



WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

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2 November 2021

Dear Westminster Community,

You will be aware of an ambitious project, started in 2017, which would see the Westminster School name used for the first time outside the UK, for a new school in Chengdu, Sichuan province, China.

It is with great regret I write to tell you that this project has come to an end for Westminster School and its wholly-owned UK-based subsidiary company, Floreat Overseas Holdings Limited (FOHL). Through FOHL, a licence was granted to a Hong Kong-based investor who wished to operate this and other schools in mainland China using the Westminster School name and way of learning. FOHL also provided educational consultancy services to the operator.

As I am sure you can imagine, the formation of a brand new 2,000-pupil school, including the construction of all its buildings and the development of a bilingual curriculum for children aged 3 to 18, is no small undertaking — one which in this case has been heavily impacted by the global Covid-19 pandemic, as well as recent changes in Chinese education policy. This has created numerous financial and logistical challenges for the Hong Kong-based operator of the proposed new school. In spite of a number of attempts by the operator to restructure and refinance the operations, in which FOHL participated as licensor, this has proved not to be possible. All development work has been halted both in terms of the site and curriculum, and staff who had been working there are no longer to be employed by the operator.

As a result, the Governing Body of Westminster School has, through FOHL, terminated the educational consultancy and licensing arrangements.

From the outset, Westminster School's role — through staff seconded to FOHL — was to act as an educational consultant offering broad educational support and helping to develop a bilingual curriculum. We were also due to provide specific support to the school, when operational, to ensure it was able to operate at a level consistent with the Westminster School way of learning. Westminster School and FOHL have had no involvement in financing the project, in constructing the new school site, or in day-to-day staff recruitment, HR, and management of the business. As part of entering into the arrangement, the investor made two donations to Westminster School which also covered the cost of the consultancy.

As FOHL was providing only educational consultancy to the operator, and owing to the very specific rules Westminster School must follow as a registered charity, there has been little we have been able to do to assist financially with the closure of the operation in China. Nevertheless, considerable efforts have been made to find alternative employment for the

Mark Batten
Chair of the Governing Body



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operator's staff in Chengdu. In that regard, the British Consul General and the British Embassy have been very helpful.

The overarching goals in entering the arrangements in 2017 were to develop up to six new bilingual schools in China, to promote the Westminster School way of learning within an ever-expanding global educational marketplace, to develop potential areas for cultural and technological exchange and most importantly to invest the license fees earned from the venture back into the education of children from London and the wider UK through an expanded bursary programme. These benefits were seen as potentially transformative, and it is highly unfortunate the landscape for developing such schools now is very different from 2017. As it stands, Westminster School has no plans to licence its name or provide educational consultancy to any other new school projects in China.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Batten', written in a cursive style.

Mark Batten