



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

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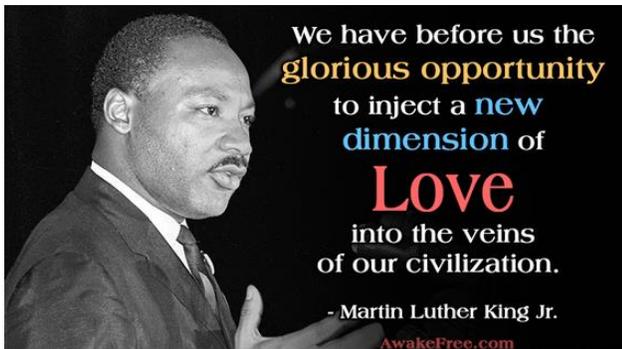
Interim Head of School: Mrs Alice Shaw

Interim Executive Head: Mrs Tonnie Read

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

## RE: Diversity, Inclusion, Discrimination & Race at St. John's



The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



We face a new challenge here at St. John's that has nothing to do with Covid-19 and the pandemic, but everything to do with Diversity, Inclusion, Discrimination and Race.

Over the past few weeks, it has been brought to my attention, that there have been an unprecedented number of racial and discriminatory comments by pupils towards pupils at St. John's. The most recent prompting a parent to withdraw their child from the school in order to ensure that they will not experience such comments again.

This has indeed cast a light on how, as a school, we deal with issues around racism and discrimination and also how well we promote inclusion, acceptance and the celebration of our differences.

It is with the deepest regret that I write to you as parents, the community of St. John's, to share this upsetting news. However, in the words of Martin Luther King Jnr above, we do have a glorious opportunity before us.

I know that many of you will be shocked and may also be concerned for your children still at school. I would like to reassure you that this issue will be dealt with swiftly and immediately.

You cannot get over a wrong without the wrong being named, owned and acknowledged. We cannot change without articulating what needs changing. Therefore, I am taking this opportunity to own and acknowledge our wrongs and articulate some changes;

- Our attitudes towards recognising that this is a problem at St. John's.
- Appropriate training for staff and Governors
- The relationships between adults at school and parents, parents believing that issues shared will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately
- Challenging, age appropriate conversations and activities with the children
- Actively seeking and creating identity safe classrooms





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We will be providing more training for both staff and Governors in how to deal with situations that may arise appropriately, in order to prevent as many future incidences as we can. As a school, we have limited influence over external factors in the lives of our pupils and so ask for your help here. Please keep the channels of communication open to your children so they feel that they can have these conversations openly and that you are able to guide their thoughts and ideas.

We will also be looking at and addressing our unconscious biases in the hope of creating an identity safe environment both in the classrooms and the wider community of St. John's.

As parents, we urge you to encourage your children to report any incidences of discrimination at St. John's so we can tackle them sensitively, but rigorously. Children need to know and have confidence in the fact that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination at St. John's. It goes against our Christian Values of Love, Friendship, Forgiveness, Courage, Wisdom & Respect and makes a mockery of our caring community spirit that we are trying hard to nurture.

I know that the contents of this letter may be difficult for some people to accept, but again, in the words of Martin Luther King Jnr, let's stand strong together in this 'time of challenge and controversy' for the good of our children and the community in which we all reside.

As always, thank you for your continued support at this time, I truly do take solace in our schools vision. 'I can do all through Christ who strengthens me' and will take this opportunity to add 'for nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37)

If you would like to speak to me regarding the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to call.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Tonnie Read  
Interim Executive Headteacher

