



Ark Alexandra Academy - Frequently Asked Questions

THE NEW SCHOOL

What is the vision for Ark Alexandra Academy?

Ark Alexandra Academy will preserve and build on the legacy of both William Parker and Helenswood.

Ark Alexandra Academy will be a co-educational Church of England school with strong universal Christian values that firmly inform our ethos and culture.

Our inclusive vision, ethos and curriculum will give clarity of purpose for each student and provide them with the highest life currency in order that every student can go to university or into the career of their choice.

At Ark Alexandra Academy, we believe that an excellent education will enable all our young people to:

- achieve the highest academic results that provide the best opportunities for their future success.
- develop the attributes and skills to be both highly employable and to be positive contributors to their community.
- be creative, emotionally intelligent and physically active young adults in order that they can lead a happy and healthy lifestyle.

We will be relentless in our drive for excellent standards and the highest academic outcomes, without exception.

Who chose the name of the school and why was Ark Alexandra chosen?

The name of the school was chosen by the joint Student Council of Helenswood and William Parker. The students wanted a name which was reflective of the locality of both schools, and which represents the local community and history of the area. Alexandra Park was opened in 1882 and two lime trees were planted in the park to represent a new beginning and local growth. The students felt that this is symbolic of the new journey and the fresh start for the school.

Students were also keen to honour the legacy of the current school names and therefore they will be retained as site names i.e. the lower school will be the Helenswood site and the upper school will be the William Parker site.

We are also looking at 'house' names in the new pastoral structure which will represent people who were born or who resided in Hastings and whose work has been influential and highly regarded locally, nationally and internationally.

Will the sixth form also change name?

Yes – the sixth form will be called Ark Alexandra Academy Sixth Form.

Who will be the Headteacher?

Ms Powell, the current Executive Principal (EP) will continue as EP of Ark Alexandra Academy. Ms Newman, the current Principal of William Parker, will remain as Principal.

Who will be on the governing body?

We are currently in discussion with the local governing bodies at both schools about how we bring them together as one local governing body (LGB). It has been confirmed that the current Chair of William Parker, Clifford Smith, will become Chair of the new LGB, with David Hinton, current Chair of Helenswood, becoming Vice-Chair.

How will the church school status be reflected in the curriculum/school day?

Ark Alexandra will be a Church of England school. The school will have an inclusive Christian ethos based on the universal values of faith, excellence and kindness alongside high expectations and an ambition for every child to succeed. All students will study RE and personal development through the Character programme. RE GCSE will also be available as an option.

All English schools are required to offer social, moral and religious education. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from religious education and from acts of collective worship if they choose. This applies equally to faith and non-faith based schools.

William Parker has a long history as a Church school with an admissions policy that has welcomed, without preference, students of all faiths and none. This inclusive policy will continue at Ark Alexandra.

How will the new school preserve the traditions of William Parker and Helenswood?

The Student Councils are meeting regularly with school leaders to discuss how the traditions of the two schools will be preserved. The first decision that has been taken is the current school names will be retained as site names i.e. the lower school will be the Helenswood site and the upper school will be the William Parker site.

The legacy of the House System is important to the students and the community and this will be retained. The House names will represent people who were born or who lived in Hastings and whose work has been influential and highly regarded locally, nationally and internationally.

Will the 400th anniversary of the founding of the William Parker school still be celebrated?

Yes. We have already been in discussion with the William Parker Foundation to plan the 400th anniversary of the founding of the original William Parker school. This work is continuing and will culminate in a series of events in July that celebrates the 400th anniversary and also marks the beginning of a new chapter for the school. Students and staff from both schools will be involved in this.

Will current GCSE students continue to study the courses they have chosen?

Yes. All students who have already selected options will continue with their courses.

Ark Alexandra will run a three year GCSE curriculum with options being taken in Year 8. This year's options process for current Year 8 students has been delayed while the new school timetable is finalised. We plan to complete the options process immediately after Easter.

Will current GCSE students remain in their single sex classes?

We are still finalising the timetable but it is our aim that next year's Year 11 students will remain in their single sex classes for all their subjects to ensure consistency in their GCSE year. They will be taught on the William Parker site. We anticipate that all other year groups will be taught in co-ed classes.

What curriculum with the new school offer?

The new school will have a rigorous academic curriculum with a strong emphasis on the performing arts and sports.

Lower school

In the lower school (Years 7 and 8) there will be a strong academic curriculum with a focus on Maths, English, Science, the humanities and a foreign language. All students will study RE and personal development through the Character programme. Students will also engage in a rich and varied curriculum of arts and sports through lessons in Art & Design, Drama, Dance and PE.

Upper school

In the upper school (Years 9-11), students will engage in a three year GCSE programme with academic excellence at the core. Students will continue their RE and personal development studies through their weekly Character lesson and will be able to choose up to 4 GCSE options. All students will continue to study their choice of History or Geography, alongside a wide variety of academic options (Triple Science, Geography, History, Spanish, RE, French) and those based around students' skills and interests (Art and Design, Catering, Enterprise, Health and Social Care, Drama, Product Design, Photography, Dance, and PE).

Sixth Form

The sixth form (Years 11 and 12) will continue to offer a wide range of A level options (English, Maths, Further Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, Economics, Spanish, Psychology, and Sociology), as well as the Business Studies professional pathway, and level 2 professional pathway, with a new addition of the Applied Science professional pathway for those students aiming for a career in the sciences. All sixth form students will continue their study of RE and personal development in their weekly Character session and engage in sports every week.

What enrichment activities will be available?

All students will have the opportunity to pursue their interests through the enrichment programme. Students will be able to participate in a broad range of activities particularly in the sports and the arts. We aim to work closely with the successful and diverse range of local clubs and associations in order that our students have exposure to new, creative and exciting enrichment experiences.

What will the school day look like?

We are currently finalising the school day and will share this with staff and parents as soon as we are able to.

Will the coeducational school have a House System? If so, what will the Houses be called?

Yes – Ark Alexandra will have a House System. The legacy of the House Systems is important to the students and the community and the House names will represent people who were born or who lived in Hastings and whose work has been influential and highly regarded locally, nationally and internationally.

Will staff and students have to travel between the two sites?

Teaching staff will only be required to travel between sites in any one day on very rare occasions. Some operations staff may be required to travel between sites during the day.

It is possible that some student travel may be required for particular events or to access facilities such as the running track, but in general the students will remain on one school site.

How will the SEND provision be handled? Will there be special needs facilities'?

We will continue to provide the necessary support and personalised interventions for our SEND students - and will work closely with SEND staff at Helenswood and William Parker to support pupils through the transition.

What will the behaviour policy be?

We are in the process of finalising the behaviour policy. Both schools currently operate a very similar behaviour policy and therefore the policy for the new school will reflect what is currently in place.

The Student Councils are also formulating a Respect Code that will detail how the boys and the girls will be expected to treat each other and to care for each other. Once drafted, there will be opportunities for all students to engage with the code and to share their understanding and interpretation of it.

Will Place2Be remain?

We will continue to provide a counselling service for students on both sites.

What building works are planned? Will the new/refurbished facilities be ready for September 2019?

There is a large programme of works being planned across the two sites including:

- Dining hall expansions at both sites
- Additional toilets and coeducational changing facilities
- Significant redecoration, repurposing and refurbishment of classrooms
- Dance studio refurbishment at William Parker
- Electrical upgrades
- Roofing and window replacement

Many of these works will be completed by September 2019 with some continuing into the Autumn term.

Which site will students be based at?

The 'lower school' for Year 7 and 8 students will be based on the Helenswood Lower site, and the 'upper school' and sixth form (Years 9 to 13) will be based on the William Parker site.

Will the toilets be unisex?

There will be a combination of unisex, boys' and girls' toilets.

Will current students need new uniforms?

No. We are planning to phase the uniforms in in an affordable way. New Year 7 students will wear the new uniform – but current students will remain in their Helenswood or William Parker uniform until the end of Year 11.

Why is the school co-educational?

We believe that the co-educational school will allow boys and girls to benefit from the rich curriculum and other opportunities currently offered only by William Parker or Helenswood.

Single sex education also seems to be less attractive to most parents these days. A review of the 2019 Year 7 applications identified that less than 2% of applicants indicated a preference for attending the single sex school – with nearly a quarter indicating that their application was for the co-educational school.

TRANSITION

Will there be Open Days and taster sessions for students moving to the coeducational school and for new pupils joining in 2019?

Yes. We are planning a number of activities as part of the transition process which will begin in March. These will include:

- Co-educational student leadership group meetings
- 6th form taster sessions
- Site tours for current and new students
- Teambuilding and careers workshops for current students.

There will also be a number of meetings held for parents and opportunities to visit the school sites.

How will you ensure that results don't dip during transition, and when we bring the schools together?

Both schools have worked incredibly hard to make the improvements that we've seen recently, and senior leaders are already working together on detailed planning to ensure that this progress continues through the transition. We are confident that in bringing the schools together we will be harnessing the expertise in both to create one excellent school.

How will the mixed sex classes be decided?

When creating mixed classes, we will take account of the students' most recent attainment and progress results to help us decide how student are assigned to each class.

ADMISSIONS

My child is already a student at Helenswood or William Parker. Do I have to apply to the co-educational school?

We want all of our Helenswood and William Parker students to join the co-educational school and all students currently on roll are guaranteed a place in September.

Therefore, if you would like your son or daughter to remain at the co-educational school you don't need to take any action.

Helenswood parents

If you wish, you can apply for a place at an alternative school for your daughter via East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) admissions website – www.eastsussex.gov.uk/admissions and follow 'apply for a school place'. This application should be made by Sunday 24 February and you will then receive a decision directly from ESCC by Friday 5 April. A flyer outlining further detail from ESCC is available on our school website under 'Admissions'.

For William Parker parents

If you do not want your son to transfer to the co-educational school, you can apply for an alternative school place for your son via the normal East Sussex County Council in-year

admissions process – www.eastsussex.gov.uk/admissions and follow ‘Applying during the school year’.

My child is currently in Year 6 – what will happen to our application to Helenswood and William Parker?

If you have applied to Helenswood or William Parker for Year 7 entry in September 2019, East Sussex County Council will now treat your application as an application for the co-educational school.

East Sussex County Council will take into account those parents who did not wish their application for Helenswood or William Parker to be treated as an application for the co-educational school, and who stated this in the reason section of the online application. However, parents should be aware that this will not prevent their child being offered a place at Ark Alexandra Academy if it is not possible to offer a place at any of their other preferences. School places are allocated in accordance with the admissions criteria for the schools in question, and the Admissions and Transport team at the County Council will be happy to assist any parent who has any queries about the admissions process.

THE PROPOSAL

When did Ark receive approval from the Minister for the proposal to bring together Helenswood and William Parker?

Approval was received on Wednesday 19th December 2018. This was the last day of term and therefore staff and parents were informed on their return to school on Thursday 3rd January 2019.

When will the schools come together?

The schools will come together on 1st September 2019.

Who will decide what happens to the Helenswood upper school site?

The deeds and the freehold to the Helenswood upper school site remain with East Sussex County Council, as the freeholder of the site. On the 31st August 2019 Ark’s funding agreement for Helenswood with the Department for Education will be terminated and the upper school land and buildings will revert to the Council.