

KAN KENT ACADEMIES NETWORK

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

September 2024 Report





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One of the most remarkable aspects of KAN is how it creates an environment where even the more reserved students can flourish and feel seen.

It offers them opportunities to learn new things about themselves, explore new passions, and have incredible experiences. The support from mentors is invaluable in this process particularly in preparing student in valuable skills such as interviews and revision.

KAN teacher lead



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Foreword



Since joining Sevenoaks School in September 2023, it has been a joy to get to know our students, mentors and partners, and witness first-hand the impact of KAN.

For the academic year 2023-24, KAN Director Isla Phillips-Ewen set objectives to maximise the capacity of our Core cohorts and to increase average attendance. I am very pleased to report that attendance at all events has increased and our Core cohorts are running at an average 88 per cent capacity, with the 2023 cohort at full capacity. We continue to focus on maintaining full Core cohorts and attendance to ensure students gain maximum benefits from the programme.

As KAN enters its second decade, we have discussed how to build on its success. We intend to use our Likert survey data, event feedback and input from teacher leads and parents to carry out a comprehensive review of how KAN improves student confidence, knowledge and agency.

We have just recruited the fourth cohort of Aspire students and we are continually reviewing the model to benefit the most students in the most meaningful way. In Autumn 2023 we opened places for new Aspire students to join the Year 11 and Year 12 cohorts as spaces became available due to transitions to Core.

Since the last impact report, KAN has featured in the Independent Schools Council Celebrating Partnerships report, Sevenoaks School's academic journal, *Innovate* and mentor Hetty's undergraduate dissertation researching 'The extent to which education consolidates class inequality'.

We are immensely grateful to our supporters: The Buffini Chao Foundation, Christopher and Kristin Gill, Queens' College and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and Sevenoaks School. We extend our thanks to our teacher leads who promote KAN in their schools and provide valuable feedback. Our mentor team continues to be the backbone of KAN, supporting our students and sharing their own experiences. Thanks also go to Stephen and Jutta at Sevenoaks who have been instrumental in running KAN, as well as the volunteer teachers (from Sevenoaks, Benenden and Knole Academy) who deliver a wide range of engaging sessions during meet-up days and residential. It has been a pleasure to work with Shakespeare's Globe, King's College London, Anglia Ruskin University, Canterbury Christ Church University, Exeter Outreach, Talent Tap, Knole House, Kooth, 2-3 Degrees, James Darley, Debate Mate, Brightside, Unifrog and the National Gallery Articulation initiative.

The KAN community is incredibly special. Thank you to all our stakeholders for welcoming me into it so generously.

Kathy O'Donnell
Director of the Institute of Service and Partnerships



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The lessons that I had studied in school were put under a different lens at KAN. Maths strayed from the GCSE curriculum and instead was completely focused on genuine interest. In all subjects there was room for discussion and debate, and the small cohort size always made it feel like everyone was always listened to.

KAN student

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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 current Kent Academies Network includes: Knole Academy, The Skinners' Kent Academy, Leigh Academy Minster, The Marsh Academy and John Wallis Church of England Academy. Each year, teachers identify Year 9 students to begin the application and interview process and 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)
- Summer residential week at Sevenoaks School or a Cambridge college (Core cohorts only)
- A summer research project
- A graduation event for Year 13 students
- An alumni and mentor networking dinner at Sevenoaks School

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 KAN students include:

- Access to an online mentoring platform
- A Unifrog account
- Access to the Buffini Chao Discretionary Fund to cover the cost of university visits

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

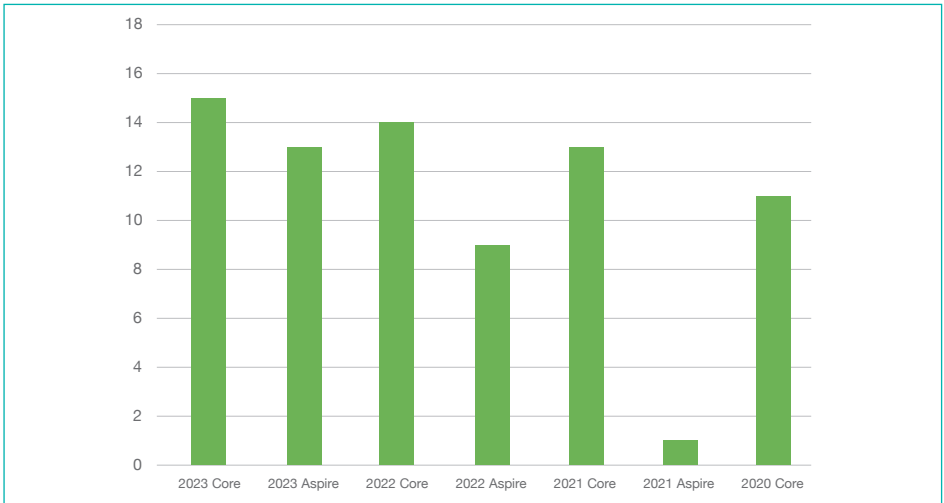


Our students

We have 81 students in the current cohorts who entered the programme between 2021 and 2024.

- 70 per cent are first generation university students
- 40 per cent qualify for free school meals
- 70 per cent are in low-income households
- 38 per cent live in a single-parent household
- Seven students are in care and eight are young carers themselves

Numbers of students in current cohorts



KAN allows me to meet so many new and inspiring people year after year. Whether it's mentors, teachers or cohort members I hadn't met before, this part of KAN continually reminds me why I find it so rewarding to attend these events.





KAN student



In the previous seven cohorts (2013-20), 72 students have completed the KAN university access programme. We know the destinations for 64 of these alumni and out of those, 62 received places for university degrees or higher level apprenticeships. Our 2019 cohort have secured places to study degrees including Civil Engineering and Biomedical Science, as well as one higher-level engineering apprenticeship. Alumni from our 2020 cohort are going on to study courses including Physics, Mechanical Engineering, Criminal Law and Paediatric Nursing.



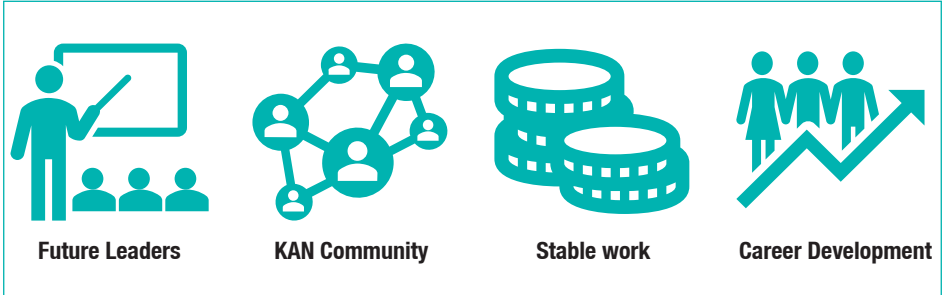
In 2021 we introduced the Aspire programme with the aims to:

			
Impact more students	Be cost effective	Scale up using technology	Increase ownership in the KAN schools

This academic year four students have moved from Aspire to Core, two in the 2022 cohort and one in the 2023 cohort. Aspire ensures our Core cohorts are always at capacity and so improves cost effectiveness. In 2023, new students from KAN schools joined the 2022 and 2021 cohorts, successfully topping up our Aspire cohorts that had been depleted through transitions to Core.

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
- Enables them to develop public speaking and time management skills
- Teaches them to work effectively under pressure
- Encourages them to pursue careers working with young people

Including our new recruits, who began in July 2024, we currently have 26 mentors in our team attending a wide range of universities and one on a degree apprenticeship. Eleven of these are KAN alumni. This year training for the mentors has included sessions on planning effective lessons and mental health. Mentors have taught eight lessons at residential events and meet-up days and continue to be the backbone of the summer research project.



*KAN has given me the confidence I need to be in a classroom.
I've had endless support from the programme,
and working with the mentees has really given me
a passion for continuing to work in education.*

KAN mentor





Review of events

Residential and graduation

As always, the Core residential events are extremely valued by our students. This is reflected in our student feedback with 84 per cent of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'the residential event has exposed me to new ideas'. Student highlights this year were the trip to London, punting in Cambridge, a particle physics session delivered by the Head of Science at Sevenoaks, the mentor-led residential quiz nights and a costume workshop run by Knole.

Mentors offered a variety of sessions from drama workshops to GCSE Chemistry revision to forensic investigation. Fifteen teachers from Sevenoaks, Benenden and the KAN academies taught sessions and we collaborated with Debate Mate, Knole, 2-3 Degrees, King's College London, Shakespeare's Globe, Queens' College Cambridge, The Cambridge Foundation Year, James Darley, Anglia Ruskin University and National Gallery's Articulation Prize. Speakers this year were Lord Evans, former Director General of MI5, who shared his career experiences and challenged students to think about the practicalities of national security, and Jonas Andrew-Phillips, who shared his story as a young man building a successful life through determination, inspiration and a growth mindset.

The graduation for the 2020 cohort will be held in conjunction with the 2021 cohort's graduation next summer.



Meet-up days and online mentoring

Online mentoring attendance has been 75 per cent this year and our meet-up days (average attendance 72 per cent) have been really inspiring with more students saying that KAN events help them to feel more enthusiastic about school work and boost their confidence. Collaborators involved were: Pathways CTM, 2-3 Degrees, Kooth, The Talent Tap, Exeter University, Canterbury Christ Church University, James Darley and Debate Mate.

Alumni and mentor dinner

This year's alumni and mentor dinner will take place in April 2025. This will be the third iteration of the event and we very much look forward to catching up with those members of our KAN community who will be able to be there.

Please see our website for details and reviews of past KAN events:
www.sevenoaksschool.org/service-and-partnerships/secondary-partnerships/kan





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Another huge benefit of the programme is the support of the mentors. I found GCSEs incredibly overwhelming but often found my worries eased by mentors' advice and revision strategies.

KAN student

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The Summer Research Project

Each summer students can undertake an independent piece of essay work, researching a question of their choice. These are supervised and marked by our mentor team. Since introducing the project, we are pleased to see that the uptake has grown amongst our students: 50 per cent in 2022 completed the project but the figure has been close to 60% in 2023 and 2024.

This academic year, the following students were commended for their first-class work.

Name	Cohort	Title
Ariel	2021	The ethics of docudramas
Luca	2021	How did the discovery of ecosystems in hydrothermal vents change our understanding of Earth?
Amelia	2022	How criminalising abortions does not stop abortions but makes them less safe.
Maximilian	2022	Was gunpowder good for the world in the long run?



Reflections

Stephen is an English teacher who started his career at Skinners' Kent Academy (SKA), one of our five KAN schools. He became a champion of the programme whilst working at SKA and now teaches at Sevenoaks School. He has been instrumental in the running of KAN during both of Isla's periods of maternity leave and has been delighted to see so many KAN mentees return to the programme as mentors.



It's been a privilege to witness KAN's journey over the last twelve years, and I'd like to express gratitude to everyone who has played a part in supporting the programme. What powers KAN is a shared passion for inspiring students through opportunities that broaden horizons and build relationships — and seeing how many people care deeply about this cause has been the highlight of my time as a teacher.

My own involvement with KAN began as a fresh-faced NQT, as a contributing teacher from Skinners' Kent Academy. In truth, I didn't really understand what the programme did (or what the acronym KAN stood for), and I agreed to teach a lesson at a residential chiefly because it provided me with a break from a particularly rambunctious Year 9 class. On the day of the KAN lesson, I underestimated the expanse of the Sevenoaks campus and turned up several

minutes late, expecting to find the waiting group in a state of bored disarray. Instead the dozen or so students were chatting amiably, with discussion being gently guided by an older student who had an encouraging manner and was wearing a KAN-branded hoodie.



This was my introduction to the mentor/mentee element of KAN, and it was entirely representative of how the role of mentors is pivotal to the success of the programme. With KAN now almost teenage itself, a heartening number of the current mentors are themselves KAN alumni, and for me this is the best evidence of the affection and high esteem KAN alumni have for the programme. It has also been gratifying to witness more and more of the residential sessions being led by the mentors, who are able to bring their burgeoning expertise to promote enthusiasm in their specialist subject. It's sad to say goodbye to mentors whose conscientious care and proactive resourcefulness make such a difference to students, but they've helped to create a culture of collaboration and compassion that new recruits strive to sustain.

There are so many memorable experiences that spring to mind when I think of my favourite KAN memories. What's remarkable is the variety of the sessions, from particle physics to pizza-making, from learning the conventions of Tudor fashion to beginner's Russian. Personally, the summer residential of 2022 is particularly unforgettable, as it was my first stint as caretaker coordinator of KAN, and what I came to appreciate was the incredible work that goes on behind-the-scenes to make these events happen.

Previously, as a contributing teacher, my involvement was casual, but overseeing the programme opened my eyes to Isla's painstaking planning and preparation. She has worked extensively to ensure every aspect of KAN is given due consideration.

The programme is in great hands, especially now Kathy O'Donnell has joined Sevenoaks and wholeheartedly embraced all things KAN. Her immediate commitment is proof not only of her passion for aiding students but also of how those who become involved with KAN are instantly inspired by its culture of aspiration and participation.

That's how it's been for me, too. I've now seen countless examples of what KAN offers: friendships and fun, scholarship and skills for life. What I hope every mentee gets from their time with KAN is a better sense of who they are, what they care about and what a joy it is to help others on this same journey. Fingers crossed, I'll be writing further reflections after another 12 years.



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This network of people has not only helped me to become a better student, but also a better person, and I'm really grateful that the programme has helped me to change for the better so much over the years.

KAN student

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Key dates 2024-25

Thursday 13 June	Online induction for new cohorts
Thursday 20 June	Online training for mentors
Tuesday 2 - Friday 5 July	Summer residential weeks, Sevenoaks School and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
Friday 30 August	Deadline for summer research project
Thursday 26 September	Online mentoring and summer research project feedback
Tuesday 15 October	Meet-up day, Sevenoaks School
Tuesday 21 January	Meet-up day, Sevenoaks School
Thursday 20 February	Online mentoring
Friday 4 April	Alumni dinner, Sevenoaks School
Saturday 5 - Monday 7 April	Easter residential weekend, Sevenoaks School
Thursday 15 May	Online mentoring
Tuesday 1 - Friday 4 July	Summer residential weeks, Sevenoaks School and Queens' College, Cambridge
Friday 4 July	KAN Graduation (2019 and 2020 cohorts)

For more information about KAN, visit our website

www.sevenoaksschool.org/service-and-partnerships/secondary-partnerships/kan/

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Thank you to these supporters of KAN



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