

11 June 2020

Dear Georgian Family

We are writing to you all in response to the Black Lives Matter campaign, and specifically to the very many of you who signed the petition we received yesterday, calling for action to address this hugely important issue within St George's. We have also shared the letter and petition with John Lewin, Chair of Governors, who is totally supportive of our response here.

The letter accompanying the petition focuses primarily on how we can properly educate students on BAME issues through curriculum content. It acknowledges, for example, that our A Level History course at the College is very pertinent, focusing as it does on both the British Empire and 'The American Dream', but that more could, and should, be done. We agree, which is why we have approached Heads of Department in both the Junior School and the College to collate what we do already, and ask what more we could do within their schemes of work. We have been heartened not only by what is already in place across both schools in such subjects as RS, English, History and Geography, but also by the teachers' thoughtful responses and willingness to think seriously about how we can genuinely do more. At the Junior School, we are looking to purchase a number of new books for the Library, and the Librarians have been tasked with ensuring that the authors include a suitable representation with Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

We are challenged to look outside academic subjects, too – to engage with current events through PSHE and the lecture programme. Again, this is already part of the curriculum (sadly, the BAME and diversity speakers we invite annually were unable to speak this year due to lockdown), but of course we must do more. We are fortunate that the Chaplaincy Teams in both schools can also respond; this week at the College our 'Collective Acts of Prayer and Worship' (CAPAWs) and Year Assemblies have focused on inclusivity, especially with regard to BAME.

The Josephite values embedded at St George's are radical ones, which demand us to address any areas of discrimination and prejudice that exist - both in our school society and beyond. If we live out these values properly, we cannot avoid tackling such subjects. Some of you will be aware that the teachers and business staff at St George's financially support their counterparts in the Josephite schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But perhaps you did not know that without the money pledged through Weybridge wage packets annually, our fellow educators would not survive. Support like this is far from tokenistic, and demonstrates, we believe, what our community is capable of.

However, there is clearly more we can, and must do. It is up to all of us to act, and we would welcome any suggestions. We respect the views and experiences of all in our community, and we are always open to different perspectives; please do get it touch. As the Georgian Family, now more than ever, we must live out the line in the school prayer, 'Give us the courage and independence to defend what we know to be right'; we are confident that working together we can, and we will.

With very best wishes



Rachel Owens & Antony Hudson

*A leading independent, co-educational, Roman Catholic day school providing a perfectly balanced education for 3 to 18 year olds.*