

VSK WEEKLY UPDATE

22 April 2026

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.

Supporting Children in Care to Attend Medical Appointments

A message for schools

Children and young people in care often have additional health needs, and attending medical appointments is a vital part of keeping them safe, well and ready to learn.

Why medical appointments matter

For children in care, health appointments may include:

- Statutory health assessments
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing support
- Speech and language therapy
- CAMHS or other specialist services
- Follow-up appointments linked to identified needs



Attendance at these appointments is not optional — it is a corporate parenting responsibility and an essential part of meeting the child's care and safeguarding needs.

Medical appointments are an authorised absence

When a child in care attends a medical / health appointment, this should be recorded as an authorised absence.

Schools should not:

- Penalise pupils for attending appointments
- Discourage attendance due to attendance percentages
- Ask carers or social workers to rearrange appointments as a default

Planning around learning and exams – important caveats

Where appointments are non-urgent, health professionals will usually:

- Avoid booking during known exam periods
 - Be willing to reschedule if schools flag a clear clash early
- The key is early communication, not cancellation or non-attendance.**

How schools can help

Schools play a crucial role in ensuring children in care do not miss out on vital health support:

- Acknowledge medical appointments as authorised absences
- Share exam timetables or key assessment dates promptly with carers and professionals
- Support young people to attend appointments without feeling anxious or “in trouble”
- Notify the Virtual School or social worker early if there are concerns about timing

A shared responsibility

When children are unable to attend appointments, this may be recorded as “Did Not Attend” or “Was Not Brought”, which can raise safeguarding concerns and delay much-needed support.

By working together — schools, carers, health services and professionals — can ensure: Children's health needs are met, Learning is protected and Young people feel supported, not caught between systems!

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.



Dear Designated Teacher,

We are delighted to let you know that **VSK** are funding a set number of places on the **2-day CPD course** offered by Dandelion Time (West Farleigh, Maidstone ME15 0NY):



Enabling Learning in Children with Poor Attachment/ Trauma:

This **two-day course** offers an in-depth approach to deepening understanding about the impact of poor attachment and trauma, specifically focusing on a child or children you have worked with.

This course, which is **spread over a two-week period**, allows for an in-depth study of factors which affect children and their ability to learn. The course is intended for all those working with vulnerable children, for example, teachers, family liaison officers, special educational needs officers and early help workers.

There are two sets of dates available:

- **Monday 27th April 2026 and Monday 11th May 2026 9.15am – 3.30pm**
- **Monday 15th June 2026 and Monday 29th June 2026 9.15am - 3.30pm**

For more information please review their [Course training pack](#)

If you would like to participate in this course, then please fill out the booking form using the link below:

[Dandelion Time CPD Booking Form](#)

Dandelion Time will confirm your place upon receipt of the booking form.

Places allocated on a first come first serve basis.

Cultivating Belonging through Shared Reading

Free webinar on Tuesday 21st April 11.15am - 12.15pm with Dr Lisa Cherry, aimed at practitioners supporting children in kinship care, foster care and adoptive families. In this webinar, you'll:

- Explore how shared reading can support connection and belonging for children in kinship care, foster care and adoption.
- Hear insights from Dr Cherry's work on relational practice, alongside emerging thinking from BookTrust on bonding, attachment and shared reading.

Discover practical ways to use children's books to open conversations about identity, family experience and belonging with children and carers.

For more information, please visit their [website](#)





Free information events for kinship carers.

These kinship workshops, funded by the Department of Education, are a dedicated space for kinship carers only. All events are listed on their [website](#).

[Overview of the EHCP and SEND process](#) - next event Tuesday 24th April

[Understanding how to keep children in kinship care safe online](#) - next event Friday 24th April

With the help of the VSK Participation Team, the Kinship SGO Focus Group would like to share their views on school with you all.

Their voice matters, and we will be looking at how best we can work with schools, colleges and the wider network, on how best to ensure children and young people living with kinship carers can reach their potential. **Please take a moment to read their views** and see how you can make their educational experience an even better one...

[Supporting young people with SGO's at school](#)





WRITING CHALLENGE MAY 2026

Dear care experienced young people at school in South Kent,

Join the VSK South Team this May half term for a fun Creative Writing Challenge!

Children and young people attending schools in the South Kent area are invited to take part in this fun, fully-resourced creative activity. Everyone who completes the challenge will receive a prize pack and certificate, and there's also an opportunity to work toward a Trinity Discover Arts Award.

The challenge is open to children and young people in KS1-4 attending school in South Kent*, all abilities welcome.

We can't wait to see your creativity!

From the South VSK Team

**Please be aware, as this is a pilot project, it is currently only open to children and young people attending schools in the South Kent area.*



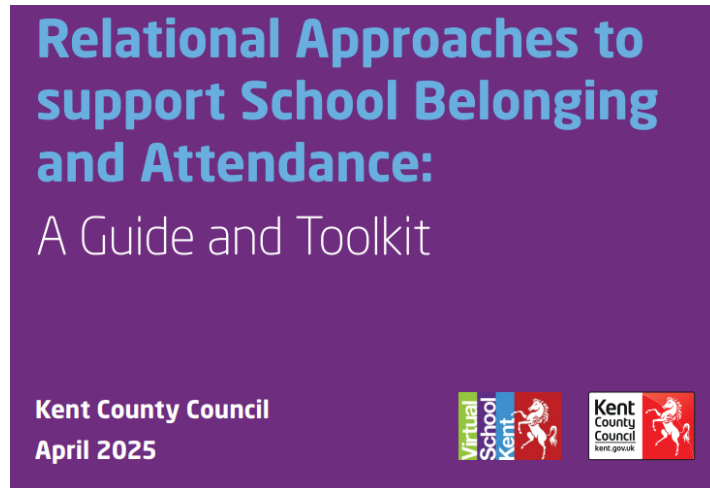
How to take part

- Register your interest using the QR code by 23:59 on Sunday 03 May 2026.
- Everyone who registers will receive more details and a consent form (to be completed by the Social Worker).
- Challenge packs will be sent out in May, and you'll have until June to complete and submit your entry.



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](#)

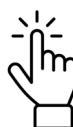


We'd love to hear from you!



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.*

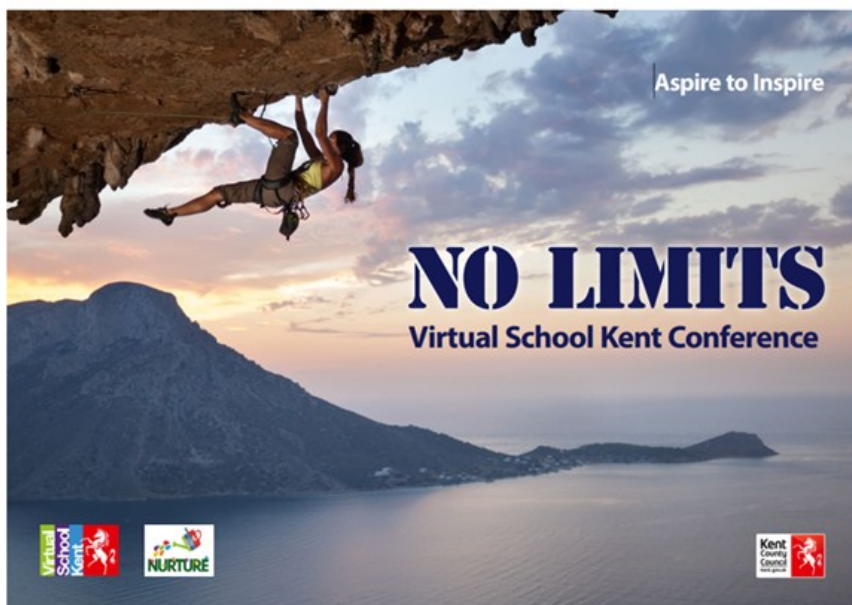
12.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 12:30 & 15:45 Online Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
13.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 8:00 Online Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
30.06.26	East Kent Designated Teacher Forum 13:30 @ 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](#)





SAVE THE DATE
Wednesday
7th October
2026
10am til 2pm

DETLING SHOWGROUND

GUEST SPEAKER: ALFIE WATTS –
Winner of Race Across the World

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



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



Instagram [participation team](#)



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