

St Helen's
School

Alternative Sixth Form Prospectus

Autumn 2009

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Welcome to the Sixth Form!

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New Subjects at A level	2	Access to a common room, a private study area and the quad - not to mention the much-revered skip-the-lunch-queue privilege and the escape from bottle-green – will all markedly affect your everyday life at school. The following 'alternative prospectus' has been compiled by students who have lived the sixth form for themselves, and seeks to give you a heads-up on a handful of other opportunities and changes coming your way.
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Second's the best: have fun. On entering a new phase of your school life at St. Helen's you are provided with more of a chance to leave a lasting impression on the school community, and the Sixth Form opens up a variety of new opportunities. This may range from setting up a new club or society, taking part in competitions such as a debating competition or Young Enterprise, PHAB, running House Arts, or becoming a member of the PR team. There really is an infinite amount of activities to get involved in which ensure that you get the most out of sixth form life and, above all, have a fantastic time doing the things you love. However, we would advise you to choose carefully. Taking part in too many activities will only add to your responsibilities, and when the work load increases it can get tough!

Lastly, sixth formers occupy many positions of responsibility within the school and are key players in the organisation and running of societies and events. With the respect younger students award you comes responsibility to be supportive and inspiring role models.

Good luck, and have a fantastic time!

New Subjects at A level

Economics

Teachers include: Mrs Britten, Mrs Bowman

“A useful subject which helps you understand today's economic climate.”

“It's coursework free.”

Business Studies

Teachers include: Mr Hoffman, Mr Firestone

“A subject that has relevance later in life.”

“Good grounding for Young Enterprise.”



Government and Politics

Teachers include: Mr Whalley

“A great subject in which to voice your opinions and debate passionately.”

“Gives you a greater understanding of current affairs – useful for history, journalism and generally dinner party conversation.”



History of Art

Teachers include: Mrs Ames

“Helps you understand symbolic interpretations behind what may just seem to be a picture .”

Psychology

Teachers include: Dr Brown

“Investigates the relationship between the human mind and behaviour.”



IB

CAS

One of the integral parts of the IB is the 50 hours each of community, action and service. It may seem daunting, but is actually a highly enjoyable way to get involved in new activities and be credited for your extra-curricular participation. You will work with other IB students in nearby schools on group projects, the most recent of which was some extensive fundraising to take some underprivileged children on a trip to the zoo – a fantastic day! By the end of IB, you'll have enough CAS cards to paper your walls and so organisation is key, but the hours fill up more quickly than expected.



TOK

“Is a table solid (according to sense) or is it mostly empty space containing small particles (according to science)?”

TOK (Theory of Knowledge) is one of the great parts of the IB. It teaches you to think critically about the nature of all your subjects—almost to the extreme! Areas of knowledge such as science, the arts and history are analysed to gain an understanding of how knowledge can be gained. The first lesson will undoubtedly leave you feeling utterly bewildered as you question your own existence while desperately trying to prove that you *know* the sky is blue and do not simply believe it to be so!

New Languages

The IB also offers you the chance to learn a completely different language. This means that you don't have to go through another year of the same language if you don't enjoy it. You might choose to take *ab initio* Japanese, Italian or Russian. You look indeed not only at the language itself, but at the culture of the country from which it is derived. This may include making sushi or going to see a kabuki play. There are also several trips and exchanges available that offer students an insight into a different way of life and allowing you to experience your language first hand.

Extended Essay

The extended essay is a brilliant way to prepare for the sort of large scale work that must be completed at university. It allows you to develop your initiative and independent research skills that will be required of you in the many years to come. The great thing about it is that it is a 4000 word essay on any chosen title as long as it relates to one of your subjects (preferably higher level). This is a great way to show universities your passion for a given subject or topic area as well as your resourcefulness and ability to work independently. Some examples may be for Biology studying the factors controlling mitosis and how this leads into the greater topic of cancer, the history of probabilities for Mathematics or even a study on Costa and Starbucks for Economics! The word count may seem a lot at first, but it's really just a chance for you to gain some valuable points by writing about anything that you are deeply interested in.

Don't think outside the box, get rid of it altogether

The style of learning for IB encourages you to think critically about the discipline of all your subjects and challenge the knowledge you are encountering. Every IB subject syllabus contains TOK questions. For example, Chemistry students not only learn the structure of the atom, but also debate the extent to which this theory is reliable. It is a refreshing break from spoon-fed learning and thus is great preparation for university.



Extra-curricular Activities

In year 12 there are many new opportunities in areas such as sport, music and drama. Yet those who have passions for other activities also have the chance to set up new clubs. In recent years clubs have been introduced by sixth formers off their own initiative, examples include drama club and Eco club. Other new opportunities in the sixth form include the chance to apply for positions with a certain amount of responsibility, such as the PR team and the PHAB team. These are more selective and allow sixth formers to experience selection processes such as interviews.

Junior School and Little Saint Helen's

In the sixth form you have the chance to get more involved with the lives of the younger students at **St Helen's**, as your timetables are more flexible allowing you to get involved in other activities. One of the ways in which you can do this is by helping out in Junior School during select study periods. You can join in with design and technology lessons or even help with reading for the younger years. Being able to help the girls in your own area of interest allows you to also benefit from the experience. Another way sixth formers can get involved is by helping with the Brownies on a Monday afternoon. This is very rewarding as it gives you the chance to be a role model for the younger girls and the bonus is that you get to have fun at the same time.



Entering into the Sixth Form also opens numerous opportunities for pupils to help out in Little Saint Helen's. **Help at Little Saints is always gratefully received and the staff are always appreciative of any helping hand, whether during lessons or managing those riotous games of 'Stuck in the Mud' at lunchtimes. The girls at Little Saints always enjoy any extra attention they can gain from** doting Sixth Formers and I can safely say that many fond and enjoyable experiences are always obtained, Sixth Formers and Little Saints alike.



CCF

CCF in the sixth form is a big step up, as now instead of being a cadet you will be leading cadets. This can be a handful to begin with, as you are now responsible for the safety, teaching and discipline of cadets as well as having to research topics to teach lessons each week! However, the sixth form is also the most fun and rewarding part of CCF. You have countless opportunities in which you can exercise and improve your communication and leadership skills, and it is also incredibly rewarding seeing your cadets benefit from your teaching and support. Furthermore, sixth form allows you to build on the friendships you made over the past two years in training, as well as developing close working relationships with the officers. Either by being in charge of a competitive platoon or working with staff to ensure the young cadets have a great time, you really feel you are part of a close-working and supportive team.



Lastly, instead of getting muddy and wet, you finally get to be the lucky person who sits on the sidelines of the assault course shouting encouragements to those crawling through the dirt...

Debating Club

Although debating is not compulsory in the 6th Form, there are still lots of opportunities to get involved if you are keen on improving and furthering your debating skills. It doesn't matter how much previous experience you have, anyone can take part in the inter-school competitions, of which there are two, the Cambridge and Oxford debating competitions. Both competitions may appear daunting at first since you have only 15 minutes to prepare after receiving the motion, but it is actually a great way to improve your confidence and ability to think on your feet.

Being part of debating club also means you will have the opportunity to judge the inter-class debating of the lower years, which is a great way to learn about the best way to persuade an audience and also to pass on the pearls of wisdom you have learnt from past competitions. All you need is enthusiasm and an interest in current events and of course debating to get involved.



School Magazine

There's no better way to make sure that you are remembered after leaving the school than by being part of the team to produce the prestigious School Magazine. Despite the huge pressure and responsibility involved in creating something which will be seen by all the current *and* prospective girls and parents, it is rewarding to see that all your hard work, whether it be pestering people for articles or meeting deadlines, has paid off in creating a highly professional publication. Not to mention it looks great on the UCAS form and teaches those all-important organisational skills which will be valuable for all future professions. Whether your aim is to be the Editor, Designer, or any other position, most important is enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication to representing the school's achievements and being on the School Magazine team shows just this. And remember, even if you don't get the opportunity to be on the team, you can still get involved by writing articles for the

PHAB

The most inspiring and life changing extracurricular activity a St. Helen's girl can be involved in is without a doubt, PHAB. This charity run organisation is an exciting and challenging activity which involves two terms of intensive fundraising organised between the St. Helen's and Merchant Taylors' PHAB team. The money raised allows us to run a holiday camp during Easter for disabled teenagers hosted by Merchant Taylors'. This week was the best and most rewarding of my life where I met the most inspiring people and I feel so privileged to have been given such an opportunity. During the week, you are assigned a guest to look after with the help of a Year 13 girl. We spend the week going on outings such as Legoland and going bowling as well as plenty of activities within the school where we sleep, eat and relax with the hosts and guests. The high point of the week was hearing my guest, Danielle tell her mum on her phone that she had "made new best friends at PHAB." The relationships formed are intense and I've stayed in contact with all the guests and definitely made friends for life. The week was undoubtedly a challenge, patience is a key and sensitivity towards your campers needed, and it can be extremely tiring, mentally and physically. However, this opportunity is one which each girl should embrace and feel lucky to be part of such a unique and rewarding scheme.



Prefect Team

The Prefect team are elected in March of Year 12 and is made up of 11 posts. There is a prefect for each section of the school: Little Saints, Junior, Year 7, Middle and Upper School, as well as Sixth Form. There is also an admin and a charities prefect, two deputy head girls and, of course, the head girl. Each prefect has a different role: the charities prefect will play a large role in organising calendar sale, while the Year 7 prefect will be busy around induction day at the start of the year. All prefects, however, will on a regular basis be found organising and presenting assemblies, taking parents or prospective teachers on tours around the school and helping out at school events throughout the year. There is a lot of scope, however, for each prefect team to be different from year to year. Being a prefect is your chance to **get your ideas for the school on the agenda and to leave a mark at St. Helen's even after you have left. Don't hesitate to speak to any of this year's prefect team if you're interested in what they do or how the application process works.**

Model UN

If you enjoy debating, current affairs, international relations or simply want to find out more about the working of **the United Nations you can join the St Helen's Model United Nations Team.** MUN is a simulation conference which is based upon the discussions which are carried out within the committees of the United Nations



The team enters the competition and participates in the debates, discussions and resolutions, representing the views of their chosen country, just like the officials in the UN. Last year the team attended the **HABS boys MUN conference and participated in debates on topics including 'Human Rights in Sri Lanka' 'Overfishing' and 'The illegal arms trade'.** MUN is a really great opportunity to improve your debating skills, understand more about the working of the UN, learn some more about issues dominating the deadlines and meet some interesting new people.

Drama Club

Being part of the Sixth Form gives you the new and unique opportunity to set up and run your own clubs for younger years. In the past year a group of drama students decided to set up a drama club for years 7 and 8 and although it was challenging to get people to pluck up the courage to come at first, when the year 7s finally started coming their enthusiasm made all the hard work really rewarding. Setting up the club was much easier to do than expected, the prestige gained when you become a sixth former means that strangely the younger years seem to do what **you tell them. Of course setting up a club doesn't just have to be related to Drama** or even the Arts, on this prospectus alone you can see all types of different clubs that have been set up by sixth formers with different interests, so get involved!

Jewish Society

Jewish Society is a weekly lunchtime group run by sixth formers with support from the UJIA (United Jewish Israel Appeal). The programme is aimed at years 7-9 and weekly speakers are invited into the school to address the girls on a variety of subjects; from learning about Jewish history and celebrating the traditions of Jewish festivals to taking part in energetic Israeli dance lessons. Of course, food is always provided! The Jewish Society welcomes girls from all backgrounds and will hopefully go from strength to strength.

Amnesty International

The Amnesty International group at St Helen's meets weekly to support the human rights initiative across the world. All girls from year 10 to year 13 are welcome to come along and contribute their views on how we can raise awareness of human rights issues, ideas for fundraising and planning events throughout the year. The main event held by Amnesty International is Battle of the Bands (formerly known as the Alternative Music Evening AME) and coming to Amnesty International meetings is also a great way to get involved in the organising of this popular and worthwhile event. Whether your talents lie in organisation, art, sales or even talent scouting the whole process- from designing the tickets and the posters to enjoying the local bands battling it out on stage (musically, of course...we hope!) means that there is something for everyone to enjoy. At the Amnesty International meetings we also exchange views on human rights issues in the news and on what we can do to help. We also give an assembly to main school and run a stall at Calendar Sale and at Fun Day. The Amnesty International group is also divided into committees: fundraising, design (in charge of the Amnesty board) and although we all work together this means that everyone gets to take some responsibility developing all important organisational and communication skills. It is also a great opportunity to actually be a young leader and to run the meetings. In short it is a good way to meet people with similar passions, to be involved in group discussion, to develop key skills and to make a difference in the world.

Music in the Sixth Form

In the sixth form at St Helen's, the Music school continues to offer the wide variety of musical activities and clubs that it has earlier, for example Orchestra, Jazz Band, Choir, and Concert Band. However, being older and more responsible, it is likely that you will be relied upon more to set an example to the younger years and perhaps be offered positions such as **'Leader of Concert Band'**. However, there is also an exclusive sixth form music group in the form of Chamber Choir. This ensemble currently meets once a week, and practises slightly more tricky, and sometimes more contemporary, music than is sung by the Choir.

Eco Club

At present in the sixth form, there is a small but dedicated group of students that meet once a week at lunchtime, attempting to save the globe one small potted plant at a time! **St Helen's is already an environmentally conscious school, with a recycling program** amongst other things, but the Eco Club is hoping to qualify to join a special environmental school scheme, allowing us to compete for the title of the 'Greenest School of the Year'. **However, even without this scheme, the club has already managed to convince the school's IT department to remove the 'stand-by' mode for students on the school computers, as well as considerably upping the success of recycling in the school bins after a trip to visit Grun- don by Geography students.** The Eco Club also has links with the university student-run 'People and Planet' charity, which provides useful ideas and support. **The club is open to anyone interested, with no knowledge of or burning passion for Geography required!**

The PR Team

In the Autumn term of Year 12, girls have the opportunity to apply for the Public Relations (PR) team. The Deputy Head Girls conduct interviews in order to find the students who would best represent the School. The PR team is responsible for helping to run and organise certain aspects of School events and also for providing tours for prospective pupils and parents. The hosting of functions includes serving refreshments, guiding guests and answering their queries or even delivering letters to local houses to inform them of school events. Being a member of the PR team offers girls the opportunity to be a spokesperson for the School.

Careers

When you reach the sixth form careers and university applications start to become a lot more prominent, and it is important to take advantage of all the help on offer and to spend some time researching courses and universities. **Don't worry if you change your mind about what you want to study at uni (this is fairly normal!) or if you're still not sure what you want to do, the important thing is researching ...visit the careers library, the UCAS website, speak to Miss McKinley, look at prospectuses or talk to upper sixth formers as all this will help you make an informed decision.** When you do have an idea about what you want to read at university it is important to do some reading around the subject; to try and find some related work experience or voluntary work; go on a taster course or even attend a relevant lecture (LSE have a great free public lectures and events programme on their website) as all this will help you decide whether the course or career really is what you want to do and is also very useful as evidence of commitment to your chosen course for the all important personal statement. Also remember to apply for your UCAS card, as this will make finally registering on UCAS a lot easier and will also give you 10% off at Topshop! Finally make sure you update your futurewise profile as this gives you a record of all your achievements and will make finally filling in that UCAS form a lot easier.



A few tips...

Dress Do's and Don'ts

What to wear and what not to wear!

- Do - go shopping. I'm not saying you should go on an outrageously expensive shopping spree ready for the first day of sixth form, but you'll be surprised how many clothes it suddenly becomes necessary for you to own!
- Do- be comfortable. It is good to try and remember that you are at school and not on the catwalk, so high fashion is not required. You do also have to work in what you wear, so it is useful to bear that in mind!
- Popular basics include jeans, cardigans and hoodies.
- Do- have smart options. There are a few days in the year, for example on Open Days, when you are required to dress more smartly than normal, which means no jeans and no mini-skirts- this can be quite limiting!
- Don't- wear beach stuff. Excessive amounts of flesh on show is not nice and, quite frankly, can be dangerously embarrassing! So no bikinis, above-knee shorts etc...
- Don't- wear offensive slogans. This is a school of over 1,000 students after all- **someone's bound to take it personally.**

Don't- dress inappropriately. A final reminder to follow the previous guidelines and, equally importantly (to us!), to wear what you want and be comfortable! Also- the dress rules are pretty relaxed here so **don't push it!**

Mugs...

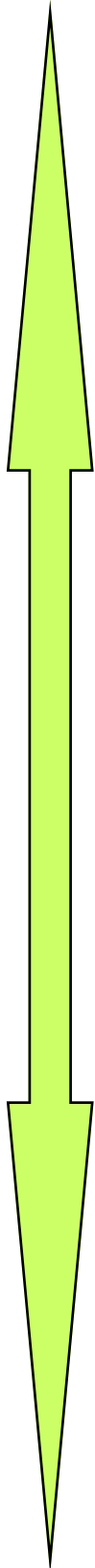
It is a minority of sixth formers who could stay awake during period 2 without having devoured their choice of hot beverage at break time. Indeed, the common room cupboard is always home to a variety of wild and wonderful flavoured teas, occasionally syrups and sometimes even whipped cream.

To save from confusion each sixth former brings in their own mug to facilitate this early morning caffeine fix. Be warned though: our early morning privilege is easily removed by the confiscation of the kettle (imagine the furore), which occurs when the common room has been left in a mess. To prevent this be sure to always wash up your mug after use and leave the common room clean and tidy.



The Measure

GOING UP



No more uniforms- yes that's right, no more bottle green (as much as we all love it!).

Skipping the lunch queue- after 12:50 you can casually jump in front of all the little scowling greenies.

The common room- this is base for most sixth formers; the place where we can relax or work during breaks...AND we can use our mobile phones there.

The study area- it is a quiet place to work and is equipped with enough computers to ensure that there is usually always a computer free to work.

Study afternoons- during year twelve most sixth formers become eligible to study afternoons which can be spent studying at home if you have an afternoon of study periods only.

Going down to Northwood at lunch- this is the time when endless trips to Starbucks and Costa begin; but make sure you sign out first.

Free tea and coffee- just another perk of the common room...for all the caffeine addicts amongst us.

Access to the quad- you can now officially access that sacred square of grass.

Enhancement courses- these allow you to explore a subject that you are interested in without the pressure of masses of homework or major exams.

House arts- a chance to finally write, direct and produce your very own spectacle after years of knowing you *will* win it!

Mugs being stolen- the mug rage when you find your mug half full of cold tea left in the common room. Some mugs have even been found as far away as the science block!

Leaving your personal statement to the last minute- this is not the wisest choice and can cause lots of stress as well as excessive coffee consumption.

A messy common room- this can lead to confiscation of the kettle and the closing of the common room.

Rainy treks to the science block/ gym- these are conducive to shivering your way through science/P.E.

GOING DOWN

