

Mark Batten
Chair of the Governing Body



WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

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Dear Members of the Westminster School Community,

I am writing to you all – parents, guardians, pupils, staff, alumni and those soon to join the school community – in my capacity as Chair of the Governing Body. I hope this letter finds you well and that you have managed to enjoy a restful and restorative Easter after an extraordinarily challenging term for staff, pupils and parents alike.

The Head Master has written to you on a number of occasions in recent weeks, following the publication of testimonies on the *Everyone's Invited* website and other fora. Like you, I have been horrified and deeply troubled by what I have read, and I both endorse and reiterate the Head Master's statement that these attitudes and behaviours are abhorrent and have no place in our or any school, or in society more generally.

As you know from the Head Master's communications, among the immediate steps being taken by the School to tackle these matters is to establish an independent, external review; the review will consider matters relating to sexual harassment, sexual violence between peers, misogyny and bullying around gender, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. I am writing to let you know that the Governing Body has commissioned Fiona Scolding QC to lead this review and that it will be overseen by an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Group comprising both selected Governors and representatives of the Westminster School Community, including recent alumni. Fiona has 24 years' experience of practice concerning children and vulnerable adults, specialising in issues concerning education, health, social care, discrimination and human rights as they affect children and young people, working for parents, pupils, charities, schools, further and higher education institutions and central and local government. She is currently on the A Panel of the Equality and Human Rights Commission Panel of Counsel. As such, we believe she is very well placed to conduct a truly independent, comprehensive and effective review at Westminster.

Fiona's remit, drawing on external expertise as necessary, will be to investigate the School's culture and ethos, and to make concrete recommendations on, amongst other things, our policies, procedures, wellbeing curriculum and staff training. This should ensure we are better equipped to address, tackle and ultimately eradicate discriminatory and abusive attitudes and behaviours from our School, and contribute to their eradication in society more

generally, as we all would wish. Testimonies, posts on *Everyone's Invited*, and any other correspondence on these matters from pupils and parents, past and present, will form part of this review, along with, of course, direct engagement with staff, pupils, parents, members of the OW community and other relevant parties.

The overriding aim of this review is to help Westminster to understand the past in order to improve the care and safeguarding of every single pupil in our care in the future. Other immediate actions being taken by the School include further training for staff and pupils on sexism, consent, wellbeing and relationships education as well as the provision of further support in addressing these matters both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, a #noexcuses poster and social media campaign will take place next term as well as the development of other measures to help build pupil confidence in bringing difficult matters to the School's attention. These include the establishment of the callitout@ email address, specifically established to enable current pupils to raise issues of sexist, racist, homophobic or other unacceptable and discriminatory behaviours directly with senior members of the Safeguarding Team.

As you may have read, the NSPCC have launched a dedicated helpline for children and young people who have experienced abuse at school, and for worried adults and professionals who need support and guidance, including for non-recent abuse. The "Report Abuse in Education" helpline number is 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Please rest assured that I and my fellow Governors absolutely share the Head Master and his team's determination to work together to make our School a safe and happy community for every single pupil in which all can flourish.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Batten', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Batten