

High
Performance
Learning

Transforming Learning in Central Asia: High Performance Learning at Haileybury Almaty



Haileybury Almaty

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- Simon Mills , Headmaster



Haileybury Almaty, an esteemed British international school in Kazakhstan, has embarked on a transformative academic journey by adopting High Performance Learning (HPL). Under the leadership of the Headmaster, Simon Mills, Deputy Head Academic, Andrea Angus and HPL Lead, Sophie Lightowers, the school is redefining teaching and learning, and creating a unified educational philosophy that resonates across its community.

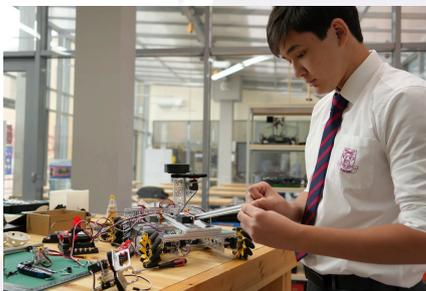
Through a deliberate and inclusive approach, Haileybury Almaty has woven HPL into its pedagogy, adapting it to align with both the local context and the expectations of the British international curriculum. This integration has enhanced academic performance, fostered a culture of high aspirations and united students, staff and parents around a shared vision of excellence.

Why choose HPL?

Simon Mills became aware of HPL during his previous headship at a UK independent school and was drawn by its potential to elevate teaching and learning. Upon joining Haileybury Almaty in 2020, he identified the opportunity to implement a framework that could help unify the teaching and learning at the junior and senior schools, while simultaneously engaging parents and staff.

“We needed a common language around teaching and learning,” says Mr Mills. “HPL provided the perfect solution, offering a structured yet adaptable approach to ensure that every child can be the best they can be.”

The senior leadership team’s decision to adopt HPL was inspired by its success in other international schools, including Doha College and the British School of Muscat. “These well regarded British international schools showed how HPL could improve student outcomes and this gave us confidence to investigate HPL more fully” he recalls.



Challenges of implementing HPL during a pandemic

Haileybury Almaty's HPL journey began amidst the global pandemic, posing significant challenges. With schools operating online, launching a new initiative required both creativity and resilience.

"We had to maintain a viable income stream, support our teachers and bring students back from remote learning," Mr Mills explains. "And in the middle of that hurricane, we launched HPL."

Ensuring strong staff confidence was another hurdle. "Initially, some colleagues were hesitant," he acknowledges. "Many were overwhelmed by the demands of online teaching. But within a year, key faculty members started embracing HPL, and that created a tipping point."

Andrea Angus, who joined after the initial launch, highlights how leadership played a critical role: "By creating the role of HPL Lead, we ensured there was someone dedicated to driving the initiative forward, even during challenging times."



Aligning HPL with the curriculum

One of the most significant accomplishments of Haileybury Almaty has been the successful alignment of HPL with the curriculum and ensuring compliance with local educational standards.

"We knew that for HPL to truly work here, it needed to resonate with our local context," says Mr Mills. "That meant translating HPL's principles and language into Kazakh and Russian, as well as integrating it seamlessly with our British international curriculum."

The school achieved this by condensing HPL's core ideas into accessible digital resources, including one-page summaries and subtitled videos for parents and students. These materials helped to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps.

Sophie Lightowers elaborates: “We worked hard to connect HPL’s values and attributes with existing expectations in the curriculum, ensuring that students could see the relevance and applicability.”

A key initiative was the adaptation of the school’s ticket or reward system with HPL values. “We repurposed our rewards system to reflect HPL’s Advanced Cognitive Performance (ACPs) and Values, Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs),” Mr Mills explains. “Tickets for attributes like empathy or analysis were issued in Kazakh and Russian, making the connection clear for students and parents, and allowing a quantifiable system for staff.”



The Impact of HPL

Since implementing HPL Haileybury Almaty has experienced profound transformations across academic and cultural spheres:

- **Academic Excellence:** Examination results have improved significantly, with the past two years delivering the school’s best outcomes at A-Level and IGCSE. Students are also securing very competitive places at prestigious global universities including MIT, CalTech and Stanford.
- **Retention Rates:** Previously, many students left after Year 8 or 9 to attend boarding schools abroad. Today, retention rates are higher, and the school’s sixth form has grown strongly. Students feel confidence in their academic outcomes and want to remain at Haileybury Almaty for their best future destinations.
- **Cultural Shift:** Students now focus on developing skills and attributes alongside achieving grades, fostering a culture of resilience, independence, and critical thinking.

Mr Mills shares a particularly memorable moment: “During our accreditation visit, a Year 4 student was asked what she would do if HPL was taken away. She replied, ‘You can’t take it away—it’s in our heads.’ That’s when we knew HPL had made an impact.”

Enhancing the Learning Environment

Deputy Head Andrea Angus emphasises the holistic nature of the school's HPL journey. "We've moved beyond viewing HPL as just a teaching tool. It's become a framework that connects everything—well-being, sustainability and even digital innovation. It's how we teach, how we lead and how we grow."

The school's student body has also embraced HPL. A team of student learning leaders has been instrumental in driving initiatives, delivering assembly presentations and creating newsletters. Sophie Lightowlers describes their efforts: "Our students are not just participants—they are leaders, taking ownership of their learning and sharing their enthusiasm for HPL with the wider community."

A school of choice

As the only HPL school in the region, Haileybury Almaty has distinguished itself from competitors offering IB, A-level or American curricula. "We've built a reputation for academic excellence and holistic education," Mr Mills notes. "While parents might not initially know what HPL is, they see its results—in their children's confidence, skills and achievements."

Looking Ahead

Haileybury Almaty is committed to expanding and refining its HPL practices. Future priorities include:

- Strengthening HPL's presence in the junior school, ensuring continuity across all age groups.
- Supporting teachers with ongoing professional development to deepen their understanding of HPL.
- Engaging parents further through workshops and translated resources.
- Measuring HPL's long-term impact, including tracking alumni success stories.

For Simon Mills, the journey is just beginning. "HPL isn't about quick wins. It's about equipping our students with the skills and mindset they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world. That's a mission worth pursuing."

[View HPL in action at Haileybury](#)





Simon Mills, Headmaster

Simon Mills was appointed as Headmaster of Haileybury Almaty in August 2020, and previously was Head of College at Robert Gordon's College, one of Scotland's largest independent co-educational day schools. Within education Simon has interests in developing the full potential of young people, extending the power of digital education, helping pupils develop their ability as leaders and developing sustainability skills with young people. He has been an inspector of schools in the UK and internationally, and has served on several national educational committees and within FOBISIA.

Haileybury Almaty

Haileybury Almaty opened in 2008, in association with Haileybury in the United Kingdom. This not-for-profit educational project was inspired by a philanthropic group of Kazakhstani businessmen. Haileybury Almaty offers a broad, holistic liberal education in the best traditions of British independent schooling. Pupils are prepared for Advanced Levels (A levels), which enable them to apply to and enter the best universities both abroad and in Kazakhstan.



High Performance Learning (HPL) works with schools to embed the HPL philosophy where every student is seen as a potential high performer. Its unique teaching and learning framework systematically recalibrates the school and enables students to develop the cognitive skills, values, attitudes and attributes needed for high academic performance and lifetime success. HPL offers a range of programmes to enable schools at any starting point to begin their journey towards being an HPL school.

The HPL World Class School Award recognises the very best schools in the world and is designed for those at the forefront of educational thinking.



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