



# St John's Highbury Vale C of E Primary School

Conewood Street, London N5 1DL

Tel: 020 7226 4906

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Head of School: Mrs Lindsey Hodgson

Executive Head: Mrs Tonnie Read

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear Parents & Carers,

## Black History Month

In October, many schools will focus their attention on Black History for a month. The reason for this dates back to an event introduced nearly 100 years ago.



Black History Month was created by historian Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). He wanted to challenge preconceptions at the time that 'the *black community* has no history' and founded *The Association for the Study of 'Black' Life and History* in 1915, which encouraged scholars and historians to research and preserve black history and culture. **In February 1926, Woodson founded 'Black' History Week.**

It was later decided that a week wasn't long enough and, against the backdrop of the civil rights movement and the Black Power Movement, **Black History Month was born in 1969.** Like most things that originate in the US, it wasn't long before word about *Black History Month* made its way to the UK. After visiting America in the 1970s, Ghanaian-born Akyaaba Addai Sebo, a special projects officer at the Greater London Council, founded the UK's version of **Black History Month in 1987.**



The purpose of having a month dedicated to the teaching of Black History was initially borne against a backdrop of minimal or no representation in the curriculum of Black people, their lives, their achievements and their invaluable contributions to society. More recently, however, teachers and educators have become increasingly concerned by the narrowness of this time frame. It is on this basis, that St John's have made a very clear decision, to focus time, thought and teaching about Black History across the full year. We are doing this for the following reasons:





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- (1) That as a Church of England School, we teach the children that always, in the eyes of God, all humans are created as equals.
- (2) That to place a spotlight on Black History for 'one month' suggests that there is no requirement or responsibility to ensure there is coverage on a consistent and discrete basis.
- (3) That school has a duty and a desire to formally interweave Black History into our 'ordinary' curriculum throughout the year in order to better represent the black community in its fullest sense.
- (4) That school has a duty to continually offer the experiences and images of people of black and other heritage to our pupils.
- (5) That school has a duty to challenge stereotypes. This we are beginning to consciously plan for through the development of our Curriculum Maps so that the children recognise the contributions of black people in the 'broadest' sense. For example, Frank Bowling (artist), Solomon Golding (ballerina) or Katherine Johnson (computing).
- (6) That we have a duty to support our parents & carers understanding of **unconscious bias** and the difference between **equality** and **equity** alongside the education of our children.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5fbQ1-zps>
- (7) That we have a duty as a school to operate on a daily basis as an anti-racist institution and not non-racist. If you are unsure of this term, please see the link where you will find a video by John Amaechi  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zs9n2v4>

At St. John's we understand that if true **equity** is to be achieved that education is one pathway to this. **One month to shine a spotlight is not what is needed.** What is needed is **a conscious, planned and deliberate determination** to ensure that, long-term, all children of black heritage experience the same rights and opportunities as those children of non-black heritage. This can only be genuinely achieved if it is a living and breathing part of the school offer.





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So, this October, will be the last time we celebrate 'Black History' month because Black History will be celebrated and taught at St John's in September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June and July. August...

This month, each class will be researching the life, achievements and events surrounding a Black British figure either in History or present day. They will produce work in various media that will be displayed in classrooms and around the school.

We leave you with Corinthians 12:25-27

***<sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.***

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do contact us at [admin@stjiv.islington.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stjiv.islington.sch.uk).

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Tonnie Read

Executive Headteacher

