

School FOR LIFE

Katharine Woodcock, Headmistress of Francis Holland School, Regent's Park, on beyond-the-timetable education that builds skills for life

The landscape of education is changing – and the speed of this change is accelerating – yet the way in which we assess the extraordinary achievements of our pupils has not. GCSE and A-level results still open important doors, but examination results are not the only important outcome of a 21st-century education that should be considered relevant. Character education, emotional intelligence, soft skills, creativity, a love of learning, digital literacy, to name but a few, are important for a holistic and well-rounded schooling.

A curriculum for life is now integral to ensuring that pupils leave school with the requisite toolkit to thrive. This curriculum puts as much emphasis on the importance of what happens within the classroom and academic results as it does on what happens outside the classroom. At Francis Holland School, Regent's Park, we strive to be strong in every area, be that music, drama, sport or the arts. Our sense of



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ABOVE
Katharine Woodcock
with FHS Regent's
Park pupils

community and inclusivity comes from the belief that every girl should be visible, celebrated for her individual strengths and not moulded into something she isn't.

Lifelong friendships are forged at FHS, not just within year groups but across the years. All aspects of school life afford pupils with ways in which to develop self-confidence and self-discipline, empowering them every step of the way. We want them to be curious and foster a lifelong love of learning, but also to be future ready and future proofed. A balanced and enriching co-curricular programme will only serve to enhance an education, tapping into talents and passions, whilst academic enrichment deepens knowledge, broadens horizons and provides invaluable time for critical thinking as well as healthy debate and discussion.

The launch last year of our Hale Lecture Series, named after our first speaker and the first female President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Baroness Lady Hale, enables our students to lead panel discussions on a range of important topics, whilst also bringing students together from a range of different schools. Sixth Form electives, our bespoke global horizons programme, financial and digital literacy sessions and opportunities to invent, innovate and design are all

examples of how education today is not only timetabled subjects, but also schooling for life.

The values, culture and ethos of a school are also paramount and our four pillars of knowledge, compassion, perseverance and spirit underpin all that we do, ensuring that we are character building. Creativity and empathy lie at the heart of what it means to be human and we want our pupils to be the difference we need right now in the world: to be kind to themselves and others, to give back. Our Help Fund, which supports our chosen charities, encourages our pupils to do just this, and is complemented by our partnerships and outreach programme.

Our goal is that pupils leave FHS with leadership, problem-solving and lateral thinking skills that set them apart, while also knowing the importance of compassion and humility in all that they go on to achieve. The landscape of education may be changing but it is a privilege and an honour to help the minds of tomorrow embrace this change, giving them the best possible springboard to future success and happiness. 🍷

KATHARINE WOODCOCK

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