

KAN

KENT
ACADEMIES
NETWORK

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

June 2023 Report





“

KAN is a way to meet new people and explore new opportunities. It is helping me to forge my future.

KAN student

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Foreword



This year marks our tenth anniversary. In just four years' time we will have a community of over 100 alumni. An incredible 98 per cent of our alumni have received places for university degrees or high-level apprenticeships. After our summer residential week, the 28 students who completed feedback agreed that the sessions were interesting and well delivered, they feel part of a KAN network and supported by KAN. In addition, over 90 per cent agreed that KAN helps them feel more confident and the residential improved their understanding of options beyond school. Since the last spring residential, a Core student will have been able to access over 90 hours of contact time, and an Aspire student around 40 hours.

With current numbers, that totals an incredible 5,110 student contact hours.

Event highlights since the last report include the trip to Goldsmiths, University of London, the Debate Mate communication sessions, and a visit from the acclaimed choreographer Kate Flatt OBE. Personally, the fact that we were able to accommodate the Aspire cohorts into our spring residential weekend was particularly exciting. The KAN students themselves are inspirational and aspirations within the current cohorts are diverse and far-reaching, including astrophysics, neurosurgery, law, palaeontology, mechanical engineering, history and medicine.

Following student and partner feedback, we have decided to keep the spring residential event to a long weekend and to reduce the length of the summer residential to four days. We are also continuing with our mentor-led summer research project, which began in 2021, rather than working with externally led essay projects. This decision will increase interactions between students and mentors and give students more agency to choose their academic focus.

KAN would not be possible without the support of a vast array of stakeholders: The Buffini Chao Foundation; Queens' College and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge who host our summer residential events for free; and the financial and residential support of Sevenoaks School. We are also extremely grateful to the teacher leads at each of the academies for all they do. I want to extend thanks to Sevenoaks teacher Stephen Pursey who kindly shepherded KAN throughout my maternity leave, the volunteer teachers from Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Benenden, Kooth digital mental health and wellbeing, Kent and Medway Medical School, the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, The Fitzwilliam Museum and Anglia Ruskin University. It has also been a pleasure to work with 2-3 Degrees, ImpactEd and Pathways CTM over the past year.

I look forward to the next decade of KAN with enthusiasm and excitement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Isla Phillips-Ewen'.

Isla Phillips-Ewen
KAN Director

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The students I worked with this week can only be described by a list of superlatives. They are some of the most driven, ambitious, independent, courteous, and intelligent students I have had the pleasure of meeting in five years of teaching.

KAN teacher volunteer, Sevenoaks School

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Overview

KAN aims to remove barriers to Higher Education by improving student



Confidence



Knowledge



Agency

Our Core university access programme has been running since 2013 and we began our Aspire programme in 2021. These are unique four-year programmes, from Year 9 to Year 13. The schools in the Kent Academies Network are Knole Academy, The Skinners' Kent Academy, Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey, The Marsh Academy and John Wallis Church of England Academy. Each year, teachers identify Year 9 students to begin the application and interview process. 15 students are selected for our Core cohort and up to 15 for the Aspire cohort. Students must meet certain eligibility criteria that are nationally recognised as barriers to Higher Education.

Every academic year the programmes entail:

- Termly online mentoring sessions
- Two meet-up days at Sevenoaks School
- The spring residential weekend at Sevenoaks School (Core cohorts only)
- An alumni and mentor networking dinner at Sevenoaks School (new in 2022)
- Summer residential week at Sevenoaks School or a Cambridge college (Core cohorts only)
- A summer research project
- Graduation event for Year 13 students

Undergraduate mentors guide the students through the programme. The mentoring relationships and the peer-to-peer support network, fostered by the small size of the cohorts, are fundamental to KAN's success. Other resources we provide to all the KAN students include:

- Access to the online mentoring platform
- A Unifrog account
- Access to the Buffini Chao Discretionary Fund to cover the cost of university visits
- The opportunity to apply for a free place on the Sevenoaks School Summer Programme

To date, six awards have been made from the Buffini Chao Discretionary Fund. This was launched in 2020 and supports either a student's university visits or professional development for mentors.

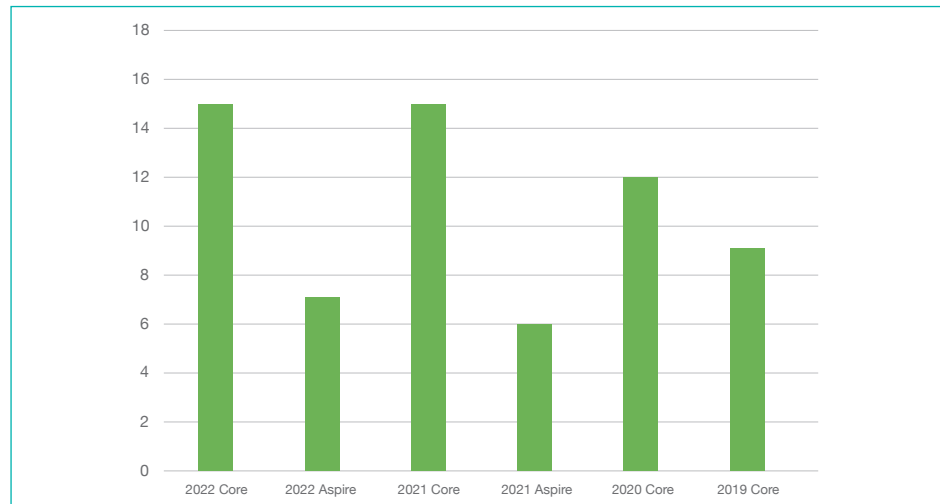


Our students

We have 64 students in the current cohorts who entered the programme between 2019 and 2022.

- 72 per cent are first generation university students
- 30 per cent qualify for free school meals
- 64 per cent are in low-income households
- 41 per cent live in a single-parent household
- Three students are in care and three are young carers themselves

Numbers of students in current cohorts



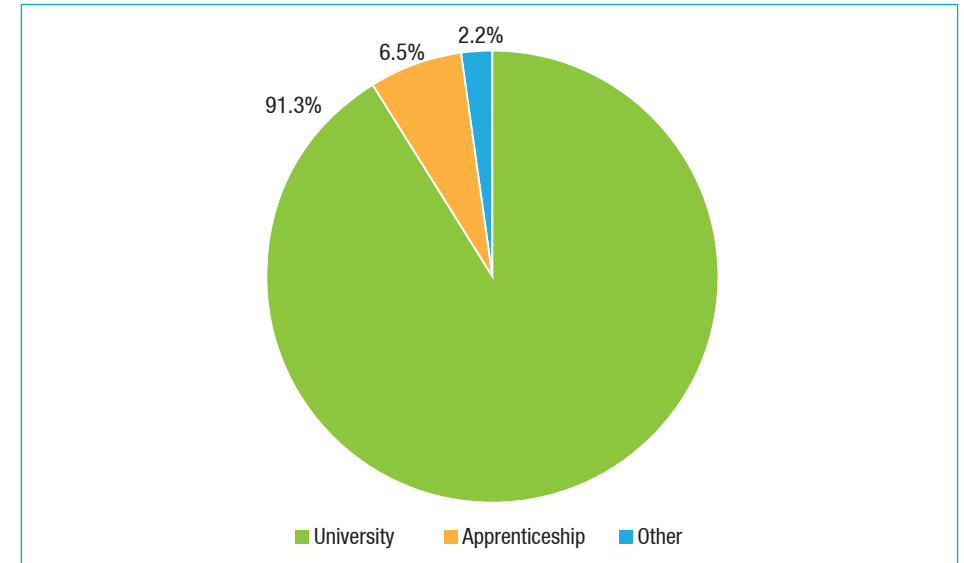
Particularly this year, I found that KAN has been able to provide me with a very welcome sense of normalcy during long periods of stress and uncertainty. Attending the residential events was an incredibly refreshing experience and I returned to school each time with a much healthier headspace than before. I owe this to the immensely supportive and hardworking people behind this programme, as well as my terrific cohort. I'm very grateful for every bit of support that KAN has to offer.

KAN student



51 students from the previous six cohorts (2013–18) have completed the KAN university access programme. We know the destinations for 46 of these alumni and out of those 45 received places for university degrees or higher level apprenticeships.

2013–18 cohort destinations



In 2021 we introduced the Aspire programme with the aims to:

Impact more students

Be cost effective

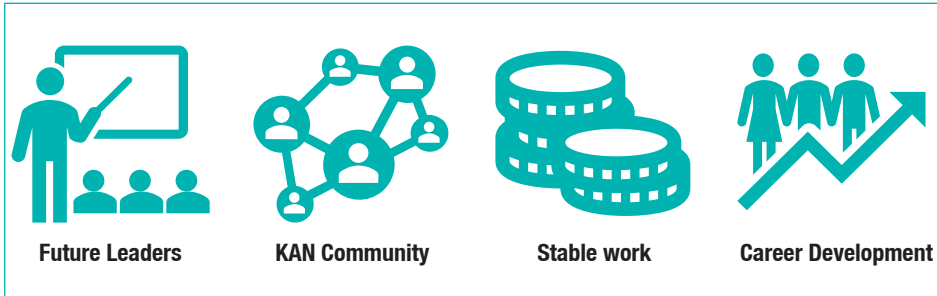
Scale up using technology

Increase ownership in the KAN schools

To date, three students from the 2021 cohort and five from the 2022 cohort have moved from Aspire to Core. Aspire ensures our Core cohorts are always at capacity and so improves cost effectiveness. Because of operational elements we were pleased to be able to invite all 13 Aspire students to the spring residential.

Our mentors

KAN aims to develop future leaders in education and social impact who feel part of a wider community and have increased opportunities, thanks to the experiences and skills they develop through their commitment to the role.



All our current mentors believe that KAN:

- Equips them with leadership skills
- Improves their confidence
- Provides them with opportunities to develop professionally

Including our new recruits, who begin in July 2023, we have 33 mentors in our team from a wide range of universities. Out of these, 11 are KAN alumni and three are Old Sennockians who were part of the KAN service group. This year training for the mentors has included sessions on Special Educational Needs and using the Unifrog platform. Mentors can teach at residential events and apply to the Buffini Chao Discretionary Fund to pursue leadership courses. This year, one mentor has also completed work experience at Sevenoaks School.



The relationships I formed have stayed with me, and the opportunity to work to improve social mobility has been extremely valuable. I've always been passionate about access to education, and I continue that work as an EDI professional in higher education.

Alumni mentor



Review of events

Residential and graduation events

Our two summer residential events in July 2022 took place in person at Tonbridge School and at Queens' College, Cambridge. Highlights include university visits to Anglia Ruskin University and Goldsmiths, University of London, workshops at The Fitzwilliam Museum with 2–3 Degrees, and excursions to an Escape Room, Dino Golf and punting. The lessons taught by volunteer teachers and mentors included Philosophy, Economics and Russian. Students in Cambridge had taster lectures on Biomimicry in Engineering and Inequality in Climate Change.

Our spring residential weekend at Sevenoaks School was very special because we were able to invite both the Core and Aspire cohorts. The timetable included a cohort print-making project to celebrate KAN's tenth anniversary, mental wellbeing sessions led by Kooth, a screening of Puccini's *Turandot* accompanied by a talk by choreographer Kate Flatt OBE, and afternoon activities such as archery, swimming and yoga. Mentors and volunteer teachers from Sevenoaks School and Benenden School taught a variety of lessons such as Poetry, Marine Biology, Classics, the LGBTQ+ Pride movement, Film Narrative, and the Climate Crisis.

We are looking forward to hosting a graduation afternoon tea for the 2017 and 2018 cohorts this July at Sevenoaks School.



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The best thing about the residential event was the balance between academic learning, mentoring and free time to enjoy each other's company as a cohort. The timetable for the week was very fulfilling.

KAN student

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Meet-up days

At our two meet-up days, in November 2022 and March 2023, students participated in fantastic workshops by Debate Mate. They also had the opportunity to attend sessions on post-18 options with Pathways CTM, in public speaking with the National Gallery's Articulation team, and medical applications with the Kent and Medway Medical School.



Student work

This year 43 KAN students in Year 10 and Year 11 completed a summer research project under the supervision of mentors. The following students were commended for their first-class work.

Pupil Name	Cohort	Title
Jess	2022	Who was Alan Turing and why was he significant?
Grace	2021	Does society reflect feminist literature?
Hansali	2021	Why is it that felines are such great hunters?
Majenta	2020	Why are there typically fewer opportunities for women, compared to men, in sport?



Alumni and mentor dinner

The second alumni dinner took place in March 2023. It is a pleasure to see the relationships forged between alumni which continue well beyond the end of the programme. This year alumni and current mentor Chloe gave a moving testimony of her experience of KAN, an edited version of which is on the Reflections page.



Reflections

Chloe was a KAN student, from The Marsh Academy, from 2016 to 2020. She is studying a bachelor's degree in English at The University of Sussex and returned to KAN as a mentor.

My sister was in KAN's first cohort in 2013. I was only eleven at the time, but I remember listening to her recount her experiences and desperately wanting the same. I was overjoyed when I was chosen for the programme, alongside two others from my school. My family was so proud of my achievement and excited for me to have opportunities I would not have had access to otherwise.

I can say with certainty that I would not be who I am today if it were not for KAN.

I hadn't been away from my family for longer than one night until the first KAN residential. Although this brought with it some anxiety, we were all made to feel so welcome by our mentors and staff that my worry quickly eased. It felt great to be around like-minded peers and learn new things. My time as a KAN mentee allowed me to try subjects my school did not offer. Even lessons that I was familiar with were made new and engaging. There was much room for discussion and everyone felt their opinion would be heard.

We spent the evenings listening to motivational speakers and it was so interesting to hear their different paths to success. It taught me that there is not just one way forward, I needed to find what I liked, and make decisions for myself. We bonded over pizza and games and there was space to give feedback on the day, which was always listened to. I truly feel that KAN adapts to the needs of its students, with mentees being able to request topics that would be helpful to them in future residential.



Most residential also featured a trip to universities. These proved especially useful to me, as it was a visit to the University of Sussex that was instrumental in my decision to study English there. Without this opportunity, I would have found it more difficult to make that decision.

As the end of school approached, I was given a lot of support with university applications and my personal statement. I received further support as I decided to apply for Cambridge. As the first person from my school to apply to Oxbridge, my mentors worked tirelessly to prepare me for a difficult application process. Though I wasn't accepted, I do not regret applying. My interviews were a chance to talk to leading experts in my favourite subject and it was an experience I wouldn't have had the courage to pursue if not for KAN.

KAN has done so much for me: it gave me confidence in myself and my ideas; told me that I could achieve more than I thought; and connected me with like-minded people. I became a KAN mentor for two reasons: to give back to the programme that had given me so much; and the residential are so much fun. I love working with students who come from a similar background to me and I aspire to be for them what my mentor was for me – a face for academia and proof that what I dreamed of could be achieved.

I can say with certainty that I would not be who I am today if it were not for KAN. I am so grateful that people cared enough about me, and other students like me, that they were willing to give the time and resources I needed to expand my horizons.



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KAN broadened my horizons by giving me the chance to explore universities and subjects that I wouldn't have had access to otherwise.

Alumni and current mentor

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Key Dates 2023–24

Tuesday 27 June	Online induction for new cohorts
Thursday 29 June	Online training for mentors
Tuesday 4 – Friday 7 July	Summer residential, Sevenoaks School and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
Friday 7 July	KAN graduation, Sevenoaks School
Friday 1 September	Deadline for summer research project
Monday 25 September	Online mentoring and summer research project feedback
Tuesday 17 October	Meet–up day, Sevenoaks School
Thursday 25 January	Meet–up day, Sevenoaks School
Thursday 22 February	Online mentoring
Saturday 23 – Monday 25 March	Residential weekend, Sevenoaks School
Tuesday 14 May	Online mentoring
Tuesday 2 – Friday 5 July	Summer residential, Sevenoaks School and Queens' College, Cambridge

For more information about KAN, visit our website

<https://outreach.sevenoaksschool.org/kentacademiesnetwork>

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