Visual Needs Teaching Assistant

Helenswood Academy

Candidate Information Brief
Dear candidate,

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about the opportunity to become Visual Needs Teaching Assistant at Helenswood Academy, a large all-girls academy in Hastings.

In 2004 ARK Schools set out to create a group of exceptional, non-selective academies that would radically improve the life chances of their pupils. We now run 27 academies, educating students of all ages across London, Birmingham, Portsmouth and Hastings.

Helenswood Academy joined the ARK network in September 2013 alongside ARK William Parker Academy, a nearby all-boys school, creating a new ARK hub in Hastings. The two schools are continuing to collaborate effectively and they also benefit from the support of the ARK central team and other schools in the network. ARK has considerable experience in helping transition schools such as Helenswood and William Parker reach their targets for improvement.

This is an exciting opportunity to become a Visual Needs Teaching Assistant in a successful and aspirational school. You will support a visually impaired year 7 student.

You will have previous experience of working with students with a visual impairment at KS3/KS4. You will have knowledge and experience of Braille.

To apply please go to: https://application.arkschools.net/vacancy/PJJKXMnH. Please submit your application by 9am on Monday 30 September. Interviews will be held on Tuesday 8 October. For an informal, confidential discussion please contact Geraldine on 0203 116 6345 or geraldine.gailans@arkonline.org.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Lucy Monk
Principal
Helenswood Academy
Job Description: Individual Needs Assistant- Visual Impairment

Reports to: Assistant Headteacher
Start date: 9 October 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter
Salary: £16,377 - £17,506
Hours: 32.5 hours per week, term time only

The Role

The person appointed will work for the school with regard to a visually impaired student. The post holder will be under the direction of the coordinating teacher of the visually impaired and the class teacher and will assist in the support and inclusion of this pupil in the mainstream school.

Key responsibilities

Supporting the student

- To develop knowledge of a range of learning support needs and to develop an understanding of the specific needs of the visually impaired pupil to be supported
- Taking into account the learning support involved, to aid the child to learn as effectively as possible both in group situations and on his/her own by, for example:
  - clarifying and explaining instructions;
  - offering appropriate communication strategies, including Braille, when required;
  - ensuring specific technological aids and equipment are operating satisfactorily;
  - ensuring the child is able to use equipment and materials provided;
  - motivating and encouraging the child as required;
  - assisting in weaker areas, e.g. language, behaviour, reading, spelling etc;
  - helping the pupil to concentrate on and finish work set;
  - meeting physical needs as required whilst encouraging independence;
- liaising with class teacher and teacher of the visually impaired about individual education developing appropriate resources to support the child.

- To establish a supportive relationship with the pupil concerned.
- To encourage acceptance and inclusion of the child with special needs
- To develop methods of promoting/reinforcing the child’s self-esteem.

Supporting the teacher

- To assist, with class teacher (and other professionals as appropriate) in the development of a suitable programme of support (IEPs).
- In conjunction with the teacher of the visually impaired and class teacher to maintain a system of recording the pupil’s progress.
- To contribute to the maintenance of children’s progress records.
- To participate in the evaluation of the support programme
- To provide regular feedback about the child to the teacher
- To support the teacher in the overall running and maintenance of the classroom environment.
**Supporting the school**

- Where appropriate, to develop a relationship in order to foster links between home and school.
- To liaise, advise and consult with other members of the team supporting the pupil when asked to do so.
- To contribute to reviews of the pupil’s progress, as appropriate
- To attend relevant in-service training
- To be aware of school procedures.
- To be aware of confidential issues linked to home/pupil/teacher/school work and to keep confidences appropriately

**Other**

- To supervise pupils in playgrounds, lunchrooms, etc
- To assist with follow-through for related services, e.g., speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy
- To maintain pupil and family confidentiality
- To attend regular meetings and training, as required
- To maintain stock supplies and distribute as required.
- To undertake other various responsibilities as directed by the Leadership Team and Principal.
- To participate in training and other learning activities as required
- To attend relevant school meetings as required
Person Specification: Individual Needs Assistant- Visual Impairment

Qualification Criteria

- English and Mathematics GCSE (or equivalent) at grade C or above
- Degree level qualification is desirable but not essential
- Braille qualification
- Certified teaching assistant course or training would be beneficial
- First aid qualification is desirable but not essential
- Right to work in UK.

Experience

- Experience of establishing successful learning relationships with a variety of children at the relevant age
- Experience of working with children with a visual impairment
- Experience and/or understanding of the role of a LSA and in particular classroom organisation and management.
- Knowledge/experience of Braille

Behaviours:

Personal characteristics

- Genuine passion and a belief in the potential of every pupil
- To be a learner and continually seek professional development opportunities
- Helpful, positive, calm and caring nature
- Able to establish good working relationships with other LSAs and teachers
- Able to follow instructions accurately but make good judgments and lead when required
- Motivation to continually improve standards and achieve excellence.

Specific skills

- Willingness to gain proficiency in the use of specialist technology used by the visually impaired
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Good numeracy and literacy skills
- Competent with computers and other technology
- Good administrative and organisational skills
- Able to understand and implement particular strategies and methods to help pupils to improve their learning and enjoyment of learning
- Able to help implement the necessary routines and patterns to establish good behaviour management within the school
- Able to deal with minor incidents, first aid, and the personal health and hygiene of the pupils
- Understands the importance of confidentiality and discretion
• The ability to speak another language, play a musical instrument or coach a sport desirable, not essential.

Other

• The post holder will be expected to undertake the paperwork associated with their caseload
• Commitment to equality of opportunity and the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils
• Willingness to undertake training
• This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.
About Helenswood Academy

Helenswood Academy (previously Helenswood School) is an eight form-entry all-girls academy in Hastings, East Sussex. The school has approximately 1200 students on roll, 17.3% of whom are eligible for free school meals and its proportion of students with special educational needs is below the national average. Years 7-11 are all girls. However the school's sixth form college, Parkwood Sixth Form, is mixed, sharing facilities and teaching with the nearby ARK William Parker Academy, an all-boys school.

The school has National Healthy Schools Status and holds the Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark Gold and Investor in Careers awards. In 2011 it was graded ‘satisfactory’ by Ofsted, who praised the Headteacher and her senior team’s vision for the school.

In September 2013 the school transitioned to the ARK network, joining alongside William Parker. The governors of the school proposed to join the ARK network in order to increase opportunities for staff and students and help the school rapidly become outstanding.

As an ARK academy, it will maintain its key characteristics including its collaboration with William Parker in the running of Parkwood Sixth Form.
About ARK Schools

ARK Schools is an education charity set up in 2004 to create a network of high achieving, non-selective, inner city schools where all pupils, regardless of their background or prior attainment, achieve highly enough by age 18 to have real choices: to go on to university or the career of their choice. ARK Schools has no faith affiliations.

All the ARK schools are situated in areas of high deprivation or educational need and our pupil profile reflects this: over half of our pupils are eligible for free school meals compared to 18% nationally.

The ARK network is growing: we operate 27 academies across London, Portsmouth, Birmingham and Hastings and we aim to have 50 schools open by 2015. At this size, we will be able to achieve our vision of creating a sustainable network of outstanding schools succeeding in closing the achievement gap. We're growing as quickly as we can but as slowly as necessary to ensure we never compromise on quality.
**Track record**

ARK Schools is one of the top performing academy operators in the country. 11 of the 12 ARK academies inspected by Ofsted so far are rated good or outstanding. Our students outperform national GCSE attainment in both English and mathematics and in the percentage of students who make three levels of progress between key stage 2 and 4 in these subjects.

**Secondary**

In 2013 all but one ARK academy reported growth in the number of students achieving the English Baccalaureate standard of five GCSEs at A*-C including English, maths, a humanity, a modern language and a science, with 37% of Burlington Danes students achieving this standard and 19% at St Albans Academy in Birmingham and Evelyn Grace Academy in Brixton. Given their lower than average prior attainment, many of our students are making exceptional progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4, reflected in several ARK academies achieving the highest value added scores in the country.

**Percentage of pupils passing five GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year opened</th>
<th>Final result previous school</th>
<th>2012 result</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Change 2012 – 13 (percentage points)</th>
<th>English Baccalaureate 2013 (2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington Danes Academy</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>37 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walworth Academy</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn Grace Academy</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARK Globe Academy</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Academy</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>+18</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Albans Academy</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>19 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARK Kings Academy</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARK Putney Academy</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>13 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Primary**

Across the network, we have seen significant improvements in reading, writing and maths. Four of five of our primaries have made significant progress in their combined results, with pupils from Globe and Tindal in particular showing exceptional improvement. Globe’s combined results increased by 10 percentage points while Tindal’s leapt by 18 percentage points.

Mathematics is a network strength with 75% of Year 6 pupils reaching 4C+ and nearly a quarter excelling at 5C+. In the new key stage 2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test, more than half of pupils reached level 5C+. Our first transition primary, Globe, achieved 100% success at 4+ in reading and maths in 2013.
Our six pillars

We want every ARK pupil to do well enough by 18 to go to university or pursue the career of their choice.

To achieve this, our schools prioritise six key principles.

**High expectations**

With the right teaching and support, we believe every child can realise their potential. We set exceptionally high expectations for all our pupils and do whatever it takes to achieve them. Our aspirations are no lower for our most vulnerable pupils.

**Excellent teaching**

A teacher is the most important factor affecting pupil achievement.

We work side by side with our teaching staff to ensure excellent teaching and support them with exceptional training and development. To ensure no child is left behind, we have developed data management tools which allow teachers to monitor pupils’ progress and quickly identify when children, or indeed teaching staff, need extra support.

**Exemplary behaviour**

Our schools are characterised by a respectful and orderly environment, where teachers focus on teaching and pupils on learning. Good behaviour is taught, reinforced and recognised throughout every school and poor behaviour is not tolerated. We do not accept excuses and we do not make any either.

**Depth before breadth**

When pupils secure firm foundations in English and mathematics, they find the rest of the curriculum far easier to access. That’s why we prioritise depth in these subjects, giving pupils the best chance of academic success.

To support fully our pupils’ achievement in maths, we have developed Mathematics Mastery, a highly-effective curriculum and teaching approach inspired by pupil success in Singapore and endorsed by Ofsted. We teach Mathematics Mastery in all our primary schools and at Key Stage 3 in a selection of our secondary schools. It is also being implemented in over 100 schools beyond our network.

We also dedicate more time to literacy and English than other schools to encourage a love of reading and develop fluent communication skills. We have two programmes that focus specifically on phonics teaching and early spoken language skills. We also train all of our teachers to be aware of possible barriers to learning and how to support children if more help is needed.
More time for learning
To embed core subjects and make time for enrichment, many of our schools run a longer school day. Others are open at weekends and during school holidays, offering revision and master classes as well as residential stays, day trips and summer schools. In all our schools, every hour of every day is devoted to children learning and no time is wasted.

Knowing every child
We organise our schools so that every pupil knows and is known well by their teachers. Children do best when teachers and families work together: we involve families in all aspects of school life and encourage participation and collaboration. We keep parents well informed of pupils’ targets and progress and work together to understand any challenges children may face at home or at school. Together we aim to create a safe, happy and dynamic school environment.
A commitment to training and professional development

We are committed to helping our principals recruit, develop and support excellent staff within the network. ARK invests significantly in a number of professional development programmes which complement academy level training.

- The ARK training menu: we have developed a bespoke training menu, which is accessible by all staff in the network offering a wide range of training modules to staff in all roles
- The Summit: ARK Schools hosts an annual staff training conference in London, bringing together all the staff in the network to celebrate success and participate in specialist seminars and workshops
- Network hub days: All the schools share INSET days, allowing us to share best practice and role specific training across the network, facilitated by in-school and central staff
- ARK staff receive 10 training days each year rather than five.

ARK runs a number of additional programmes, including:

- Leading Impact for senior leadership development
- Lead Teachers, aimed at developing the skills of outstanding teachers to improve performance of other teachers
- Outstanding Teachers, aimed at good teachers aiming to improve and embed outstanding practice
- SEN training for new to role and established SENCOs
- New Teacher induction.

ARK Schools is running an Initial Teacher Training programme through School Direct, starting in September 2013.

ARK Schools is the co-founder of the Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders development programmes.

Other staff benefits

Alongside our continued focus on professional development we also offer a variety of other benefits. These have been chosen to help our employees develop professionally, plan their finances and look after their wellbeing.
- **GymFlex**: Save up to 40% at your local gym
- **Discount scheme**: Employees can access up to £1,000 in savings a year from over 3,000 major retailers
- **Interest Free Loans**: ARK Schools offers employees up to £5,000 in interest free loans for season ticket or bicycle purchases
- **Childcare Vouchers**: All employees are eligible for tax free childcare vouchers as part of a salary sacrifice scheme
- **Healthcare**: A low cost plan gives you money back towards the cost of your optical bills, dental costs and consultations.

**A Commitment to Encourage Diversity**

ARK Schools is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our employees. Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee feels respected and able to give their best. To that end we are committed to provide equality and fairness for all in our recruitment and employment practices and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
Terms and conditions

Leadership contracts
The leadership contract mirrors the national leadership contract.

Teaching staff
We want to compete for the best staff and offer attractive pay and conditions and career development opportunities.

We operate our own terms and conditions, which broadly mirror national pay and conditions. The main differences are:

- **A 39 week year:** 37 teaching weeks and 2 weeks for planning preparation and professional development
- **An 8am – 5pm day:** including significant planning and preparation time (overall teaching loads are not higher than similar inner city schools)
- Main scale and UPS teaching staff receive a **2.5% salary uplift** to reflect this additional flexibility.

Operational staff contracts
Operational staff contracts are based on:

- 36 hours a week
- 25 days holiday a year (for those on year round, pro-rated for Term Time Only contracts)
- Competitive salary scales
ARK Schools, Safe Recruitment Procedure

ARK is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its academies. In order to meet this responsibility, its academies follow a rigorous selection process to discourage and screen out unsuitable applicants. This process is outlined below, but can be provided in more detail if requested.

Disclosure
ARK Schools requires all employees to undertake an enhanced DBS check. You are required, before appointment, to disclose any unspent conviction, cautions, reprimands or warnings under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975. Non-disclosure may lead to termination of employment. However, disclosure of a criminal background will not necessarily debar you from employment - this will depend upon the nature of the offence(s) and when they occurred.

Shortlisting
Only those candidates meeting the right criteria will be taken forward from application.

Interview
1. Longlisted candidates will be subject to a screening interview. Those shortlisted will take part in an in-depth interview process.

2. Candidates will be asked to address any discrepancies, anomalies or gaps in their application form.

Reference checking
References from the previous and current employer will be taken up for shortlisted candidates, and where necessary employers may be contacted to gather further information.

Probation
All new staff will be subject to a probation period of six months (which may, in certain circumstances, be extended by up to 10 weeks). The probation period is a trial period, to enable the assessment of an employee’s suitability for the job for which they have been employed. It provides the academy with the opportunity to monitor and review the performance of new staff in relation to various areas, but also in terms of their commitment to safe guarding and relationships with pupils.