



2026 NATIONAL AWARDS

NATIONAL AWARDS 2026

The Engage in their future National Awards is a unique opportunity to recognise and celebrate the amazing progress and achievements made by children and young people from schools across the country.

Staff members from schools are invited to share examples of the outstanding accomplishments of their children and young people by nominating them for a National Award.

These awards celebrate the incredible journeys, achievements and contributions of children and young people. Recognising not only success but the resilience, creativity, kindness, and determination that help shape brighter futures.

Each award category highlights a different form of excellence — from personal growth and wellbeing to creativity, leadership, and community impact.

Through these awards, we aim to shine a light on the moments of courage, kindness, and determination that might otherwise go unnoticed — the small steps and big leaps that make a lasting difference.

This is your opportunity to share those stories — to recognise the individuals and groups whose actions, attitudes, and achievements truly stand out. These stories remind us that success takes many forms and that every step forward deserves recognition.

Nominate someone who deserves to be celebrated for the difference they've made this year.

Further information about the categories available and some guidance notes about the nomination process are provided in this brochure. If you have any specific queries about the engage in their future 2026 National Awards, please do email us at **general@engageintheirfuture.co.uk**





ABOUT THE AWARDS

All short-listed students (usually three in each category) will be invited to gather with family, staff and peers to be presented with their certificate and trophy at the National Awards ceremony.

The National Awards Ceremony is typically quite an emotional occasion as the achievements and progress of the students are celebrated and applauded. A short synopsis of each nomination is read out together with a few choice photographs before short-listed nominee is invited on to the stage to collect their certificate and trophy, and to have their photo taken - no one leaves empty handed.

The National Awards Ceremony has been held at different locations across the country, and welcomed special guests that reflect the inspirational efforts of the students.

Attendance at the National Awards Ceremony is not obligatory, and we recognise that attending may involve long journeys which can be particularly challenging for the children we work with and those travelling with them.

For those that are unable to make it to the National Awards Ceremony, we will always consider alternative arrangements to remotely present the trophy and certificate after the ceremony. Failing that the trophy and certificate will be sent to the school to present, ensuring that the winner still receives their moment of glory.



WHY GET INVOLVED WITH THE NATIONAL AWARDS?

- The National Awards Ceremony is a prestigious and inspirational event only one of its kind which offers excellent hospitality and provides the perfect occasion to celebrate the accomplishments of children and young people.
- It's an excellent opportunity to recognise and celebrate the progress and achievements of your students on a national platform.
- There are a variety of individual and group categories that reflect a wide range of achievements and contributions.
- Every young person and their circumstances are unique, so the context of each nomination is taken into account by the Judging Panel.
- Being short-listed for a National Award can have a positive impact not just on the nominee, but also those around them - peers, friends, family and the whole school community.
- Short-listed winners are invited, along with family and staff, to receive their trophy at our National Awards Ceremony.

HOW DO I SUBMIT A NOMINATION?

You can complete an online **Nomination Form** [here](#).

If you have any queries regarding the awards or your nomination please send you enquiries to: general@engageintheirfuture.org.uk

Additional information about the awards can be found at www.engageintheirfuture.org.uk

The closing date for nominations is
Friday 9th January 2026



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Biggest Journey (Individual Award)

For those who have travelled the furthest on their journey of growth

Purpose:

To celebrate the individual who has made the most significant personal growth over the year. This award recognises resilience, determination, and measurable progress—whether in confidence, learning, attitude, or relationships. It is not about perfection, but about the journey taken and the changes achieved.

Summary:

This award celebrates the individual who has made the most significant personal growth over the year. Progress may come in many forms—improvement in attitude, effort, resilience, teamwork, or confidence. The winner will be someone who has overcome barriers, shown determination, and made measurable changes in how they approach school life and relationships. Nominations should give clear examples of the individual's journey: what challenges they faced, the steps they took to overcome them, and the impact of this progress on themselves and others. Strong nominations will include details of measurable outcomes, comparisons of “before and after,” and evidence of how this transformation has inspired the individual, their peers, staff, or the wider community.

What nominations should include:

- Clear examples of the challenges faced and how they were overcome.
- Evidence of progress in personal development (e.g. confidence, behaviour, academic engagement, teamwork).
- Specific comparisons of “before and after” or measurable outcomes.
- The impact this growth has had on themselves, peers, staff, or the wider community.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Inclusion Champion (Individual Award)

For those who make belonging possible for everyone.

Purpose:

Recognises individuals who go above and beyond to ensure others feel safe, welcome, and valued. These champions celebrate difference, stand up for fairness, and create a sense of belonging, making sure every voice is heard.

Summary:

The Inclusion Champion award recognises those who go above and beyond to make sure everyone feels safe, welcome, and valued. These individuals stand up for fairness, celebrate differences, and create environments where all voices are heard. They show empathy, compassion, and courage by supporting peers, challenging exclusion, and modelling kindness and respect. Nominations should include specific examples of how the nominee has made others feel included—whether through daily actions, leadership in group settings, or creating opportunities that bring people together. Evidence of the positive impact on others, whether individuals or groups, is essential.

What nominations should include:

- Examples of how the nominee has supported or included others.
- Evidence of actions that promote fairness, kindness, and equality.
- Specific stories showing how they challenged exclusion or made peers feel valued.
- The positive impact on relationships, wellbeing, or the wider school/college community.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA

Local Heroes (Individual or Group Award) *For those who change lives in their own community.*

Purpose:

To recognise those who have made a difference beyond the school gates, in their local community. This award celebrates acts of service such as charity work, volunteering, environmental initiatives, or acts of kindness that have a lasting impact.

Summary:

This award honours individuals or groups who have gone beyond the school gates to make a real difference in their local community. Their actions may include volunteering, fundraising, environmental initiatives, or simple acts of kindness that have had a lasting effect. Local Heroes show care for others, initiative in spotting needs, and dedication in giving their time or talents to help. Nominations should describe the activities undertaken, explain how the community benefited, and provide evidence of the difference made—such as money raised, feedback received, or changes brought about.

What nominations should include:

- Description of the activities undertaken and why they mattered.
- Evidence of the impact on the local community (e.g. people supported, funds raised, changes made).
- Feedback or recognition from those affected, where possible.
- Examples of commitment, responsibility, and care shown by the nominee(s).



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Global Citizens Award (Individual or Group Award)

For those who show what it means to be a citizen of the world.

Purpose:

To celebrate those who embody the values of respect, responsibility, and care for others within their school, college, or group. Within school or college, they promote fairness, equality, and community spirit, demonstrating they want to improve the world around them.

Summary:

The Global Citizens Award celebrates individuals or groups who embody the values of respect, responsibility, and care for others within their school, college, or group community. These nominees demonstrate fairness, equality, and a desire to improve the world around them. They may champion sustainability, justice, inclusion, or human rights—or simply live as excellent role models, consistently acting with kindness and integrity. Nominations should show clear examples of how the nominee contributes positively to their community: respecting others and property, supporting peers, modelling good manners, or leading initiatives. Evidence of impact—on relationships, culture, or community spirit—is essential.

What nominations should include:

- Examples of actions showing kindness, fairness, or integrity.
- Evidence of involvement in community life (e.g. peer support, leading initiatives, promoting sustainability or equality).
- Clear impact of their behaviours on others or on the school/college culture.
- Demonstration of consistent role-modelling of good citizenship.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Creative Force Award (Individual or Group)

For those whose creativity shines brightly and inspires others:

Purpose:

To celebrate originality, imagination, and self-expression through art, music, design, performance, or other creative projects. This award celebrates originality, collaboration, and pride in creative expression. It recognises creativity that inspires others, sparks new ideas, or builds confidence in a group or community.

Summary:

This award celebrates originality, imagination, and bold self-expression. Whether through art, music, design, writing, or performance. Creative Force winners use their creativity to inspire others and make a difference. Their work shows pride in their talents and the ability to innovate or think differently. Nominations may be for an individual or group project, large or small, long-term or short-term. Judges will look for clear evidence of creativity, originality, collaboration, and the impact of the work—whether on an audience, peers, or the wider community.

What nominations should include:

- Evidence of originality, innovation, or bold creative work.
- Examples of how creativity was expressed (art, performance, music, design, writing, etc).
- The impact on peers, staff, or the wider community.
- Any collaboration involved—how creativity was shared or developed together.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds (Individual or Group Award)

For those who keep both body and mind strong.

Purpose:

To recognise the balance between physical activity and mental wellbeing. This award celebrates those who have embraced sport, active play, mindfulness, or healthy habits to strengthen both their body and mind.

Summary:

This award recognises the individual or group that has embraced the balance between physical activity and mental wellbeing. Whether through sport, active play, mindfulness, or healthy habits, these nominees have shown commitment to looking after themselves and encouraging others to do the same. Their journey may include building fitness, improving resilience, finding confidence through activity, practicing mindfulness or supporting others' wellbeing. Nominations should provide examples of achievements or participation, as well as evidence of impact—on the individual's health, confidence, and mindset, or on the culture of the wider group.

What nominations should include:

- Examples of participation or achievements in sport, activity, or wellbeing.
- Evidence of commitment to building confidence, resilience, or balance.
- Stories showing how they encouraged or inspired others to look after themselves.
- Impact on health, confidence, or community wellbeing.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Story Teller Award (Individual – Chair’s Award)

For those whose passion for stories brings words to life.

Purpose:

Created in honour of World Book Day, this award celebrates a love of stories and literacy. It recognises those who bring words to life, whether through reading, writing, storytelling, or inspiring others to discover the joy of language.

Summary:

This special Chair’s Award celebrates a passion for reading, stories, and language. The winner will be someone who has shown enthusiasm for storytelling in any form—whether through a love of books, creative writing, performance, or simply sharing stories with others. Judges will look for evidence of how this passion has shaped the nominee’s learning or inspired those around them. This award highlights the power of stories to unlock imagination, develop literacy, and build confidence.

What nominations should include:

- Examples of passion for reading, stories, or literacy.
- Evidence of how this interest has supported learning, imagination, or personal growth.
- Stories showing how the nominee has inspired others through storytelling or reading.
- The positive impact on their life or community through a love of language.



CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



Bright Futures Award (Individual)

For those determined to build a future full of promise.

Purpose:

To recognise determination, ambition, and resilience in preparing for the future. This award celebrates individuals who have shown purpose in building the skills, confidence, and readiness to take their next steps beyond school – whether transitioning to mainstream school, further education, or employment.

Summary:

This award recognises determination, ambition, and resilience in preparing for the future. The winner will be someone who has shown a clear sense of purpose—whether transitioning to mainstream education, moving into further education, training, or stepping into employment. Their story should demonstrate progress, a readiness to face challenges, and a commitment to building the skills and confidence needed for life beyond school.

Nominations should include evidence of achievements, personal growth, and practical steps taken towards their goals. This award is about celebrating those who are shaping their own bright future.

What nominations should include:

- Evidence of achievements, transitions, or milestones reached (e.g. moving into mainstream education, further education, training, or employment).
- Examples of how the individual has demonstrated progress and resilience.
- Specific actions taken to prepare for their future.
- The impact of this preparation on their personal confidence, skills, and opportunities.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD NOMINATION?

If the progress and achievements of a student are considered deserving of a nomination for the National Awards, it's only fair that the nomination itself provide a true sense of that achievement and what it took to get there.

Whilst there is no 'good' or 'bad' way of writing a nomination, and the decisions of the Judges are based only on the achievements of the students, therefore the more information that is provided about the background, the journey and the outcome the better.

But time is precious and writing a comprehensive statement may take a while. So to help make things a little easier, we've pulled together a checklist to consider alongside the award category criteria and the Terms and Conditions.

Does the nomination...

- ☒ **Provide information about the background of the student(s)?**
We appreciate that there may be sensitive information that cannot be included but having even just a vague sense of the history can help put the achievements into context.
- ☒ **Identify the challenges, barriers and differences that were faced?**
What were the challenges that were faced - physical? emotional? social? Sometimes, how obstacles are approached, and how we respond to the consequences, is just as important as whether or not they were overcome.
- ☒ **Provide examples that illustrate the progress/achievements?**
This could be physical evidence such as samples of work, assessment results, certificates or awards received, letters of thanks or acknowledgement, photographs, and so on. Or it could be examples and descriptions of actions or behaviours that were observed.
- ☒ **Share the current circumstances?**
Is the journey complete? Are there plans and ambitions in place to continue that journey? Have others been impacted or affected?





**Celebrating the achievements and journeys
of young people, facing the challenges
associated with social, emotional and
mental health.**



Guidance Notes and Terms and Conditions

Nomination Process

The nomination process for the Engage in their future 2026 National Awards is intended to be flexible, fair and equal. Whilst all nominations must be submitted using the Nomination Form provided, we want you to tell us why the student/s you are nominating are worthy nominees - what is their background, what was the journey, what was the outcome?

We do ask that the description be of an appropriate length to sufficiently reflect the details of the nomination. We also welcome any supporting evidence such as certificates and photographs (which should be submitted with the completed Nomination Form). Up to 2 documents can be uploaded which should not exceed 2 x A4 pages each.

We recommend that you read the **“What Makes A Good Nomination?”** page of the booklet for further guidance, as well as referring to the, “What nominations should include” guidance provided against each award category.

Terms and Conditions

1. Entries can be submitted against more than one category although it should be made clear on the Nomination Form which category/ categories the nomination should be considered for. (Please note: the Outstanding Personal Progress category and the Outstanding Achievement category are particularly popular so if you are nominating in either of these categories, you may wish to indicate a second category in which the nomination may be considered.)
2. Nominations may be re-categorised at the discretion of the Judging Panel.
3. Entries should be submitted via the online submission form only.
4. To ensure compliance with GDPR regulation please ensure that explicit permission is in place to allow the sharing, for the purposes of the engage in their future National Awards, of all details provided in the Nomination Form and any accompanying documents, and that the box on the Nomination Form is ticked.
5. Data Protection: the details submitted on the Nomination Form and in any accompanying documents will be used, stored and shared in the following ways:
 - a. The data provided will be used, stored and shared by engage in their future for the administration of the 2026 National Awards, including the National Awards Ceremony. This will include, but is not limited to, correspondence (to confirm receipt of the nomination, notification of the outcome of the nomination, dispatch of certificates / prizes, etc), analysis, and certificate personalisation.
 - b. Nomination Forms (and details taken from them) and accompanying documents will be shared with the Judging Panel.
6. Please ensure that an email address is provided as an email will be sent to acknowledge receipt of the Nomination Form (this is in addition to the automated response for online nominations). If you do not receive this email your nomination documents may not have arrived. Please allow five working days between sending the documents and receiving the acknowledgement email. If you do not receive an email as receipt of delivery, please send an email (without attachments) to – general@engageintheirfuture.org.uk
7. If supporting documents are provided with the Nomination Form, please ensure that they are afforded an appropriate level of security, especially if they contain sensitive information. If they are posted, you may wish to consider Royal Mail’s ‘Signed For’ or ‘Special Delivery’ services.
8. Completed Nomination Forms must be received by 5pm on Friday 9th January 2026.
9. The decision of the Judging Panel is final.
10. A short-list of nominees (which may include joint winners) for each category will be announced at the end of January 2026 with the short-listed nominees invited to attend the National Awards Ceremony.
 - a. Nominees that are not short-listed will be sent a certificate in recognition and celebration of being nominated.
 - b. The 2026 National Awards Ceremony will be held at the Concept theatre, Manchester on Thursday 5th March 2026.
11. A trophy and framed certificate will be awarded at the National Awards Ceremony to those short-listed by the Judging Panel. If the nomination is for a team or school, a trophy and framed certificate will be awarded to the team/school as named on the Nomination Form. If (unframed) certificates are required for each individual member of the short-listed team/school, please provide their names on the Nomination Form.
12. Attendance at the National Awards Ceremony is not obligatory. Whilst we hope that all the short-listed nominees are able to attend and receive their trophy and certificate, we appreciate that this may not be possible for everyone. Should a short-listed nominee not be able to attend the Ceremony, their trophy and certificate will be sent as soon as possible after Thursday 5th March 2026 to their school for the attention of the staff member that submitted the nomination.