are being supported to understand and respond to trauma with consistency and compassion.

Social workers:

Access to strengthened interventions that complement care and placement planning, supporting emotional regulation and engagement.

To apply: healingtogether@innovatingmindsgroup.com

Deadline: Tuesday 30 June 2026

(Places are limited.)



Click here to book a place: [School and College Wellbeing Cards Webinar – Fill out form](#)

Webinar and Free Resources



School Wellbeing Cards: *understanding and overcoming children and young people's barriers to engagement in education*

Wednesday 6th May 15:30-16:30 Microsoft Teams.

Do you support children and young people (Key stage 2 – Key stage 5) who struggle to engage in their education, spend increased time outside of the classroom or have difficulties with attendance and EBSA?



Do you have students who struggle with persistent disruptive behaviour, resulting in less time spent learning, internal exclusions, suspensions and risk of exclusion?

The VSK Advisory Team and VSK Educational Psychologists invite you to a webinar introducing the **School Wellbeing Cards** (age 7+) and **College Wellbeing Cards** (age 14+). Developed by Educational Psychologist Jerrica Holder in response to research into common push and pull factors, the cards use visual prompts to help young people express barriers, strengths and resilience more freely. The resource supports professionals to enrich Breakthrough Meeting discussions and identify effective strategies to improve attendance, wellbeing and engagement in learning.

This webinar will guide education settings how to use School Wellbeing Cards to:

Explore and understand children and young people's barriers to engagement in their education and how to reduce and mitigate these barriers.

Explore and understand resilience factors and strengths and how to best utilise these to improve attendance and engagement in education.

Plan and deliver strategies to improve school engagement and attendance, for example by using the KCC Breakthrough Meeting template.

Schools and education settings attending the webinar will receive a free pack of School Wellbeing Cards (and College Wellbeing Cards for secondary schools), subject to availability. Cards will be sent after the webinar. A follow-up webinar in Term 6 will support embedding practice and provide an opportunity to discuss any issues with our Educational Psychologist.



Virtual School Kent Advisory Team

Strategically championing the educational needs of children with a social worker, those previously in care and children in kinship care.



Did you know VSK has an Advisory Team?

The VSK Advisory Team provides advice, guidance and signposting for education settings regarding three vulnerable groups of children and young people:

- **Ever6 Children with a Social Worker:** Children currently or previously subject to CIN, CP or assessment in the last 6 years, including those who have returned home from care.
- **Previously Looked After Children (PLAC):** Children who were in care and left via Adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO).
- **Children in Formal Kinship Care:** Children living with relatives under a formal court order (SGO or CAO) who were not previously looked after.

What do we offer?

Although children in these cohorts do not have an allocated VSK officer, the Advisory Team is available when needed to discuss concerns about individual children or groups, and to help plan next steps and solutions to support their education and wider outcomes. Parental consent is required to discuss a named child or share personal information. Cohort or anonymised discussions can take place without consent.

Get in touch

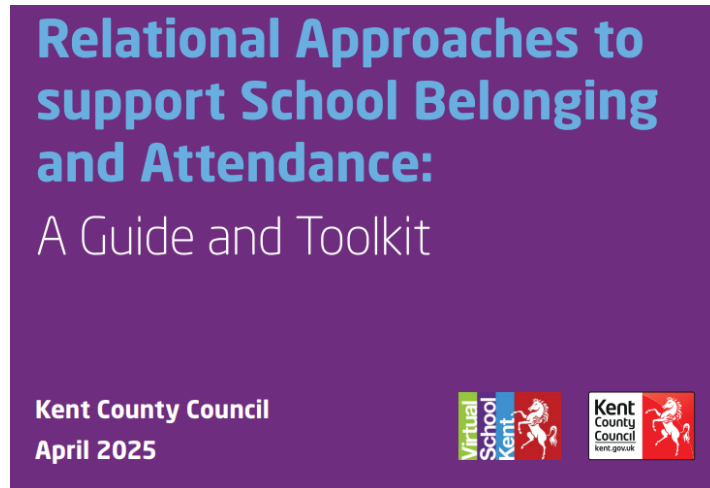
- To find out more, visit the VSKAT section of our website: [VSKAT Introduction | Virtual School Kent](#)
- To discuss a child or cohort, complete the contact form (remember to obtain consent if required) [VSK Advisory Team - Request Advice](#)

We also welcome examples of good practice, strategies, and success stories. Understanding what works well across the county helps us provide the best possible advice to schools, families and professionals supporting the VSK Advisory Team cohorts.



This guide and toolkit was initially developed by the Virtual School Kent and the Kent Educational Psychology Service. Its aim is to support schools in their understanding of the importance of promoting relational approaches to create a sense of connection, school belonging and with trauma informed practices supporting all vulnerable children, particularly those who may struggle to attend school.

[Click here](#)



We'd love to hear from you!



How have VSK supported you or your team recently?
Please take a moment to let us know by clicking the link below:

[Feedback Form: Share how VSK supported you](#)



Book Your Place Today!

Click. Book. Secure. *Don't miss out.*

12.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 12:30 & 15:45 Online Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
13.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 8:00 Online Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
30.06.26	East Kent Designated Teacher Forum 13:30 @ Whitstable Youth Hub East Kent Designated Teachers Forum - Booking Form 30th June 2026
01.07.26	North Kent Designated Teacher Update 13:30 @ North Team - Virtual DT briefing - 01 July 2026 -Term 6 – Fill in form
02.07.26	West Kent Designated Teacher Induction 13:00 Online Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
07.07.26	South Kent Designated Teacher Update / Induction 13:30 @ Smile Centre Whitfield Primary South Kent Designated Teachers Forum - Booking Form Tuesday 7th July 2026 –

Open Days at the Colleges within the EKC group

It is recommended that anyone who is interested in attending college who has not completed an application, that this be submitted as soon as possible, in order that they can secure a place for September: [Register](#)

- Canterbury College – 6th May 4:00-7:00pm [Open Day | Wednesday 6 May - Canterbury College](#)
- Broadstairs College – 12th May 4:00-7:00pm [May Open Day 2026 - Broadstairs College](#)
- Dover College - 5th May 4:00-7:00pm [May Open Day - Dover College](#)
- Folkestone College - 14th May 4:00-7:00pm [May Open Day 2026 - Folkestone College](#)
- Ashford College- 13th May 4:00-7:00pm [May Open Day 2026 - Ashford College](#)



Who To Contact



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Instagram [participation team](#)



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<http://kentcarestown.lea.kent.sch.uk>