

HfL 2021 Statement regarding Black Lives Matter

To be published: 25th May 2021

Herts for Learning (HfL) marks the first anniversary of the murder of George Floyd

In the 12 months since the murder of George Floyd, much of the world has begun to have conversations around race, diversity and inclusion in a far more challenging and meaningful way than ever before. HfL is no exception. The event brought to the fore the daily experiences of overt racism, unspoken discrimination, and structural racism that Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the UK face every day. We believe that through difficult exploration of the issues, we are galvanising action that is making a real difference to the progression of the Black Lives Matter movement and of all pro-inclusivity work across our communities.

HfL's purpose is founded on our belief that every young person, through access to a great education, should be able to realise their potential, regardless of where they live or their circumstances. In 2020 we released a bold statement that deplored the murders of George Floyd and the countless others who have lost their lives due to unrelenting racial injustices and we recognised the uncomfortable truths that we all must face. HfL pledged to become an anti-racist organisation and in doing so we acknowledged that systemic racism is a problem that must be addressed everywhere. We acknowledged the current position and we refused to fail to learn.

We have conducted and reviewed research and data that evidences that in Britain, Black children are more likely to experience poverty, have poorer educational outcomes, be excluded from school, be unemployed, and come into contact with the criminal justice system. They are less likely to access the care they need if they are struggling with mental health problems, and Black children are more likely to act as carers and to miss out on support. We know that the Black community is underrepresented in teaching staff, even more so at a leadership level, and we acknowledge the impact upon Black children's experience of education.

Last year we declared that we must take action beyond statements. We opened ourselves for challenge on our practices and let it be known that we are unafraid of robust questioning. Furthermore, HfL pledged to:

- Promote the comprehensive review of the curriculum coverage of Black history in Hertfordshire schools to ensure that, at every key stage, Black voices are heard, Black stories are told and Black achievements and contributions to society are celebrated. It is vital that all Hertfordshire children have knowledge of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Britain's colonial background and how our nations came to be ethnically diverse.
- Support school leaders, through our school improvement work, to review the entire curriculum experience to ensure that there is good representation of Black voices and experiences: inside and outside of the formal taught curriculum, in each subject area, through trips, visits and the profile of speakers.
- For all internal recruitment and recruitment that we support schools with, we will minimise unconscious bias by presenting anonymised CVs to hiring managers and, where there is more than one stage to the process, conducting all initial meetings over the telephone. We commit to doing all that is possible to ensure that ethnicity is unknown throughout all hiring processes.
- Monitor, report and take action upon any differences in successful hires, performance results, promotions and pay between our White and non-White colleagues.
- Invite all colleagues that identify as BAME to form a BAME forum. This forum will be given an Executive level platform to make robust recommendations that seek to further the cause of ending systemic racism both internally and with the work that we do.

HfL recognises that these issues affect the whole BAME community and we extend these commitments to all affected.

In practice this has meant that we have:

- Set up the Great Representation programme to run annually from Sept 2021, inviting applications from schools based on their demonstrable commitment to and with a track record of effective, creative and innovative race equality work.
- Appointed a Race Equality Adviser to support schools in their work to become anti-racist organisations.
- Changed our recruitment practices so that all applications are anonymised, with no data identifying ethnicity, age, gender, educational background submitted to hiring line managers.
- Ensured our recruitment adverts seek candidates that don't 'fit in' to our culture, but add to it.
- Ensured that all new candidates are questioned on their own unconscious biases, both how they manifest and how they are tackled.
- Heard from, and employed, a range of speakers at internal and external conferences and training sessions, talking on the themes of unconscious bias, BAME representation and anti-racism.
- For all permanent employees, set ourselves bespoke objectives showing how we are supporting the anti-racist commitment.
- Created the systems and data requirements to examine ethnicity pay differences alongside the statutory gender pay gap work.
- Collaborated across the organisation to educate ourselves on systemic racism through presentations, data examination and hearing lived experiences of racism at work and in education from our own colleagues.
- Set up our BAME forum and committed to ensuring this is a safe space for non-white colleagues to discuss experiences and seek support, as well as provide challenge to the success or otherwise of the HfL actions.
- Committed to examining the advantage of being White in the next iteration of our roadmap to being an anti-racist organisation.

We have also seen the emotional toll on our communities as a result of George Floyd's murder, the trial, the verdict, and now the one-year anniversary. That is one reason why we will ensure that George Floyd's legacy is not underestimated or diminished. As we take time to commemorate, we will also be thinking about how to establish true allyship: a long term process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability. We have, through our conversations, come to understand that the key to upholding that legacy is to ensure that we all understand the advantages of being white in our society and that we challenge the privileges that this brings. We pledge to evolve our roadmap to becoming anti-racist, with that at the forefront of our minds. There is much to do and the work is long overdue. We commit to maintaining our focus and energy on eradicating systemic racism, to recognising which efforts are effective and which need restarting, to challenging all our systems and processes and to holding ourselves to account at the highest level.

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