



WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

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Friday 16 October 2020

Dear members of the Westminster School community,

Earlier this year, many schools were contacted by their pupils and alumni in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Particular areas of focus in this correspondence at Westminster were the curriculum, widening access for Black pupils, diversity of staff recruitment, and the provision of structural opportunities for the experiences of Black pupils to be heard and their needs supported.

My predecessor, Patrick Derham, wrote in June outlining the School's response to these vitally important questions and its immediate and longer-term plans to begin addressing them. As promised in that communication, I am writing to you now with an update on our work and on how our plans are developing.

In order better to process and engage with these concerns, in June Westminster established the Challenging Racism Committee (CRC), involving members of the SMC, Heads of Department, Housemasters, staff involved in widening access and Wellbeing, Human Resources and, of course, pupils. The committee met twice before the end of the school year and has met recently again on 7 October. The committee has now drawn up Terms of Reference and will update the Governing Body on the full range of issues in December 2020. We are also continuing our programme of unconscious bias training for all pupils and staff, up to and including the Governing Body.

Plans for combatting structural racism in the curriculum have been part of every Head of Department (HoD)'s annual report to the Deputy Head (Academic). These are currently being discussed with the Head Master and plans will be reviewed by the Governing Body's Education Committee directly after Exeat. Additionally, HoDs have been in touch with examination boards where the set texts or other aspects of the curriculum are not conducive to supporting a more diverse curriculum. The timescales for exam board reform are long, but we want to play our part in actively encouraging them to move in the right direction. With the help of the Library and other contributors from the school community, a large bank of resources has been compiled and is available to staff and pupils on the CRC Firefly site. The Archives have been researching Old Westminsters and Benefactors who owned enslaved people or had connections to the transatlantic slave trade; this work supports an ongoing review of the presentation of historic figures in our school environment.

This month, Westminster has been celebrating Black History Month through a range of pupil and staff Society presentations, Assemblies, Abbey talks and subject-specific lessons. Some of the many highlights to date have been talks on inclusion in the science curriculum, Maya

Angelou's life and poetry and a spoken-word performance of Samuel King's 'What I Wasn't Taught in School'.

We have decided as a School to work to ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are a standing item on all meeting agendas so that the School can better respond to issues as they emerge, and pupils who feel they are experiencing any form of discrimination feel empowered to speak up. There are also plans to create EDI representatives across year groups, who will be trained and will meet regularly to discuss live issues and add another form of peer pastoral support to the already in-place Peer Support system. Issues relating to the lived experience of Black pupils at Westminster will be paramount in these initiatives.

Platform and Platform+ continue to create opportunities for pupils to join Westminster from diverse backgrounds. Through the partnerships and contacts developed over recent years we are working hard on widening the pool of pupils applying to Westminster, identifying those who would flourish here, and encouraging them to apply. Platform pupils are likely to need bursary support, which the Westminster School Campaign is seeking to grow significantly in the years ahead.

The HR Department and Communications Team are reviewing strategies for staff recruitment, including advertising vacancies more widely and encouraging a greater diversity of applications for teaching roles particularly. We are also looking to develop a system of teaching internships made available to staff from Black or Asian heritage.

Everyone recognises that these critically important issues are not liable to a quick fix; but we hope some of the work adumbrated above highlights our genuine commitment to becoming an ever more inclusive and diverse School in line with our enduring values and reflecting who we want to be in the 21st century, and the kind of environment we want our pupils to grow up in – one which reflects and respects the multi-cultural city we live in, and the diverse world we all share.

Should you wish to contact the Challenging Racism Committee about any of the issues touched upon in this and previous communications, please email crc@westminster.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Gary Savage