



ARK Elvin Academy

Newsletter

Half term 1 | October 2014



Welcome to the first ARK Elvin Academy newsletter

We've had a highly productive and enjoyable first half term at ARK Elvin Academy. I have been very proud to see our pupils model our school values, embrace our new systems and focus on their learning.

Over the past six weeks we have been developing our understanding of our school motto, **magna aude** – dare for greatness. We have been honoured to welcome both Claire Harvey and Jimmy Wales to our school to talk about their inspirational life stories and how they have dared for greatness. You can read more about their visits in this newsletter. Pupils have also been receiving recognition for magna aude through our celebration of our four core values – integrity, courage, community and mastery. All pupils can earn merits for these values, which I am sure they have been showing you in their planners.

Of course a key focus for us is on ensuring that our pupils make rapid progress in their learning. We have been doing a number of baseline assessments with our pupils to give them an understanding of where they are at the moment. After the half term we will be setting targets for all pupils in every subject and sharing these with parents. I look forward to discussing this with you further at parent evenings and celebrating the on-going success of your children.



Have a wonderful half term break,

Elvin community welcomes year 6s to open evening 15th October 2014

Wednesday 15th October was ARK Elvin Academy's very first open evening for year 6s who are interested in joining us next year. It was an opportunity for us to showcase some of the improvements made to the school, and the great learning and teaching that happens here.



Over a hundred of our pupils volunteered to spend their evening helping out, and impressed visitors with their enthusiasm and professionalism. Volunteers from years 7-13 were either acting as tour guides for families or helping in departments - whether performing science experiments, dressing as Shakespearean actors, or handing out French and Spanish delicacies.

Visitors had the opportunity to hear from our Principal Ms Bates, head girl Rashmi Raghvani, and Nayem Hussain from year 7. They also played volleyball, sampled

homemade muffins, made a model volcano erupt, and came into the school to the sounds of improvised jazz piano by one of our sixth formers Leo Ohemeg-Dwarka.

Parents also visited the school on Friday and Monday mornings, to see lessons in action. Parents at all three events were universally positive about the school and the pupils. At the open evenings parents commented on the variety of interesting activities, while at the open mornings they were very impressed by how happy and focussed on learning pupils were in lessons.

Paralympian inspires at opening ceremony 9th October 2014

London 2012 Paralympian Claire Harvey was guest of honour at our official Opening Ceremony on 9th October. Claire, who captained Team GB's sitting volleyball team, gave a motivational speech on why pupils should follow our school values and motto and 'dare for greatness'.



She inspired pupils, teachers, and guests from the wider ARK family, with stories of her personal journey since being paralysed in one leg after an accident in 2012. She said "The motto *magna aude* is one that I lived by when I dared for Paralympic greatness ... what I learned is that you don't have to see the whole journey to take your first step – greatness means knowing you are better today than you were yesterday, every single day."

Ms Bates reminded pupils: "Our motto is *magna aude*, which means 'dare for greatness', and we talk every day about how each of us can achieve this: through pursuing audacious goals, acting with integrity, and making sure we are always learning."

New ARK Elvin Head Girl Rashmi Raghavani hosted the event, while the Head Boy Syed Haque also gave a speech, recounting how he learned the importance of the values of courage and community when supporting a friend with Asperger's Syndrome.

After the event, Sixth Formers from the new Pupil Leadership Committee mingled with visitors and commented on how they have already begun to notice the difference in the school just weeks after opening. Year 12 pupil Kishankumar Patel, who has been at the school since Year 7, said: "ARK is definitely the best thing that has happened to this school.

"The teachers are really focused on behaviour and pupils' personal development. We have a longer school day and extended time with our form teachers, so we can each focus on our own goals."

Kishan, who is studying for his A Levels in Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Maths, hopes to go to university and study chemical engineering.

Jimmy Wales visits Elvin pupils

1st October 2014

The internet entrepreneur Jimmy Wales visited ARK Elvin Academy on 1st October to deliver a message about the importance of failure and resilience. The founder of Wikipedia spoke to pupils from Years 9-13 in a live broadcast that was watched by students in schools across the UK.

"Failure – Jimmy Wales is good at it", was his key message, reinforcing the ARK Elvin value of courage and our mantra that "mistakes are learning opportunities". He discussed the various businesses that he had tried to set up, including an online food ordering business, a search engine and even an initial online encyclopaedia called 'Nupedia' which all failed to take off.

"I spent about \$250,000 just on the first twelve articles. I keep all twelve of them printed out and by my bed and I read them every night – so someday I'll get my money's worth. It was a failed business idea. It didn't work. Then I had a really dumb idea. A free encyclopaedia for everyone. Just open up the website and let anybody come and edit. No advertising. No sane business plan of any kind."

The idea would go on to become the 5th most visited website in the world and according to Wales, "change the face of human knowledge forever".

“The classic entrepreneurial success stories that you hear about – the most famous one currently is Mark Zuckerberg – an enormously fast growth curve with no stumbles along the way. These kinds of stories are enormously misleading to young people getting into business. The truth is for most entrepreneurs that’s not the way it works. The way it works is there’s lots and lots of failure. One of the problems for young people is they are very afraid to take that first step, because what if it’s a failure? The idea is just embrace that, try lots of little things – fail and fail and fail because ultimately that is what is going to lead to success.”

Ms Bates said, “It was great to welcome Jimmy to our school. We try to build a sense of resilience and determination amongst our students. We believe mistakes are learning opportunities, and a chance for students to build their strength for future life.”

The event was live streamed via Google Hangout and the TES Connect website to over 100 schools to mark the launch of a series of events to promote the study of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects.

At ARK Elvin we have a strong belief in the importance of these subjects, and have this year started the Computing curriculum for Year 10. The talk was also of particular interest for Year 9, whose forms are all named after technology entrepreneurs such as Tim Berners-Lee and Jony Ive.

Rory Cellan Jones, the BBC’s technology correspondent, who chaired the event, said that the audience of ARK Elvin pupils was “very intelligent”.

And Jimmy even took the time to take a 'selfie' with our Head Girl and Head Boy, Rashmi and Syed!



Pupil Leadership Committee appointed

26th September 2014

On Friday 26th September, Ms Bates was proud to announce Syed Haque and Rashmi Raghvani as the school's first Head Boy and Head Girl.

Syed and Rashmi will be the main representatives of our 800 pupils, welcoming guests and acting as ambassadors for the school. Their responsibilities will involve public speaking, contributing to whole-school decision making, and representing the interests of the pupil body. They will be supported by a pupil leadership committee currently made up of 21 Sixth Formers with specific responsibilities; one of the first tasks will be extending pupil leadership throughout all year groups.

All of those appointed went through a very competitive process, culminating in interviews with Ms Bates and the Assistant Principal responsible for Sixth Form, Ms Megaw. The appointments of Head Boy and Head Girl were particularly difficult, with many applicants; however Syed and Rashmi's applications and interviews were very compelling.

Upon being appointed, Syed said to the school community, "Thank you for putting your faith in me and I can't wait to repay the school with my dedication and hard work in this role". Rashmi added "I am really thankful for this opportunity and I look forward to working with Syed and everyone at ARK Elvin to make this school the best it can be". Ms Megaw commented that "Syed and Rashmi are fantastic role models for our ARK Elvin values and I know they will do a fantastic job in these positions, bridging the gap between our student and staff cohorts as well as our wider community, and with the support of the extended Student Leadership team".

Next half term pupils in all year groups will have the opportunity to take pupil leadership roles.

Pupil Leadership Committee	
Head Boy	Syed Haque
Head Girl	Rashmi Raghvani
Lead Councillor	Kishankumar Patel
House Leaders	Sakirye (Mandela), Ardan (Sutton), Redjan (Rowling), Haydn (Angelou), Chantel (Farah), Shyam (Malala)
Community Organiser	Xhenarjo Ballin
Lead Mentor	Natasha Pal
Social Secretary	Dhaval Shah
Magazine Editors	Lourdita, Sebastian, Joseph
ARK Elvin Ambassadors	Nermin, Saynab, Abdi
Literacy Leads	Omnia, Lourdita, Adila, Laila

ARK monitoring visit a success

23rd September 2014

ARK Elvin Academy had its first monitoring visit by ARK on 23rd September. As an ARK school, we will be visited every half term by a team of inspectors and head teachers to ensure that we are providing our pupils with the very best education.

The monitoring team for this first visit were impressed with much of what they saw. They noted that in every lesson they visited, pupils were well behaved and keen to learn. They saw teachers using new techniques from September's training, to maintain the high expectations the school has of all its pupils' behaviour and learning. The team also commented on the warm welcome they had received from staff and pupils, and the commitment to the school values that they observed.

Of course, there is still much work to do, and the monitoring team agreed with some of the areas that the school is working hard to improve. These include making sure we have good assessment data for all pupils, maintaining our high expectations through classroom routines, and ensuring every lesson is well planned.

However, overall the team was very positive about the development of the school, and could see the positive impact of the changes even a few days into lessons.

Leading educationalist visits Elvin

9th September 2014

ARK Elvin Academy was delighted to welcome Doug Lemov, a leading educationalist and internationally renowned author, to the school in September to deliver training to a group of school leaders and teacher development leads.

Mr Lemov, who was visiting from the United States, is the author of *Teach Like a Champion*, which has been described as "one of the most influential and helpful books that any teacher ever owns". He is also an expert on how best to train teachers and other professionals to become outstanding practitioners, which is the subject of his latest book *Practice Perfect*.



During his day at ARK Elvin, Mr Lemov was training head teachers and teacher training leaders – including our own Ms Bayes and Ms Khokhar – from across the country in how best to develop their teachers. He also spent time with our Senior Leadership Team discussing ARK Elvin's own staff training programme, commenting that 'it sounds amazing'. We look forward to inviting Mr Lemov to visit us again when lessons are up and running!

Staff preparation for pupils' return

15th September 2014



All staff at ARK Elvin Academy completed a fortnight of training and preparation for the return of our pupils in September. The two weeks were a valuable opportunity for staff to ensure that the pupils would come back into a new school with everything ready to maximise learning. The sessions focussed on how to embed the ARK Elvin Academy values of integrity, courage, community and mastery, making sure we have high expectations and a commitment to quality and learning in everything that we do.

The largest proportion of time was devoted to developing classroom practice, as we are committed to always improving the learning that happens in our lessons. Routines and systems for ensuring that

behaviour in lessons and around the academy is positive were also developed and shared. This included teachers practicing for themselves the lining up that pupils now do on a daily basis!

The Elvin staff all felt that these two weeks were invaluable in improving the way the school and lessons will run when pupils return. Teachers in the maths department commented that the training was “not stereotypical but very informative, encouraging and to the point. Staff can adopt it in simple ways to develop good practice in the classroom. The training has reinforced positive values, building bridges and community spirit to turn things around”. These sentiments were echoed by the head of science, who said that “I am really impressed by the positivity which has underpinned all of the training sessions so far. Everybody is keen to embrace ARK Elvin's values and we are all looking forward to putting the strategies which we have learnt into practice when the students return”.

ARK Elvin Academy canteen re-launched

8th September 2014



September saw the re-launch of the ARK Elvin Academy canteen in preparation for the return of our pupils. A major investment has been made into upgrading the canteen, with brand new furniture, specially designed glass barriers to ease crowding, a refurbished hardwood floor, and repainted walls. Most importantly, the kitchen has been upgraded and the canteen team have been working hard to develop a new menu which is varied, tasty, and nutritionally rich: essential for maintaining the welfare of our pupils and ensuring they are ready to learn.

Meal options every lunchtime include a meat and vegetarian hot main; meat and vegetarian hot pasta; choices of sides, desserts, and fresh fruit; and a baguette bar with a selection of fresh fillings.

The canteen team tested the new menus at the start of September with ARK Elvin staff and visiting ARK head teachers from across the country. All were impressed, with many commenting that the meals were

some of the tastiest they'd eaten in a school canteen. These sentiments were echoed by pupils once they returned, with pupils amazed by the changes since last year.

Menus for the canteen will soon be available on our website.

A summer of volunteers and renovations

1st September 2014

ARK Elvin Academy received a much-needed facelift before term started in September, with the support of over 130 volunteers.

To mark a new chapter in the school's history, the volunteers – including pupils and staff from the school, members of the local community, staff from ARK central office, and companies such as Eversheds, Bouygues and Hewlett Packard – got to work over the summer holidays, cleaning up the school grounds and giving it a fresh coat of paint. The vital works were carried out in partnership with Brent Council and with support and donations from the local Dulux Decorator Centre and Burlington Home Interiors, a blind and shutter company.



As well as the classrooms and corridors, the team painted the academy's new logo in the main courtyard, which is made up of a purple torch bearing the letters 'AEA' with a yellow flame forming the shape of a lion's head. They then used the leftover purple paint to paint all classroom doors and radiators to match the academy's new logo as well as repairs and decoration to the music rooms.

Ms Bates said: "I want to thank everyone who gave their time over the summer to help improve the look and feel of our school. This will give a real boost to pupils and staff as they come back from their holidays and begin the new term.

"The paint Dulux donated has helped us to give the building a new lease of life, to commemorate the start of a new chapter for staff and pupils. I would also like to thank Brent Council for its valuable support. This is all part of our plan to improve our local school – we will now be focusing on transforming standards of learning for all pupils."

Key Dates for next half term

Tuesday 4th November:	Start of half term
Wednesday 12th November:	Year 7&8 parents information evening
Thursday 13th November:	Parent forum meeting (all parents who would like to get involved please come along)
Wednesday 3rd December:	Year 9 options information evening
Friday 19th December:	End of term

Also, please look out for information about our Christmas fair and community listening evening