

BLACK LIVES MATTER

“INJUSTICE
ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE
EVERYWHERE. WE ARE CAUGHT IN
AN INESCAPABLE
NETWORK OF MUTUALITY, TIED IN A
SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY.
WHATEVER AFFECTS ONE
DIRECTLY, AFFECTS ALL
INDIRECTLY.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING
JR., LETTER FROM THE BIRMINGHAM JAIL

Black Lives Matter

From Tallis to You

Dear students

The killing of George Floyd has shocked and saddened our Tallis Family. You may have seen things in the news or on social media. Some of you will have talked about it with your families. These recent events will have been felt differently by different members of our community. We wanted to write to you too, to reach out and to acknowledge the range of emotions that our students, families and staff may be experiencing.

The Black Lives Matter movement is important because it recognises that there are members of our community who continue to experience racism and brutality. Some people counter this by saying that all lives matter. Well of course they do. But not all lives are endangered or affected by systemic racism. To say that all lives matter downplays racism and the fact that black people are disproportionately excluded from schools, stopped and searched, imprisoned and more likely to suffer from police brutality. Talk of equality is important, but it is not enough. We must also be purposefully anti-racist.

Earlier in the year we celebrated Black History Month addressing the theme 'When You See Me'. We questioned our own prejudices and considered the consequences of discrimination that stems from an inability to see all people as equals. After doing this kind of work, and knowing what we stand for at Tallis, recent events have left us questioning and frustrated.

I have struggled with writing this to you because I don't really know what to say. There is probably nothing that I can say. I don't have all the answers. So I can only ask – how are you? What can I do? What can we do as a school? What should we do? Racism doesn't just come from cruelty or hatred, but also from lack of care and ignorance. Thomas Tallis School has always said that we want education to understand the world and change it for the better. So we should seek to educate and be educated. This requires conversation.

On Monday we started an Empathy Project. Empathy is the act of feeling what someone else is feeling and understanding and experiencing what their life is. The act of listening to someone brings us closer to this. I don't understand what it is like for someone who is Black to see something like this in the news again; to not be surprised that this has happened because it is a part of the world you know. And I can't know unless someone tells me. I, and so many others, need to hear the experiences and feelings of you who do know, and who experience daily the structural racism that brings about the death George Floyd.

You are all being exposed to a lot of difficult and potentially traumatic material on the news and social media and I encourage you to step away from it. Not to forget about it or to pretend that it is not happening. But to look after yourselves or to read more widely about the issues. For those of you who already know the issues and have experienced them for yourselves, I don't want to tell you how to feel or what to do. But I do want to do something and to help you to do something.

There are a range of links below that provide further reading and opportunities to contribute, through donations or petitions or support of various charities. However, there are things that we can do here and now. We can talk to each other and try to understand each other better and work towards the values set out by our school. The Tallis Accepts Charter was made by you, telling the staff in school what you want. It states, among other things, that you want acceptance, truth and to learn about diversity and the consequences of ignorance (the full Charter is at the end of this document). At Thomas Tallis School we are committed to creating an inclusive and safe environment where racism is not tolerated. As a school we believe in Honesty, Fairness, Respect, Kindness and Optimism. We want this for all of us and we value what you, our students, tell us.

Useful Link and Contacts

Further Information

Black Lives Matter - <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

Reading list - <https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/resources-supporting-black-lives-matter-movement-creative-industry-010620>

Systemic Racism - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/03/america-black-deaths-racism>

Clara Amfo anti-racism speech praised - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-52890690>

Alison Hammond - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGnjgp1gzrw>

What you can do

Charities - <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/how-to-support-anti-racist-charities-uk-black-lives-matter-a9545986.html>

Donations - <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/black-lives-matter-charity-donate-uk-stephen-lawrence-stop-hate-a9544786.html>

Petitions - <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/black-lives-matter-protest-support-george-floyd-donate-petition-a9542576.html>

Support and Mental Health

Childline - www.childline.org.uk Phone: 0800 1111

Kooth - free, safe and anonymous online support for young people <https://www.kooth.com/>

There is also a huge range of resources on the school website -

<https://www.thomastallisschool.com/schoolclosureresources.html>

Tallis Accepts: a school charter on diversity and rights

Thomas Tallis is a diverse community.

1. We are a team of different individuals
2. We are a band of different languages
3. We are a community of different ethnicities
4. We are a school of different classes
5. We are a body of different sexualities
6. We are a congregation of different beliefs
7. We are a crew of different abilities
8. We are a family of different families

Thomas Tallis students expect to be educated to understand the world and change it for the better.

We want :

1. Teaching about diversity and the consequences of ignorance
2. Celebration of languages so we learn about different cultures
3. Teachers and students treated with equal respect
4. Acceptance for who we are
5. No one left out or picked on
6. Life on a global map with events to share the excitement
7. Explaining of current affairs to help us improve the future
8. Safe space to express ourselves freely
9. Truth and trust without any lies
10. Help with our problems

What matters about us is on the inside not outside.