

VSK WEEKLY UPDATE

13 May 2026

VSK Pre 16 Awards Nominations – Live!



We're thrilled to share some exciting news with you – the Pre 16 nominations have officially gone live; the nomination window will remain open until Friday 3rd July at 5pm.

Please be aware that no further nominations will be accepted after this deadline.

This is your opportunity to recognise the Kent looked after students that you support up to the academic year 11

We're keen to celebrate a wide range of achievements and contributions, so please consider nominating someone who shines in any of the following categories:

- Outstanding or greatly improved academic achievement
- Outstanding or greatly improved engagement and/or attitude towards learning
- Outstanding contribution to education, training, or employment placement
- Outstanding contribution to the community
- Wider achievements of note

You can submit your nominations using the VSK Pre 16 Awards Nominations 2026 form:

[VSK Pre 16 Awards Nominations 2026 – Fill out form](#)





Legislative update – Crime and Policing Act 2026

On the same day that the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 received Royal Assent, [the Crime and Policing Act 2026](#) also became law. This significant legislation introduces a range of measures that strengthen safeguarding, child protection and the wider children’s services landscape.

Key provisions include a new mandatory reporting duty for child sexual abuse, alongside further measures focused on knife crime, violence against women and girls, criminal and sexual exploitation, child cruelty offences, and online safety.

While the Act has a direct impact on colleagues working in Youth Justice, it is also highly relevant to professionals across education, social care, early help, health and partner services who support children and young people at risk of harm, including those experiencing abuse, exploitation or domestic abuse. The legislation reinforces the importance of strong multi-agency working, clear safeguarding pathways and shared responsibility for protecting children and young people.

What this means for those working with Virtual School Kent

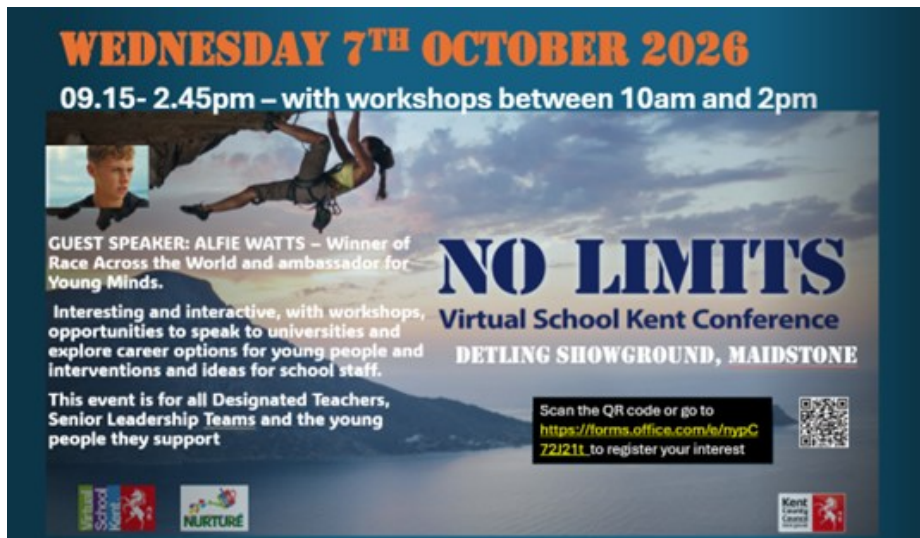
For everyone working with or alongside Virtual School Kent, the Crime and Policing Act 2026 strengthens the statutory framework that underpins our shared work to support children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable to harm outside the home or affected by exploitation, violence or abuse.

The introduction of a mandatory reporting duty for child sexual abuse reinforces the need for robust safeguarding practice, professional curiosity and timely information-sharing across schools, colleges, education providers, social workers and partner agencies. This is especially relevant for designated safeguarding leads, education staff and professionals supporting children in care and previously in care.

The Act also highlights the importance of remaining alert to risks linked to criminal and sexual exploitation, knife crime, online harm and domestic abuse, and of working together to identify concerns early and respond collaboratively through local safeguarding arrangements.

Overall, the legislation underlines the vital role that education settings and children’s services play together in creating safe environments, escalating concerns appropriately, and ensuring children and young people are supported to remain safe, engaged in education and able to thrive.

Book Your Place Today!



We're really pleased to welcome Dr Asha Patel from Innovating Minds to our [No Limits Conference](#), where she will be leading an engaging and practical workshop for teachers attending the event without young people. Dr Patel brings both warmth and expertise, creating a space where research and real-world practice come together in a way that feels relevant and easy to apply.

Her session, 'Becoming & Being a Trauma Informed Practitioner', will support professionals to better understand how trauma affects children's development, behaviour and wellbeing, while offering clear, practical strategies that can be used day to day. The workshop also highlights the importance of early intervention and explores how simple, body-based approaches can help children feel safe, calm and ready to learn. Importantly, it also gives thoughtful attention to staff wellbeing, helping practitioners recognise and respond to the impact of the work they do.

HEALING TOGETHER



Alongside this, there is a fantastic opportunity to be part of the Healing Together programme.

There are 60 fully funded training places available for schools across Kent and Medway, offered on a first come, first served basis. There is no cost to train or maintain accreditation, although practitioners are expected to go on to deliver the programme, including work to support children affected by domestic abuse. Practitioners can train in two programmes, with at least one focused on this area.

You can find out more here: [link](#)

To apply to become an accredited facilitator, please email: healingtogether@innovatingmindsgroup.com



Why understanding “differences on the inside” matters more than ever

With Mental Health Awareness Week approaching (week commencing 11 May), schools across Kent are reflecting on how to support pupil wellbeing and create inclusive environments where every child feels understood and valued.

[The Kindness Crew 4 Schools](#) is a free, not-for-profit primary school initiative that helps children understand “differences on the inside” through short classroom and assembly resources. These hidden differences, including autism, ADHD, hearing loss, anxiety and other unseen conditions, can affect confidence, wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Mental Health Awareness Week provides a timely opportunity to begin age-appropriate conversations about empathy, belonging and inclusion. To support schools, The Kindness Crew 4 Schools offers a free, ready-to-run 15-minute Assembly Challenge for primary pupils from Reception to Year 4, requiring minimal preparation. Since launching in March, more than 100 schools, including over 20 in Kent, have taken part.

The Assembly Challenge shares three simple messages:

- *Ask, don't guess.*
- *Respect is the rule.*
- *Be curious and kind.*

The Kindness Crew 4 Schools is a not-for-profit community interest company founded by Simon Houghton, a deaf social entrepreneur, to promote kindness, empathy and understanding of unseen differences.

Further information is available via the project [website](#) or by contacting simon@unseenaware.com



Early Learning Goal targets and fully funded training

The government has set out its ambitions for ensuring strong early foundations for children through [Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life](#).

As part of this, the Department for Education has established challenging Early Learning Goal (ELG) targets for Kent. Schools will already have received correspondence outlining the role they play in meeting these expectations.

From June 2026, EYFS Profile outcomes will once again be used as an accountability measure, returning to the IDSR and forming part of Ofsted's analysis of school performance. This makes accuracy, confidence and consistency in EYFS assessment increasingly important.

To support schools with this, Kent County Council has commissioned The Education People to deliver bespoke, fully funded training to strengthen understanding and consistency in EYFS Profile assessment. All state-funded Kent schools with a Reception cohort are entitled to one free place. While places are limited to one delegate per school, a waiting list is in place should additional capacity become available.

The three-hour, face-to-face session provides a supportive and professionally rich opportunity for Reception teachers to work alongside colleagues from other schools and experienced advisers. Participants will review and moderate EYFS Profile judgements using DfE support materials, building shared understanding and confidence.

Sessions will be led by Polly Sharman and/or Jan Dubiel and held at venues across the county.

The first session takes place on Monday 18 May, and demand is expected to be high.

For further details and to book a place for your school, please visit [The Education People](#) website.

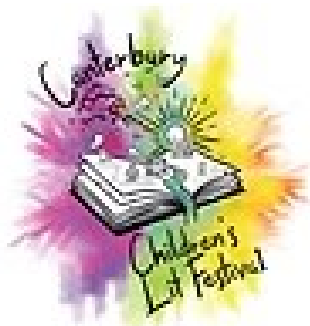




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PEP reminder:

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.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



[The Minds Ahead School Mental Health Hub - Minds Ahead](#)

[School Mental Health Qualifications Framework - Minds Ahead](#)



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.

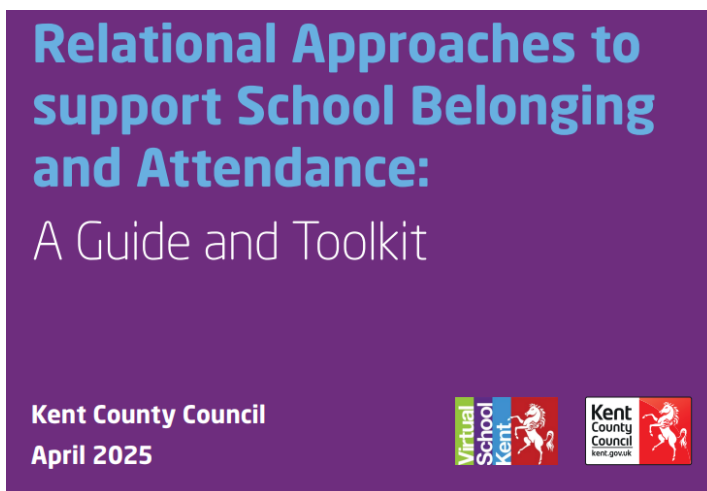
Get in touch

- 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 – Fill out form
07.10.26	VSK No limits Conference @ Detling showground for Primary/Secondary and College staff. Sign Up form https://forms.office.com/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

Join Us at the “No Limits” Virtual School Kent Conference!

We’re excited to announce this year’s *No Limits* Virtual School Kent Conference on **Wednesday 7th October 2026**, from **10am to 2pm**, at **Detling Showground**.

This inspiring event is designed for **Designated Teachers, Senior Leadership Teams, and the young people they support in Years 8 to 13**. Together, we’ll explore ambition, resilience, and what it truly means to aspire without limits.

We’re also thrilled to welcome our guest speaker, **Alfie Watts – Winner of Race Across the World**, who will be sharing his remarkable journey and the lessons he learned along the way.

Please save the date and start planning which young people you’d like to bring—this is an event they won’t want to miss!

Who To Contact



North Kent Assistant Head: Jo Hayes - northvsk@kent.gov.uk

West Kent Assistant Head: Jen Kemp - westvsk@kent.gov.uk

South Kent Assistant Head: Carole Bailey - southvsk@kent.gov.uk

East Kent Assistant Head: Simon Fosse-Collins - eastvsk@kent.gov.uk

Advisory Team Assistant Head: Emma Wills - vskadvisoryteam@kent.gov.uk

Post 16 Assistant Head: Catherine Thompson - 16plusvirtualschoolskent@kent.gov.uk

Post 16 NEET Team Lead: Samantha Perrin - 16plusvirtualschoolskent@kent.gov.uk

Out of County Team Lead: Amanda Ormond - virtualsschoolkentocc@kent.gov.uk



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