

Never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up. Jesse Jackson

Barley Lane School

Friendship, Optimism, Hardwork

7th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers and Colleagues,

Some feedback on behalf of all of us here that we hope will bring clarity and reassurance on a few things parents and carers have quite reasonably flagged-up recently; both as questions and concerns.

“Black Lives Matter”: in simple terms and just like the professional footballers “taking a knee” ([Gareth Southgate: England manager says taking the knee is showing solidarity, not a political statement - BBC Sport](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/football) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/football>) we want to show and express our solidarity with black people and to challenge the racism that still powerfully hurts and disadvantages them: we are not associating with any specific political group or movement. I guess many of us will have voted Conservative or Labour in general elections but that does not mean we agree with the sometimes extreme elements on the fringes of those parties and challenging racism is anyway a moral issue not a party political one and tolerance and fairness are indisputably core British values.

Similarly in our small state special school many “white working- class boys with SEN matter” and they matter hugely to us but to say so does not imply the privileged young people at Eton for example matter any less: all children matter albeit some clearly deserve some extra help.

We are a Stonewall Champion school not because we all agree with everything they say but we do agree as a team that homophobia is wrong and is still too prevalent and we want to send a clear message of friendship and respect to the LGBT community in school and beyond.

Recent work on the American election coverage included one question that asked the children to consider did Donald Trump present evidence of corruption or simply claim it? This was not about Donald Trump’s character but an English comprehension exercise based on current events: being able to reliably understand information in the media is a critical skill for all young people.

The team here never expresses political views and encouraging kindness and respect for all people we say again is a moral issue and obligation and becoming a critical thinker who can discern reliable facts from what are now described as “alternative” ones is fundamental to any school and any education.

Michael MacCourt