

Proposed academy schedule change consultation Collated FAQs and comments for parents/carers

What are the proposed changes? What is the rationale for these changes?

- We are proposing to redesign the curriculum for Ark Helenswood in order to prepare students for the demands of the new linear GCSEs, and the additional challenges and requirements posed by these exams.
- Our current curriculum does not allow for enough breadth or depth of subject matters.
- The new schedule will feature lessons that are 60 minutes long, rather than 1 hour 15 minutes. This will allow for more subjects to be covered as part of the curriculum. There is a great deal of research that shows that shorter, more focussed lessons lead to better retention and learning outcomes.
- In order to accommodate these new lessons, the school day for Ark Helenswood will be changing.
 - Start time remains **8.45am** every day for both schools
 - Mondays and Tuesdays school will finish at **4.05pm for Years 9-11**
 - In response to feedback from the consultation, **Years 7 & 8 will finish at 3.05pm every day**
 - Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays school will finish at **3.05pm for Years 9-11**
 - Break time will be reduced from 30 minutes to 20 minutes.
 - Lunch time will be shortened from 50 minutes to 30 minutes.
 - Tutor time will be extended from 15 to 30 minutes and will move from first thing in the morning to after the first break.

Day	Year Group	New finish time
Monday to Friday	7 and 8	3.05
Monday and Tuesday	9 to 11	4.05
Wednesday to Friday	9 to 11	3.05

How will changing the schedule and curriculum make a difference to student outcomes?

- Educational requirements have changed dramatically in recent years and linear GCSEs present a host of new challenges for students and schools. More subjects and more material than ever before must be covered in order to achieve good GCSE results. At the same time, universities are becoming more stringent in their requirements. We believe that these changes are absolutely necessary in order to prepare our students for these evolving qualifications and to prepare them go on to university and the career of their choice.

Why can't school end at the same time every day of the week?

- This schedule enables us to teach the 27 hours of subject lessons that are required every week. There is no other practical way to break up 27 hours of subject lessons across five days of equal length.
- The school day will continue to end at the same time every day of the week for Years 7 and 8.

Will the new curriculum feature more maths and English, at the expense of other subjects?

- No, if anything, an extended schedule and a new curriculum will allow more curriculum time for other subjects. It will allow some subjects to have weekly lessons rather than fortnightly, as at the current time.

Why haven't we got this right before in previous schedule changes? Why change again?

- It is important to note that the educational landscape has changed significantly in the past two years. Linear GCSEs require more depth and breadth of subjects and our schools need to respond to these new challenges.

Is this a full, legal consultation? How much say will parents have in the final decision on this schedule change?

- There is no legal requirement for the school to consult parents and students on a schedule change and we are sorry if we have given any impression otherwise. We have sought parental feedback, not out of any legal requirement, but we recognise that any schedule change will have an effect on the families that make up our school community. Although the ultimate decision rests with school leaders, we want to gather as much information and feedback from parents as possible in order to minimise any inconvenience or difficulties presented by these proposed changes. This document is meant to address many of the concerns presented by parents and we have already adjusted our plans based on the feedback we have received. Your feedback has been vital to that process.

Have these proposed changes been approved by Ofsted?

- School schedules are the responsibility of the school leadership team. There is no requirement for Ofsted to approve schedule changes.

Have parents of students coming in to Year 7 been informed or consulted on these changes?

- We will let parents of students coming in to Year 7 know about the curriculum and schedule changes once they are finalised.

Were staff members at Helenswood shown plans and given a chance to comment?

- We have consulted with staff.

What is the rationale behind having two long days and three shorter days each week? Why not have the same finish? Have you accounted for the difficulty students will have arranging different schedules for different days of the week?

- We have chosen it in order to be able to fit the proposed new curriculum. This schedule enables us to teach the 27 hours of subject lessons that are required every week. There is no other practical way to break up 27 hours of subject lessons across five days of equal length.

What is the rationale behind moving tutor time later in the day and extending its duration?

- Tutor time currently is 15 minutes and takes place first thing in the morning. It will be extended to 30 minutes and moved later in the day.
- Registration will then be taken as part of the first period.

- Tutor time is part of the school's core curriculum and extra time is needed to cover the curriculum requirements and pastoral needs of students.
- We believe that 15 minutes is not long enough for tutor time and that is why we are extending it. There will be a clear and focussed curriculum for tutor time as part of these changes.

Why is the school cutting down lunch time from 50 to 30 minutes? Is 30 minutes enough time for students to queue and eat?

- We have proposed shortening the lunch period to allow more time for learning.
- This is an appropriate amount of time and in line with standard practice in many schools.
- We have worked closely with the canteen manager and we are confident that we can move students through the lunch queue more quickly, leaving them plenty of time to eat. We will monitor the situation closely.

Isn't the new lunchtime of 1.35pm too late in the day? Will children go hungry if they've not eaten since the morning?

- All students will still have the opportunity to eat something during their morning break time.

Will extra-curricular activities suffer if the lunch period is shortened?

- We will ensure that a full schedule of extra-curricular activities is available after school including sports, dance, arts and other activities.

How will students, particularly A-level students be expected to move between sites and eat lunch in the allotted time?

- We are aware of this issue and are blocking the timetable to minimise the number of moves needed for students. We are currently finalising the plans for movement between sites.

How will schedule changes affect the 6th form?

- There is no change to the 6th form schedule. The curriculum offer for the 6th form remains essentially the same – the only difference is that 6th form students will also have a new dedicated 1 hour tutor time built into their schedule.

Will there be separate, set aside spaces and libraries for 6th formers at both schools?

- We will ensure that students have the space necessary on each site.

Has there been consideration into the health and safety of students walking home potentially in the dark during the winter months?

- Under the current schedule, students are already going home in winter, after it has become dark outside. This is an issue that all schools face and our closing times are in step with those of a large number of schools throughout the country.
- Parents are always encouraged to think about the safety of their children after school. If parents are unable to pick up or drop off students themselves, the next safest option is for them to arrange for students to walk together in groups.

Won't these proposed schedule changes make it more difficult for parents to coordinate pick-up times, if they have children at other schools?

- Different pick-up times are already an issue for many families on our current schedule. Unfortunately, this is something faced by parents everywhere and there is no practical way to coordinate closing times between schools in the community due to differing curriculums and school priorities. We think our proposed schedule is broadly in line with that of many other schools.

Will the new schedule be coordinated with the Hastings bus timetables? Sometimes students are left to wait for a long time.

- We have heard from many parents that there has been an issue with bus reliability. We have met with the bus company and we are looking into these concerns. We used this meeting as an opportunity to attempt to improve coordination with local buses.