



KING'S COLLEGE SCHOOL
WIMBLEDON

7th June 2020

Dear boys and girls, parents, colleagues and former pupils,

I have received about a dozen emails over the weekend all related in some way to the question of society's inclusivity towards Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals, and its application to King's. Most of these emails have been about the way King's, and schools like ours, teach, or overlook, black history. I have also been shown some social media posts referring to the way some former pupils from black and Asian backgrounds have felt ostracised, overlooked or hurt either by the behaviour of peers or by us as teachers. All of this is within the immediate context of deep unease about the way black citizens, particularly, are treated within many societies across the world, as shown in the horrible death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month.

Much of what I have seen so far is written with the intention of asking us to focus on ways in which King's could be a better school – in the range and open-mindedness of its curriculum, especially with regard to black British history, and in the way it looks after and helps develop our pupils to combat racism in all its forms. The social media posts I have been shown are more personal: they reflect painful memories of an environment where some students felt other pupils or even some teachers were casual and thoughtless or actively unkind as a result of racial identity. I am extremely sorry that such experiences should have occurred to anyone at this school, and even more so if we did not do our best to deal with them correctly at the time.

I am not in any doubt we have much more we could do to open our eyes to the implications of racism for our school community and to help ensure that the experience of black and other minority ethnic children at King's is an uplifting and positive one, as it should be for all our pupils and colleagues. I don't think the day will ever come that anyone runs a school in which no one ever hears an unkind comment, but no school should ever be complicit in unkindness, or uninterested in the difficulties faced by those who are being hurt because of their ethnicity, their sexuality, their gender, their appearance, or any of the other things that are all too easily the basis of casual and sometimes highly calculated unkindness. Every school must also strive to be a place free from bias – conscious or unconscious – and the impact this has on individuals and the wider community.

My colleagues and I will reflect on everything we do in the light of the contacts people have made, and try to ensure that our school is a place where everyone feels welcome and supported from the day they arrive until the day they leave. One of us will write again once we have discussed the ways in which we feel we could do more, and could do better, for black children and children from all ethnicities and backgrounds.

Focusing on kindness, empathy and opening up the demographic of King's have been missions for my

The Head Master AD Halls OBE MA

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colleagues, school governors and me over recent years, and I hope the experience of children who are currently at King's is a positive one as a result of this. But I also hope that where it is not, every child affected knows and profoundly believes they have the right to speak up and be heard, and for their concerns to be dealt with fairly and, where needed, firmly – because that is very much the case.

Two former pupils sent me the letter in the *Independent* addressed to independent schools which included some excellent suggestions for how our schools could do much more to ensure we are balanced and fair communities. Some of the good practices referred to are in place at King's, but the letter has made me realise there is much more we could do, and my colleagues and I are now working on ways of introducing improvements for both pupils and staff.

Finally, as I hope everyone reading this will know, any pupil currently at the school who feels the behaviour of either pupils or colleagues is wrong should be in contact with their tutor, in the first instance, but any pupil is welcome to approach (instead or as well) any of the following: head of house, head of section, pastoral deputy head (Ms Lawson), one of the two school counsellors, the chaplain or myself. Similarly anyone employed by the school affected in this way should feel encouraged to speak to their line manager, the head of HR, the bursar, a trusted colleague or myself. If a former pupil wants to tell us about an aspect of their experience at the school that they feel we should know about or act upon, then please write to Mrs Clarke, bursar and secretary to the governors, at King's College School, Southside, Wimbledon Common, London, SW19 4TT.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Halls