

Astley Community High School Sixth Form

Sixth Form Vision

Astley Community High School (ACHS) Sixth Form aims to provide a holistic education. We aim to equip students with the knowledge, opportunities and skills to be successful citizens whilst being taught in a challenging and thought provoking environment. We recognise the importance of giving the students the support they need to:

Be healthy

Stay Safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

ACHS Sixth Form - The Way Forward

Our vision will be achieved through the provision of a variety of academic subjects taught by specialist staff and the through the leadership of the Sixth Form team. Our dedicated team of tutors and A' level teaching staff will ensure that students are given the high quality and consistent academic and pastoral support throughout their studies at Sixth Form level.

As senior students, ACHS Sixth Formers play an important role as leaders in the school community and have many opportunities to develop a variety of skills to the highest possible level. Amongst such opportunities are the Peer Support Programmes where Sixth Formers will work with younger pupils in both tutor groups and lessons to support their literacy, organisational and study skills throughout the year.

In 2008, 80% of our Year 13 students received offers from universities and benefited from the package of UCAS support , financial advice and student shadowing opportunities that are provided in the Sixth Form each year. All of our Year 13 students celebrate their success with a Leaver's Prom' traditionally held at St James' Park. We also have growing alumni of students who return to Astley to share their experiences of University life.

Our emphasis on academic success, community work with our partnership schools in the Seaton Valley has led to the development of skills and leadership opportunities are greatly valued by the local community and students alike.

Department and Subjects

Year 11 students have a specifically designed package of support to help them to make the right decisions regarding their Sixth Form options. Each student undergoes a series of interviews with senior staff and receives taster lessons in the subjects that they are interested in following. Assemblies, an Open Evening and a redesigned prospectus also give ACHS Sixth Form students a secure basis upon which to frame their decisions. Our subject range includes BTEC Diploma, BTEC National, AS and A2 qualifications with BTEC National Travel and Tourism and AS Further Maths new additions to our curriculum for 2007. In addition, we have one of the largest uptakes of Sixth Form students successfully studying YASS Open University courses within Northumberland.

All Sixth Form students have tutorial lessons in which General Studies AS / A2 is also taught. These tutorial sessions are also used for visiting speakers. The Sixth Form was addressed by the leaders of Northumberland and Blyth valley councils, charities including Macmillan Nurses and the Red Cross,

Newcastle, Durham, Teesside and Sunderland Universities as well as by local businesses. We also worked on environmental, Healthy Schools, safe driving, and drugs, alcohol and sexual health related issues throughout the year as part of our tutorial package.

Higher Education Interviews are conducted throughout Year 12 and Year 13. These one-on-one interviews with the Director or Assistant Director of Sixth Form and by the Connexions service provides students with the opportunity to focus their interests into potential careers and action plan their research. These are supported by the on site Connexions service with who the Sixth Form team work closely throughout the year. University representatives are regular visitors the school year to enable students to ask specific questions about their university or further education choices. Whilst ACHS students in all year groups are given numerous opportunities to visit universities through Aim Higher or via contacts at university departments themselves. A specific careers day enables our students to meet with professionals in careers that they themselves are interested in an informal setting.

Alongside the academic requirements, ACHS College Sixth Form students participate in many leadership roles including: Supporting students in Maths, ICT, Sport, Music and in classroom support in our partnership schools, working with allocated Form Tutors and classes across the school, Supporting the work of the Northumbrian Library Service, Peer mentoring, and shaping the life of the school via the Head Boy / Girl and the Sixth form Council. Students are actively encouraged to utilise their skills and act as role models to the younger members of the school community in terms of conduct, achievement and dress.

There is a broad range of BTEC, A level [AS and A2] courses available and a pathway to learning that reflects the choices made at Key Stage 4. We also have a growing number of students who undertake higher level learning through YASS Open University courses.

Support for Learning

At ACHS every child matters and we embrace a philosophy of preparing the students for the world and the challenges of the future. Our tutorial package and focus on the community gives each student the opportunity to develop to their full potential. A kaleidoscope of extra-curricular activities, community involvement programmes, Charity fundraising, Induction and Summer activities enable students to innovate, problem solve, develop independent expression and decision making skills, all of which are actively encouraged at ACHS. As a result students become informed, confident and active learners with a strong sense of self.

Our Tutorial Programme helps students develop the values, principles and ethics that are respected, admired and accepted in all cultures around the world. Students are taught healthy social attitudes and a spirit of humanity, providing the ethical foundations and social skills to guide them through life. A variety of activities and experiences based on the understanding of universal values teach students to make positive contributions to their school and the community.

Target Setting and Parental Contact

ACHS is at the forefront of educational practice in the way it uses the information from the assessment tests to set attainment targets for each student and to track their progress on an individual basis based upon their prior attainment.. This strategy provides a powerful motivator for students and helps students learn the importance of working towards specific goals. Parents and teachers are provided with a realistic basis for assessing the progress and achievement of each student in the future.

Parents receive priority attention in a friendly environment that promotes open communication between school, parents and students. Admission into the Sixth Form in Year 12 commences with a parental interview to cement these relationships. The Director of Sixth Form, Assistant Director and the Tutor Team are available to provide information and assistance to parents and to make each interaction with the school a pleasant one. Positive and effective interaction between school and home is important to a student's development and education. We listen to parents, actively inviting them to share their views with us, ensuring that they receive prompt feedback in an appropriate form. In the Kirkland Rowell perceptions survey of 2007 the Sixth form was rated as 'good' regarding the flow of information

Leadership Opportunities

Students can experiment with and develop their leadership potential within the subject classroom dynamics of group and pair work and through our structured Leadership Programme which includes Form representatives, Sixth Form Council Members, School Council Members, Peer Mentors, Learning Buddies working with the SEN department, Supporting Under Fives' Reading Clubs via the library Service, Sports Team Captains, Head Boy and Head Girl and their Assistants. The senior students also attend governor meetings to keep them informed of the student perspective and share in the decision making process.

Sixth Form Council: Pupil Power

“This has enabled us to have a real impact upon decisions that affect us”

Head Boy 2008

We feel that it is vitally important to give the young people a voice and to consult and listen to their ideas and opinions on how ACHS Sixth Form can be improved by staff and students working together in partnership. This democratically elected body of students' purpose is to represent their peers; to be a forum for active and constructive student input into the daily life of the school community. Hot topics of debate include: canteen improvements, Dress code review, Sixth Form prom', environmental issues, social and charity fund-raising events. The Sixth Form Council gives students active experience of forward thinking and problem solving, which will enhance their leadership skills in the future and give ACHS Sixth Form ownership of matters that relate to them.

To allow this process to be inclusive of all students there is a system of Form Representatives feeding back decisions during tutorial periods. The Council system allows all students to be involved in the discussion and decision making process within the school – so that all students feel that their ideas and opinions are valued and will be listened to.

The Future

Astley Community High School Sixth form will continue to broaden the curriculum and experiences of our students ensuring that as citizens they and their heirs will successfully and confidently enter the wider world equipped with the skills of the Twenty First Century.