

What's in a name?



This is the group of FHS girls who remain the best of friends to this day and wrote the poem for Rebecca. From left Olivia Prentis née Post, Rebecca Long, Holly Branson, Amy Slater, Camilla Richardson née Rodger and Jo Railton née Greenwood.

We have a great memory of Rebecca coming downstairs each morning and saying, 'It's a new day.'

Through our sadness, we are clinging to Rebecca's words – it's a new day. Our faith in Jesus Christ gives us great hope that we will see Rebecca, Alex and all our loved ones in Christ again. For now, although we don't understand why this tragedy has occurred, we chose to trust God that He is working a greater eternal purpose through the grief of Rebecca's passing.

Rebecca, you truly lived up to the Francis Holland motto, 'That our daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple.' Psalm 144. Thank you for giving all of us so much love and joy and passing on a truly inspirational legacy of what it means to follow Christ.

We love you – "au revoir."

Mrs A Walsh

We received news that Mrs A Walsh, formerly of the Old Rectory, Burgate, Suffolk, died about 5 years ago.

It is with some fear and trepidation that I claim responsibility for updating the name of our school from Francis Holland School, Clarence Gate, to Francis Holland School, Regent's Park (which you will witness on the new masthead on the front cover). Having met a number of 'Polished Corners' over the last six years, I am only too aware of the loyalty and strength of feeling many of you have towards your old school, and the name Clarence Gate in particular. Of the two Francis Holland Schools, for which I am responsible as Director of Communications, I think it is fair to say that there is slightly greater attachment to the name Clarence Gate by staff and old girls than at its sister school which has been renamed Francis Holland School, Sloane Square (formerly known as Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace).

My role, which was completely new when I joined in September 2008, is to raise the profile and strengthen the market position of both schools. I knew from the market research that the starting point was to address the identity issue which was weakened by the confusion of having two schools in London with the same name! Clearly we have our Founder, the Reverend Francis Holland, to thank for this, although to be fair to him the marketplace for education in 1880s was very different to the fiercely competitive and increasingly complex market we find both schools in today. Our prospective parents today are faced with complicated choices between day and boarding schools, co-ed and single sex and independent schools versus an increasingly varied landscape of academies and free schools.

Historically the names Clarence Gate and Graham Terrace were little to do with brand and all to do with geography. These references worked for many years on a local level but have become increasingly unhelpful to the majority of applicants who have no idea where Clarence Gate or Graham Terrace are! The North/South, NW1/SW1 differentiators used by some were too literal and simplistic to truly reflect what each school offers today. After exploring a number of other 'names', Regent's Park was decided upon. Apart from the obvious benefit to prospective parents of knowing where it is in London, the school has also long been associated with the park. Pupils today enjoy the park's 395 acres on a daily basis for sport and recreational activities.

Whilst it is commonplace now to have professional marketing expertise in the independent sector, marketing and branding a school can only be as good as the school itself. I am delighted to say that Francis Holland, Regent's Park has gone from strength to strength over the last six years, not only in terms of its academic performance, but also its extracurricular offering, its record number of applicants and the 'Excellent' rating in the ISI Inspection Report (February 2014). This lays testament to the strength of the 'product' and service the school offers.

The truth is that Francis Holland School, Regent's Park will always be Clarence Gate to some and that's absolutely as it should be, so please don't feel you have to use a different name for your old school but just be aware others may refer to it differently. Either way it is a fantastic school and ready to face a very bright future.



Vanessa McKinley is Director of Communications for Francis Holland Schools Trust (she has a marketing and advertising background, has three children and been a School Governor). She is supported by Lucy Ellwood who is Marketing Assistant. Please join them on LinkedIn and via our Quondam Facebook page if you have not already done so.



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