

# SUCCESS FOR THE KENT ACADEMIES NETWORK

## NINE TEENS FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED BACKGROUNDS RECEIVE TOP UNIVERSITY OFFERS

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The first cohort of students to participate in the UK's first multi-year summer school has achieved UCAS offers from top universities, including places at the University of Exeter and London School of Economics.

The four-year Academies Partnership Programme (APP) is the first of its kind in the county and has been piloted in Kent by a network of state and independent schools including Sevenoaks School. It has been designed to help bright, young people from under-represented backgrounds progress to university and the aim is to raise their aspirations and support them through their GCSEs and A-levels to realise their ambitions.

### Who is the Kent Academies Network?

The Kent Academies Network (KAN) enables independent schools to support academy schools that traditionally have a low rate of progression on to higher education. It comprises six academy schools and five independent sponsor schools, including:

- Knole Academy and its sponsor Sevenoaks School
- Marsh Academy and its sponsor Tonbridge School
- Folkestone Academy and its sponsor King's School, Canterbury
- Skipton's Kote Academy and its sponsor The Skipton's School
- The Jolie Wallis Academy and its sponsor Benefield School
- Oasis Academy, Isle of Sheppey

### How the students benefit

The programme offers students the opportunity to participate in two, week-long, residential courses each year (held during the Easter and Summer holidays), which are hosted at Sevenoaks School and Tonbridge School. Here, students follow a dynamic academic timetable to reinforce existing subject knowledge, challenge them and introduce new subject areas including Philosophy, Ethics and Economics.

The academic centre strengthens students' knowledge of core subjects and develops their debate, research and critical thinking skills. They also visit cultural sites, tour universities and hear from guest speakers, previous speakers include Lord Robert Winston and Olympic rower Sarah Waddock. During the residential courses, students get to mix with like-minded peers, a vital part of raising aspirations.

They also receive mentoring from Russell Group undergraduates, who act as role models, offer advice on university

applications and support throughout the entire four years via an online platform.

### Our first successes

This summer sees the first set of students graduate from the programme and, of the 11 students, nine have received university offers and one is deferring university application to take a gap year. Eight of these students will be the first from their families to go to university, achieving our primary objective: improving social mobility by widening access to top universities. As a result, the programme is now being replicated in other counties.

One member of the first cohort, Ella from Tonbridge Wells, has chosen to read Politics and Economics at Loughborough University. She says: "My experience on the programme has enabled me to develop a well-rounded approach to my studies through introducing me to the ways of university life and essential written and verbal skills. I exceeded the predicted grades for my GCSEs, three B's and seven C's, and am



proud to have achieved 11 A\*-B grades. Surpassing the scheme, I feel I have a much greater knowledge of higher education and am one step closer to getting there."

### Why was the programme established?

Research from the Sutton Trust found that pupils from the poorest fifth of neighbourhoods are 10 times less likely to attend a Russell Group university than their wealthier peers. Together with the Accelerate and Access Foundation (AAF), a foundation established by educational philanthropists, the Sutton Trust approached KAN to run the initiative in order to break down socioeconomic barriers and broaden access to higher education.

### Selecting participants for the programme

The six academies within the network identify bright Year 9 students and encourage them to apply for a place on the programme. Those that apply are keen to secure a place at a leading university and successful applicants are selected based on a combination of their

academic potential and socioeconomic factors such as Pupil Premium, Free School Meals and whether they are the first generation of their family to go to university.

Since it began in 2013, we have accepted 12-15 students each year. The demand for places is increasing as parents recognise the value that the programme has, the opportunities it offers and watch their children flourish.

Kelly Anderson, mother of Kean, a Year 10 pupil from Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey, is really supportive of the programme: "The KAN University Access scheme is an absolutely wonderful programme and we are so grateful to all involved for opening this opportunity for Kean and so excited to see how it will impact on his future. There are undoubtedly under-represented groups within the leading universities and the scheme and support of KAN within communities like ours is invaluable as it is opening doors for students from underprivileged backgrounds. Huge thanks to all involved both at Oasis and within KAN, who are working so hard to improve outcomes for our children and have them reach their full potential."

### How will this impact the future?

Our achievements are down to collaboration, both between the schools and the mentoring support from Fitzwilliam College and Queens' College Cambridge and Balliol College, Oxford. It is also due to the time and effort put in by the individual teachers, student mentors and speakers, who have volunteered their free time to support and provide content for the course.

Our approach has inspired a second programme, United Access that is being well-funded by the AAF, is being modelled on our success. It is through further collaborative programmes that we can increase the number of people from under-represented backgrounds to progress to university and change futures.

