

FHS enters its seventh year of Women of Influence Series

Francis Holland, Regent's Park, has been running its Women of Influence speaker series for seven years, since Headmaster Charles Fillingham launched the programme in 2015.



2nd February 2022 — FHS Regent's Park girls have many wonderful female role models in their lives, both at school and at home. Nevertheless, it has always been important to Charles Fillingham, the school's the first male headteacher, to host an engaging range of guests to inspire, to challenge and to encourage girls to ponder their place in the world now, as well as their career and their future. The power of responsibility and influence is immense, and you don't have to be famous to be influential. In light of this, our Wol series has included academics, politicians, actresses and film producers, dignitaries, royals, activists, sportswomen, politicians, businesswomen, curators and Polished Corners (members of our alumni community).

One particularly valuable aspect of the series is the fact that the Sixth Formers themselves welcome, interview and offer a vote of thanks to each guest. In this way they are learning a number of essential soft skills, for example the ability to meet and greet people they do not already know, to research them focusing on the most imperative contextual points and to make informed, sensitive and polite conversation. This will stand them in great stead for university, the working world and general adult life.

Last year, our Women of Influence Series was one of the most impressive we have had since we began this series six years ago. Our visitors were interviewed by our pupils, with the main discussion centring around the (particularly poignant in light of the pandemic) theme “Stronger Together, A New Beginning”. Guests included actress Tilda Swinton, author of Everyday Sexism Laura Bates and British journalist, documentary filmmaker and newsreader Emily Maitlis. Polished Corner Grace Beverley, CEO and Founder of Wellness brands TALA and SHREDDY and NatWest GBEA Young Entrepreneur of the Year, was another of our guests who is a shining asset to our alumni community. Having been named in Forbes’ 30 under 30 aged 23, Grace was able to give our pupils a fascinating insight into the world of millennial business. Indeed, all of our guests offered invaluable careers advice as well as discussing how they have coped with the personal and professional pressures imposed by the pandemic.

This year’s line-up is just as exciting and includes, amongst many more, speakers from creative industries, the world of finance and the third sector. Guests will include iconic Australian actress and film producer Rebel Wilson, renowned The Telegraph Features Writer Yolande Fawehinmi, High Commissioner of India Gaitri Issar Kumar and survivor of the Manchester Arena Bombing Freya Lewis. Our Sixth Formers are in the process of preparing for and organising these interviews and we are so excited to learn all about these fascinating women.

So, to conclude, watch this space...! Our Women of Influence programme encourages girls to expand their horizons, engage with the wider world and feel confident to aim for their fullest potential and their wildest dreams. Arguably no other school in London has so many and such distinguished guests and we are so grateful to them all for their time. Long may this unique proposition continue to help us shape the women of tomorrow using the wisdom of the women of today.