

# HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL

## YEAR 12 BOYS

## WORK EXPERIENCE



**An explanatory booklet for students, parents,  
guardians and carers.**

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### What Parents Should Know

#### Why do Work Experience?

The government have decided that all secondary school pupils should have the chance to do a period of Work Experience. Nationally, this means at least one week in a Work Placement. In Year 10 students will have the chance to arrange a work experience day and in Year 12, a full work experience week.



#### What is Work Experience?

By Year 12, some students may have an idea as to the direction that they wish to pursue regarding their careers. However, many students will not have firm idea at this point. It is normal for students to change their minds several times over the next few years.

For all students, the aim is to provide 'experience of work' in general terms – working with adults, communicating, team working, meeting deadlines, problem solving – in other words just getting a taste of 'the world of work' and general employment skills rather than specific job training.

For those students in Year 12 who have a firm idea of the career they are interested in or the general direction, this week provides an opportunity for finding work experience in that chosen field or something related to it.

#### How can you help? Be prepared!

##### Know Your Child:

Talk to them about where their interests lie. Remember that you probably know them better than anyone – their strengths and their limitations! Help them to be realistic about their capabilities, but at the same time do not impose your preferences on them!

- If their best marks are not in Science, they are unlikely to make it in Medicine.
- If they dislike Technology, they probably will not enjoy engineering.
- If they are shy and retiring, they are unlikely to succeed in jobs which focus on people skills: i.e. retailing, reception, hotels and leisure, teaching.
- If they cannot sit still for too long, work in any kind of office (including those of solicitors, accountants, banks etc.) is not suitable.
- If they like dealing with people and have a low boredom threshold, then retailing may be ideal. There is always something to do and people to meet. It develops good job skills, and may even

lead to a useful Sunday job!

### **Know the system – how Work Experience is arranged at Hasmonean.**

#### **ONE**

Students should attempt, as a first option, to organise their own Work Experience by using the Own Find Form (OFF). If this is not successful, a list of possible employers that previous students have used will be available for pupils to approach. There is no guarantee that these employers will have placements available for Work Experience.

#### **TWO**

Once a placement has been arranged, be it through personal contacts or through the school, the next stage is to complete the Own Find Form (OFF). This provides the school with full details of the placement. The OFF has to be completed fully on-line via

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeEDZbB2IMICrX8976G6RKPWRammCgdHkgd0pBGbzBwNDn3tQ/viewform>

Since Work Experience is a school approved activity in school time, the school is responsible for the safety of the students. It is imperative that the school receives the forms promptly so that the Work Experience Co-ordinator can approve each and every placement for safety and insurance purposes. This is required by law. If a placement is not considered to be suitable, the student will have to re-organise their Work Experience. It may be possible for parents / guardians to sign a waiver in cases where the employer does not have the required indemnity insurance – this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Checking and confirming such placements takes time, and therefore placements must be arranged well in advance of the date of Work Experience. If a placement is not approved and another placement is not arranged in time, the student will have to come to school otherwise this time will be marked down as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Placements abroad will be considered however approval needs to be made by the Headteacher. Any placements abroad must be in before the deadline and further information will be required.

Employers are interested in employing young people who have certain basic 'key skills'. They are not too concerned about job specific skills – those can be taught, but what they look for in young employees (and work experience students) are:

- Good communication skills
- Ability to be part of a team
- Problem solving skills
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Willing to try new things
- Reliability – especially in punctuality and attendance

## Know what employers are looking for and know the pitfalls – what can go wrong?

Most Work Placements are successful. Most of our students have a wonderful time with no disappointments, however sometimes problems do occur and these are usually because the expectations of the students, parents or employers have perhaps been rather unrealistic. In the past, problems have occurred in some of the following areas. Be warned!

**Hairdressing and Beauty** – Many (although by no means all) work long hours and expect students to do so too – after all, they are expected to get ‘experience of work’ as it really is. The work is physically hard and often menial (or involves just watching). Some salons have very poor staff ‘facilities’ and ‘lunch breaks’ have to be fitted in around customers’ appointment times. We have some excellent placements, but most of them require really keen students with a sense of real commitment.

**Law** – Whilst this sounds glamorous, generally it is not really for those under sixteen. Students may get to court if they are lucky, but most will spend long hours filing and photocopying because all the exciting work is highly confidential.

**Health and Hospital Work** – Students under sixteen are rarely admitted onto the wards in most health authorities. Even in GP’s surgeries, patient confidentiality means that students are often consigned to filing and administration work alongside the receptionist, although this does still give an insight into the medical world. Many surgeries now have all their records on computer and so there is little that an under-sixteen can actually do.



**Finance** – Banks, building societies etc now have very little that ‘juniors’ can actually be given to do – so much is either computerised or requires skills and expertise, and they certainly will not let them handle money! As a result, some Banks now will not take Work Experience students at all, because they know it can be boring and of very little real use.

**Working with Animals** – Many vets will not take pupils under sixteen for health and safety reasons. Those that do may have little that the students can actually get involved in apart from the dirty jobs, but these will be expected to be done with great enthusiasm to prove that they are really dedicated. Remember, to be a vet students will need at least 3 Grade A’s at A-level just to stand any chance of obtaining a place at a Veterinary College.

**Working with Children** – is physically demanding work. Students should try to avoid going to a school where they were once a pupil, as it is very difficult to establish an adult working relationship with teaching staff who remember you as a student.

**Hotel/Leisure Industry** – is not as glamorous as students may think. In Sports Centres they may be cleaning changing rooms or stocking vending machines. Hotel work may include cleaning bathrooms and dusting and may also involve very early starting times, for example, getting breakfasts ready.

**Last minute disappointments** – A parent has a ‘contact’ who agrees to do them a favour and arrange a work place for their son/daughter. Because it is a favour, they cannot be too particular or too pushy, so then when nothing happens after a few weeks, or months, they are left in a difficult position. If you wait too long and they then say “no”, where do you turn? Or perhaps the friend changes jobs and your son/daughter loses the promised placement.



Contacts always mean well but even though they may be quite high-powered in their organisation, they may not be able to deliver the promised placement. If they delegate it to someone else, who then changes jobs or goes on maternity leave, you can be left stranded. If you decide to arrange a placement for your son/daughter make sure your contact understands the time pressures that we are all working under, and that a definite “Yes” or “No” is needed as soon as possible.

Hopefully, this makes it easier to find an alternative placement. Even a placement found through the school may take up to six weeks to process, so last minute disasters are very difficult to deal with. Unfortunately, every year there are one or two last minute upsets.

## **FINALLY**

Remember, all companies are different, and to a certain extent a good placement is down to ‘pot luck’. Some individuals and companies go that extra mile and put a great deal of effort into organising really good experiences for students, but staff change from time to time, so nothing is certain.

Some firms may agree to a Work Experience placement but be unaware of what they should do to organise a worthwhile programme. Some firms just see it as ‘free labour’ and do not think beyond that.

Placements in Film, Television, Theatre, Journalism, Fashion Design, Medicine etc are particularly hard to find. If the student is determined that this is what they want to go, he/she will certainly have to find their own contacts – and they need to be secured NOW! Be warned – in the past, students have obtained placements through friends etc in film companies or other potentially glamorous places but have sometimes found when they got there they were working in the administration section, doing the filing and photocopying – by which time it is too late to change. It

is also difficult to tell a friend (who thought they were doing you a favour) that you do not want to do the job they have arranged.

Please be assured that Work Experience for most students is a thoroughly worthwhile experience and that the students learn a tremendous number of things, many of which are not solely to do with the specific type of work they have chosen. These generic 'life skills' are really important and we always notice how much more mature the students are when they return to school, and they themselves always comment on the range of things they have learned. Work Experience can also give a student a real incentive to focus on their studies, to achieve the grades needed to begin to enter the field of their choice.

**Contacts:**

If you have any further queries about the Work Experience programme please do not hesitate to contact the Work Experience Co-ordinator at the school.

**You may phone the School Office and ask to speak to Rabbi Fisher (Boys' School) on 0208 203 1411 or send an email to [danny.fisher@hasmonean.co.uk](mailto:danny.fisher@hasmonean.co.uk)**



## DRAFT LETTER

### Draft of letter to assist students in contacting possible employers

**Always put your address, telephone number and e-mail address (if you have one) at the top.**

Dear Sir or Madam (or name if you have been given one to contact)

I am a Year 10 student at Hasmonean High School in the London Borough of Barnet studying for GCSE examinations in Year 10. My subjects include:\_\_\_\_\_.

I am very interested in a career in \_\_\_\_\_ when I finish my education. I am currently trying to arrange a Work Experience placement for one week from (DATE OF WORK EXPERIENCE) and would be most appreciative if you could assist. I know that organisations such as yours receive many requests for Work Experience placements and, whilst you cannot help everyone, I do hope that you might consider me a worthwhile candidate.

(Now say something about how keen you are on this sort of work and what, if anything, you have done to improve your chances of getting a job in this area e.g. voluntary work, subjects you are studying, belonging to clubs and societies, anything at all that is related to the work you are interested in.)

My school aims to help us obtain placements, and I have been advised to make a personal approach to your organisation. I would be very grateful if you could offer me a placement so that I might gain some experience of the kind of work which interests me.

I am particularly interested in the area of \_\_\_\_\_ but would be willing and eager to get involved in any aspect you could offer.

Yours sincerely/faithfully

**Your Name**

