

19 July 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am delighted to be able to write to you my first letter as the new Secondary Headteacher at Preston Manor School. I am also honoured to have been chosen to lead a school so rich in prestige and history. During the selection process, I came to understand that Preston Manor School is an ambitious and supportive school community in which partnership and collaboration are at the heart of school life. The staff value their positive relationships with parents and the student body spoke warmly about the teaching and support that they receive. It is a great privilege to lead this wonderful school and I am looking forward to us achieving exceptional outcomes together in the coming years.

I would like to start by introducing myself. I have worked in London schools for over 18 years following a move from my beloved North East of England, beginning my career at Stoke Newington School in 2005 for ten years. Initially a PE teacher and then Head of PE, I have now enjoyed teaching History for the past eight years. I have been Deputy Headteacher for six years with an additional six months' experience as an Acting Principal at Phoenix Academy in the White City. In recent years, I have worked predominantly in school improvement, with a strong track record of turning around failing schools. I was Vice Principal responsible for Culture and Ethos at both Phoenix Academy and Ark Acton who both moved from Ofsted 'inadequate' to 'good', with Phoenix becoming the most improved school in London in 2018. More recently I have spent the past year at Ark John Keats in Enfield where I oversaw school organisation, personal development and sixth form. I am sure that my experience, commitment and passion towards education, together with my research-based methodology and preference to keep things simple will benefit and further strengthen PMS.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reinforce some of the good practices expected to continue from students from their first day in September and throughout the school year. When improving any school, it is important to raise expectations from whatever starting point they are at. As a leader, I focus strongly on culture and behaviour, believing that classrooms should be calm and focused with no place for low level disruption. Whilst firm in this belief, I approach each day with warmth, humour and a smile on my face. Keeping behaviour consistently high on our agenda will mean that students and staff can always enjoy coming to PMS each day, feeling safe and supported, whilst knowing that the students will be maximising every second of learning time.

By focusing on culture, we will ensure that standards are high and this will in turn challenge staff and students to be the best versions of themselves on a daily basis. I am a believer that school uniform being neat and worn properly is a strong indicator of high standards in any school and will therefore insist on uniform at PMS being full and correct each day, with all students fully equipped to ensure they can focus on learning. In doing so they will not have to engage in negative conversations around

why uniform is incorrect, or why they do not have the correct equipment needed to participate in a lesson. I want their energy and interactions with staff and each other to be positive from the moment they walk through the gate until the time they leave, eliminating distractions and barriers to learning.

Providing our students with in-depth knowledge of our world and life, allows them to understand the intricacies of growing up in a vast and complex society such as London. For this reason, I favour a knowledge rich curriculum which allows students to explore a broad range of subjects and in greater depth. This allows students to be taught a rich foundation of subject-specific and broader cultural knowledge that enables them to think in more powerful ways while exposing them to experiences that enrich their cultural capital. Along with high academic aspirations, this will support our students to continue to get strong results at GCSE and A-level.

For me the development of the child's character is as important as their GCSE and A-Level results, and this is done through an extensive Personal Development and Clubs programme and strong pastoral support. Leaving no stone unturned in giving Preston Manor students the experiences which put them on par with their privately educated counterparts, will be high on my list of priorities. My vision for Preston Manor is to ensure all children leave after Year 13 as well-rounded and polite young people, who move to the next stage of their education with the grades they need to build a great life for themselves, whilst also having the experiences and strength of character to succeed in the modern world.

As key educators in your children's lives, I feel that it is important that you feel you have a voice and that as a school we are approachable and allocate time to listen to your concerns, worries or thoughts about the school. I understand there is already a thriving online forum and I look forward to joining this as well as looking at other opportunities to strengthen the relationship between school and home.

Together, we can achieve great results if we are collectively ambitious for your child, and I hope that you will join me in challenging them to take up every opportunity that they are offered academically and in the wider curriculum to support their development and future. I am relishing the challenge of leading PMS Secondary phase through the next stage of its development, and I look forward to meeting you over the course of the year.

I wish you a happy summer and look forward to seeing the students return in September.

Sincerely,



Mr Tom Phillips

Designate Headteacher of the Upper School