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'Living for Learning, Learning for Life'

We believe Alec Hunter is a great school, and we hope that you and your child will share our view – why not come and see for yourself?





A Message from the Headteacher

At Alec Hunter Academy, we pride ourselves on the positive relationships we engender between our young people and the adults who work with them on a day-to-day basis. We believe that students learn best when they feel valued and when the expectations of them are high.



Our membership of the Saffron Academy Trust gives us the opportunity to work in partnership with a dynamic group of schools, all of which are determined to contribute positively to each other's development. This has had a significant impact on our journey of improvement to becoming the thriving, oversubscribed school that we are today, graded 'Good' by Ofsted in both 2017 and more recently, in November 2022. Central to our ethos is the desire to see our learners both achieve academic success and cultivate personal qualities that will allow them to flourish in the modern world. The most important of these is the notion of 'kindness above all else', a principle which we promote consistently with our students.

We hope that our young people will leave Alec Hunter with happy memories, having enjoyed a range of experiences that have prepared them for the next phase of their education and for their adult lives.

Trevor Lawn BA (Hons) First Class, PGCE, NPQH Headteacher

Committed to Excellence

Alec Hunter Academy is part of the Saffron Academy Trust, a high-performing family of local schools that work closely together to provide an exceptional standard of education to the children in our care. We do this by sharing good practice, developing common policies and striving for continuous improvement. At the same time, we value the individual character of each of our schools and encourage them to engage fully with the communities that they serve. This is reflected in the wide range of activities that can be found across the Trust and the partnerships that we have established is our pursuit of excellence.

Alec Hunter Academy and Saffron Walden County High work in close collaboration, sharing staff, strategies, and the desire to enable all students to achieve their very best. We are proud to be working closely with a school that has made such huge strides forward in recent years and continues to improve at an impressive rate.

Caroline Derbyshire CEO, Saffron Academy Trust

Mission Statement

Our mission is to serve our community by providing opportunities for all our young people to progress, enjoy learning and fulfil their academic potential in a safe, caring environment that prepares them well for a successful future.

Core Principles

The seven core principles of our academy are:

- *Giving our best, every minute of every lesson, every day*
- *Promoting high aspirations, confidence and self-belief*
- *Respecting ourselves, each other and our environment*
- *Valuing every person as an individual of equal worth*
- *Celebrating our successes in learning and beyond*
- *Developing positive, productive partnerships*
- *Kindness above all else*





High Expectations

Our role in preparing students for the world of work begins by ensuring that they take pride in everything that they do, from wearing their uniform smartly to taking responsibility for their own learning. Students are expected to adhere to our core principles, which encourage everyone in the school to be respectful and always to give their best. This extends to our staff, who strive to provide engaging and creative experiences for the youngsters in their classes. Our ethos inspires teachers with the confidence to innovate and students with the motivation to succeed.



Our Behaviour for Learning Policy is clear, consistent and engenders a climate in which students understand exactly what is required of them. By developing positive relationships with their teachers, they will establish a firm platform of trust and collaboration, on which they can build their skills and knowledge, allowing them to make strong progress towards the ambitious yet achievable targets that are set for every child.

High Quality Learning

Through our desire to assist every child to achieve their best possible outcomes, we have placed learning and teaching firmly at the heart of our school. We believe that good teaching which promotes great learning, progress and enjoyment is the primary factor in raising standards.

We maintain that learning should be a challenging yet rewarding experience for everyone and we anticipate that students will play their part by being active, resilient and committed to their studies. At Alec Hunter, we aim to provide a rich and varied diet of learning opportunities which allow our learners to develop their abilities to the full.

We encourage our young people to reflect regularly on the ways that they learn best and to embrace different approaches. They are expected to take responsibility for learning independently, as well as working productively in groups or pairs, where collaboration and communication are essential to producing positive outcomes. Praise is central to our culture and we seek to reward our students for making good behaviour choices, working hard and demonstrating exemplary attitudes. They can earn house points in a variety of ways, or may even be selected as the 'Student of the Lesson', while our end-of-year Awards Evening highlights those who have excelled in a certain subject or made impressive progress overall.

Treating Learners as Individuals

At Alec Hunter, we value the diversity of backgrounds, skills, experiences and perspectives that our learners bring to the school. Our inclusive ethos is founded on a desire to nurture the strengths of each individual in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

All students are prompted to stretch themselves and take on additional challenges within lessons. For some, this provides access to the very highest grades and enables them to progress to top universities. Others, who find it more difficult to access certain elements of the curriculum, are encouraged to achieve their personal best through a combination of in-class support and additional academic interventions, such as literacy or numeracy programmes, for example.



Working in Partnership

We believe that good communication between home and school is essential if learners are to fulfil their potential. Students receive termly progress checks, outlining their levels of attainment and attitude to learning across all subjects, throughout their time at Alec Hunter. Parents also have access to a platform called Satchel One, whereby they may access specific details about homework tasks that have been set for their child.

Students and parents are invited to at least one Parents' Evening each year (two in Years 10 and 11), where appointments can be made with individual subject teachers to discuss progress. However, we welcome contact at any time if parents wish to raise a query, highlight an issue or discuss progress, with a team of colleagues in different roles well placed to address any concerns. All our staff are available directly by email, but we also like to facilitate dialogue via more traditional routes, such as telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings.

A Stimulating Curriculum

The curriculum at Alec Hunter is central to our aim of providing outstanding education for all, regardless of background or ability.

At Key Stage 3, learners engage in a wide range of subjects in line with the National Curriculum, providing them with a broad and balanced foundation during their first three years of secondary education.

This includes the opportunity for almost all students to study more than one modern foreign language. The options process in Year 9 provides all the details required to make informed choices, supported by guidance from tutors, careers advisors and subject leaders. We offer a wide range of qualifications, incorporating both traditional, academic subjects and more vocational opportunities, and learners are steered towards the pathway considered to be best suited to their abilities and interests. Above all, our young people are recommended to pursue courses which they feel they will enjoy and in which they know they can achieve highly.





There are many innovative features to our curriculum, typified by our termly Skills Days. These are designed to offer our learners a range of experiences to complement their regular studies, often taking them away from the classroom on trips and visits or providing a cultural enhancement to their learning via special events within the school.

Student Leadership

We believe that students should be given every opportunity to take on roles of responsibility, to prepare them to become society's leaders of the future. An active and enthusiastic School Council encourages learners to represent their peers, consult others, and present their views with clarity and sensitivity. Students also play a key role in the appointment of all new staff.

By joining our prefect team, under the direction of our Senior Student Leaders, many older students enjoy representing Alec Hunter Academy at public events as well as assisting younger students and the staff of the school. A select group of fully trained Year 10 Peer Mentors offers support and guidance to Year 7 students as they make the transition to secondary school, while our Anti-Bullying Ambassadors support the school in creating an environment where bullying behaviours are not tolerated.

House captains take the lead with inter-house competitions, organising and coordinating events, and each tutor group has its own form representatives. Any student can volunteer to be considered for such a role and those selected always wear their badges with great pride.

There are also numerous opportunities to take on leadership through a wide range of charitable and community-based initiatives. Our RAAP (Raising Awareness Against Prejudice) Group promotes equality and inclusivity in our school community, while the Eco-Committee works towards making Alec Hunter an environmentally friendly school, and was recently honoured with an Eco-Schools Green Flag.





Opportunities for All

Something for Everyone

At Alec Hunter Academy, we believe in enriching lives. Consequently, we offer activities both in and out of the classroom which cater for the needs and interests of all. We encourage all learners to participate fully in these opportunities.

Clubs and Enrichment

There is a full programme of sports, music and specialist interest clubs both at lunchtime and after school hours, catering for all tastes. Students can attend practice sessions in a different sport every night of the week if they wish, and many go on to represent the school in our successful teams. Our presence at local tournaments is consistently strong, even in less popular sports such as handball, futsal and hockey.

High quality music and drama productions have become a locally recognised feature of the school and provide further avenues for our young people to express themselves. Students have the opportunity to learn to play a wide range of musical instruments through peripatetic lessons. Moreover, through our links with Saffron Hall, a renowned concert venue with a growing reputation, internationally acclaimed artistes have previously visited Alec Hunter to work with our students and further events of a similar nature are eagerly anticipated.

However, our extra-curricular activities are by no means limited to sport and performing arts. The current offer encompasses First Aid, Sign Language, Art, Creative Writing, Chess, Gardening and Strategy Games, to name but a few. Our award-winning STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Club attracts both boys and girls who are keen to undertake a variety of projects from building and flying drones to racing rocket cars or attending Science Challenge Days at local universities.

Trips and Visits

The school has organised a broad range of local, national and international visits and trips and exchanges to a number of interesting locations. Curriculum visits to Germany, Spain, France and Belgium, for example, have all played a key role in supporting learning through first-hand experience, as have others to places of interest and significance in the UK itself. Moreover, our biennial World Challenge Expeditions have given students life-changing opportunities to undertake community projects in Ethiopia, Uzbekistan, Tanzania and Morocco in recent years.

The Team Around the Child

We recognise that there will be times when many students may need guidance and support, so we have invested heavily in creating a team of skilled and experienced professionals who care deeply about our youngsters' wellbeing and are on hand to address any concerns as they arise.

Our five full-time, non-teaching Student Support Leaders (one per year group) are dedicated to helping students by removing barriers to learning and communicating regularly with parents to resolve any anxieties or issues. In addition, we utilise the shared expertise of our Home-School Liaison Worker, Home-School Attendance Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Student Development Team and various external agencies to assess learners' needs and provide care or support as appropriate. Each year group has a Head of Year, whose focus is to oversee the academic progress of each individual within that cohort, whilst also upholding the standards expected within the school. The Student Support Leader and the Head of Year work in close partnership with their respective year groups to ensure students have the best chance of reaching their full potential.

Progress is also closely monitored by all our Heads of Subject, and suitable interventions are initiated to address underperformance, whilst those who are performing above targets are identified and congratulated, notably in our biannual Celebration Assemblies. In addition, these special events offer an opportunity to recognise students with 100% attendance, along with those who are making a positive contribution to school life, as well as showcasing the talented performers in each year group.





The Alec Hunter Community

Community Partnerships - We are an outward-looking school and have forged many productive partnerships both in the local community and through national and international contacts. Aside from our extremely beneficial membership of the Saffron Academy Trust, we are full partners in the Braintree Sixth Form, we hold Consortium School membership of the MEITT (Mid-Essex Initial Teacher Training) and we are also a PiXL (Partners in Excellence) School, an organisation through which hundreds of schools nationwide share good practice and help each other to improve.

We have a very positive relationship with all our feeder Primary Schools, with whom we have worked collaboratively on numerous cross-phase projects, supporting the process of transition. In addition, we offer some of our staff to primary partners to provide specialist subject teaching or support with specific projects.

Parents - Parents are kept regularly informed about events and student achievements through our newsletter (The Herald), our school website and our social media feed on Facebook (www.facebook.com/alechunteracademy).

Employers and Careers - Well-established links with local employers support our students' developing understanding of the world of work. Further education providers and external contacts from a range of employment sectors visit the school regularly to attend work-related Skills Days, conduct mock interviews and support the school through sponsorship and community projects.

Visitors - We are very proud of our school's history since its foundation in 1959, and of the learning environment that we have created. We know that Alec Hunter Academy is at the heart of its local community and holds cherished memories for the many ex-students who live in the vicinity. We are keen to keep in touch with our alumni, to hear about their successes and we always offer a warm welcome to visitors to the school.

