



10th June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: 'The world is changing, and we must be a part of it' (June 2020)

We must not stay silent in the face of injustice and racism.

It cannot have escaped anyone's notice that the world is in many ways on the brink of significant change. Within the last year, we have seen young people around the world challenging governments to act to stop climate change. Brexit was in every newspaper with talk about what it would mean for our society and economic outlook. The curriculum schools provide for young people was encouragingly being debated across the country. Little did we know that within months the UK economy would shrink by over 20% following a global pandemic. And now the events we all learned about in the recent death of George Floyd in America have horrified us to our core and have quite rightly led to a local, national and international outcry for justice and anti-racism protest. The world is changing and so must we all.

Where do we fit within this and how do we lead, encourage and teach our young people in interpreting recent events so that we can effect real, sustained change and not merely ride the wave of popularism? Whilst Finham Park School strives to be an inclusive and diverse environment where students are encouraged to be kind, to embrace difference and to celebrate diversity we always recognise that there is more that can be done to make this a living reality for all. As others have commented, we also fully acknowledge that we are part of a sector and country where racism has proliferated and is embedded within our society. We see this in the lack of Black teachers, and in the experience of Black students every day. We recognise that these everyday experiences, in addition to the repeated racial violence they witness first-hand or in the media, can affect them and cause psychological, emotional and physical trauma. We recognise that racism, in all its forms, can impact our students' ability to succeed and cause them to feel like they don't belong to the school community, no matter what the school values say. This deeply saddens me.

As you'd expect and demand, the school aims to tackle any incidence of inequality robustly and places the safety and well-being of all students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or any other category at the forefront of everything we do. We will always engage with outside agencies where appropriate to ensure we are safeguarding our students and we will continue to not tolerate any form of bullying or personal attacks whether that be on social media, in person or on any other platform. Our social media platforms are designed to keep parents informed of what is happening in school and are not forums with which we will engage in any other way, especially if accounts attempt to engage us with abusive, inaccurate or personal attacks against staff or students posted on social media. As a school, we welcome views from students, parents or members of the community and will always welcome anyone with a concern to come in and talk to us as that is the most effective way to effect real change and develop common understanding.

Students are taught a wide and balanced curriculum at Finham Park School and with RS in the core for the past 2 years, we teach and value each and every cultural and religious



perspective. As an International Cross of Nails School, educating our young people on the importance of learning lessons from history is a focus across the curriculum and when students make mistakes, our priority is to ensure they learn from these and rebuild through our restorative justice programmes. Our engagement this year in national programmes such as UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation has been enabling our young people to learn the lessons from the past so that we can build a positive, more inclusive future for all that ensures equality. We understand the world is not always a perfect place and through our curriculum we are encouraging our students to make change where it is needed in the right way, to be respectful of others and to be kind always. Yet there is more we can do to educate our young people in the most rounded and complete way possible.

Some of the ways Finham Park School is working towards change include:

- Set up an Equality working group (September 2020) within the student leadership strand to discuss issues BAME students face and ways in which we can promote inclusivity.
- Meet with interested parties to discuss about related to race and what we can do to effect change.
- Library working with the “All Around Reading” team to improve provision of texts by BAME writers and awareness of these amongst the student body. More author events including BAME authors and poets recognising that we already have an biannual, popular visits from The Dreadlock Alien and hold sessions from authors such as Bali Rai.
- Review of the ‘Great Britons’ display, re-evaluating the historical figures that we promote and celebrate to encourage more diverse voices and highlight a range of cultural experiences.
- Identifying further opportunities in the curriculum to discuss and challenge the colonial and imperial heritage of our nation, recognizing that the National Curriculum and GCSE syllabuses may not always highlight the experiences of minority groups in the UK. For example, PSHE lessons to include the reading of class novels which deal with the experience of minority groups; range of BAME authors and writers covered in English lessons alongside the set texts; post-colonial perspectives offered when discussing art, literature, music and historical documents.
- Ensuring we use the pastoral system and mentor programme to discuss and promote diversity and to give opportunities for students to speak out about race and inequality through assemblies, mentor time and discussion activities.
- Increase the number of BAME role models we invite into school and use in lessons thereby raising the aspirations of all our students.
- Although we don’t have an achievement gap between BAME and other groups of students, we recognise that as it is a key group within our school community, we must acknowledge the need to keep a focus on their achievements so that remain in line with the most successful and can progress to successful destinations.

These initial actions represent the enormity of the challenges that face us all as we take our part in our ever-changing world. It is important that we therefore use our influence as teachers, parents and educational partners to instigate and discuss sustainable change.



FINHAM PARK SCHOOL

A Mathematics and STEM College

Our networks as part of World Class Schools, Leading Edge, Mandarin Excellence Programme, The Schools, Students and Teachers Network (SSAT) and International Schools must be utilised to forge change. Our international links have given students opportunities to debate, discuss and speak freely with students across the world about topical global issues. These activities have affected our wider curriculum following our overseas expeditions as we grow and develop our relationships with schools across the world. We value active debate and discourse and our students are encouraged to voice their views in the right way. Our Student Leaders provide a powerful voice for all students in the school. We have five core values at our school; kindness, integrity, humility, perseverance and courageousness. We deem these to be important because we want our young people to understand the power of modelling these values to others.

We, as a school and community, strongly stand against discrimination and racism of any kind. We must listen and learn from the past, we must act in the present so that we can effect change for the future of all to be better. Our staff and Governors are committed to providing the best experience possible for each and every student in our school which is why my letter to parents and carers this month is countersigned by the Chair of Governors, Ms Kang.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Chris Bishop
Headteacher

Ms Parneet Kang
Chair of Local Governing Body

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