



## Autumn 1 Newsletter

Dear parents/carers, staff and students

Welcome to the Ark Helenswood Academy Autumn 1 newsletter in which I reflect on the successes of the first term. We had a strong start to the academic year with students taking part in several activities and events which have complemented their studies in class.

Particular highlights have included hosting the Hofesh Shechter Company to work with our girls in Dance. Hofesh Shechter is recognised as one of the world's leading dance companies, touring throughout the world. My thanks extend to Ms Vanner for organising this very popular and energising event for the girls.

Ark Helenswood Academy hosted a visit from pupils from Scholengemeenschap Reigersbos as part of an international exchange visit from Amsterdam. The visitors joined Year 9 classes in various subjects, made new friends and had a great day touring. My thanks go to Mrs Fautley for being our school-based link.

I am very pleased to say that two Helenswood girls were filmed as part of the video made to celebrate the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. In addition, some Ark sixth formers performed in The Three Kings play at the Stables theatre, directed by our own Mr Whitehead.

Helenswood Academy continues its strong relationship with MADE, a company that visits throughout the year looking to support the study skills and revision techniques for our girls. To date Year 7 and 11 have taken part in these sessions and Year 9 will be the next year to benefit from their great work. All years will also benefit from our Alumni workshops, whereby previous Helenswood students return to talk to the girls about their aspirations and how the school can support to achieve them.

Every year group have had a dedicated parent meeting or curriculum evening and I would like to thank all that came to support those evenings and encourage families to participate in any future events. We have a Year 9 Parents' Evening this term which is an opportunity to talk to subject teachers regarding potential option choices. Year 9 girls will be making option choices in Spring and Helenswood will be running a programme of information, advice and guidance leading up to those choices being made.

Year 11 are being supported in preparation for their upcoming mocks (week beginning Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November) and then summer examinations. The academy is running a series of interventions after school, including during half term and on Saturdays. Examination performance is becoming more important now as there will be fewer and fewer subjects that have a coursework element. This means the result will be based solely on examination. This further raises the importance of the mocks, they will run as real examinations and give the girls the most valuable preparation and their teachers an opportunity to see what specific support is still required.

## Autumn 1 Newsletter

I was most proud of the exceptional participation and support we had from the students at the Year 6 Open Evening. The sporting displays, musical performances and the tour guides were outstanding in every way. The tour guides also represented the school at the Year 6 Open Mornings and they were all invited to the Principal's thank you breakfast of croissants and tea. Visitors were overwhelmingly positive with excellent feedback for our staff and students. It is testament of how great Helenswood is.

As a reminder to families, we need your support to ensure we maintain the highest quality of education and that your daughter(s) make excellent progress, it is essential that girls arrive to school punctually and every day.

The chart below shows the impact of not being punctual.

Lateness = Lost Learning (figures are calculated over a school year)	
5 minutes late each day	3 days lost
10 minutes late each day	6.5 days lost
15 minutes late each day	10 days lost
20 minutes late each day	13 days lost
30 minutes late each day	19 days lost

Many students have an attendance rate of around 90%, which may seem pretty good however, a 90% attendance record means that you are absent from lessons for the equivalent of one half day every week. This is equivalent to four whole weeks of lessons in the school year. Across 5 years it is equivalent to missing one half of a school year. An attendance record of 90% relates to students dropping at least one GCSE grade across all subjects. Government research has shown that students gaining at least 5 GCSEs at grade C and above can increase their wages by 41%. Students improving their attendance by 1% could see a 5-6% improvement in their attainment.

I am pleased to say that the vast majority of the students wear their uniform with pride and this is recognised throughout the school and local community. However there is a small minority of students that we have spoken to on a frequent basis regarding their uniform. Students who are not in the correct uniform are asked to change into the correct uniform before they go to lessons. If this is not possible they will be in isolation and home will be contacted to address the situation and support their daughter to wear the correct uniform, as detailed below:

## Autumn 1 Newsletter

### Uniform

- School blazer to be worn at all times. Outdoor coats to be placed in lockers or bags. They should not be carried around.
- Low-heeled black school shoes, which excludes trainers, plimsolls, canvas shoes, sandals and boots.
- Navy, black or white ankle/knee length socks or navy, black or beige tights. We expect either socks or tights not a combination of the two.
- Hair to be of one uniform natural colour and tied back.
- No make-up is to be worn; this includes nail varnish and false nails. Girls will be asked to remove the nail varnish and/or make-up.
- No visible piercings except for one pair of small studs. Plasters should not be used to cover piercings nor retainers used. Girls will be asked to remove additional piercings.

In my previous letter I said we would reward and recognise students who are making good progress, have high attendance and go above and beyond. Rewards from last term included skipping the lunch queue (very popular), star of the week by tutor group, and an attendance pizza party. We will continue with these rewards and have even more lined up.

We will continue our detention system for the small minority of students that do receive behaviour sanctions. This means either a 20 minute or 40 minute detention after school. If students fail to attend a 20 minute detention it escalates to a 40 minute detention and failure to attend a 40 minute detention result in isolation the following day followed by a 20 minute detention. We will continue to give you notice of the detention the day before.

The new rule of electronic devices not being seen, used or heard has had a positive impact and all staff and many students have commented on what a difference it has made to the learning experience. We analysed why mobile phones were being used and a common reason was that students were calling home to ask to be collected from school or talk through a problem. As tempting as this may be, it is critical that the correct processes are followed by students when they are at school. Any staff member at the school can support the girls and many of our staff members are first aid trained. If we consider that a call home should be made we will do so.

I would also like to remind families that if they have a concern regarding their daughter, either academic or pastoral, they should speak to the tutor or Head of Year first. If parents/carers wish to speak to a staff member on site they should make an appointment in advance.

### Pastoral team

Year 7: Mrs Phillips

Year 8: Mrs Brand

Year 9: Mrs Fautley

Year 10: Miss Atkin

Year 11: Mrs Walker

## Autumn 1 Newsletter

Pastoral support worker Years 7 to 9: Mrs Downey

Pastoral support worker Years 10 and 11: Mrs Deepröse

I encourage you all to look at the website for upcoming events. In particular I would ask that you look at how to access show my homework as staff will be putting all homework details including deadlines for submission on this website.

Unfortunately we still have some students using social media that is not age appropriate, with tags that are inappropriate. Please see the website for e-safety support for students and parents. I ask that if students are receiving offensive messages that they do not respond and report the matter immediately.

As ever I would like to thank all parents and carers for their support and I look forward to continuing the strong relationship that we have built.

The term culminated in the 'Pink Day' charity event with the money raised going to breast cancer charities.

Yours sincerely



Ms Dohel

Principal

*Proud to be at Helenswood*