

Wednesday 13th April 2022

Dear Jane Farrell,

As I am sure you are aware, around sixty students gathered on Monday 21st of March for a peaceful and organised protest outside the school gates – a true testament to the empowering environment Holland Park School has established for its students over the last 14 years. We, as a fair representation of the student body, feel that our voices have been dismissed and undermined in the decisions taken to join United Learning and change the future of our educational careers.

Over recent weeks, we have invested a considerable number of hours in researching and digesting vast amounts of information in order to better understand the board of governors' seemingly informed motivations for joining United Learning – one of the biggest MATs in the country. These hours, as I am sure you will agree, should have been spent revising and preparing for some of the most important examinations of our academic careers to date – examinations that will ultimately shape our futures. In your letter on the 26th of September 2021, you outlined how “the absolute priority for trustees and staff must be our students and their daily experience of school life. It is imperative that we remain strong in this regard, working together to secure stability and to maintain the high standards of teaching and learning so much associated with Holland Park School.” If this is the case, Ms Jane Farrell, then why are we having to spend countless hours trawling through vast amounts of information simply to inform ourselves about the future of our education? Does your inability to provide a transparent narrative – or any narrative at all – to the students at our school provide the “stability” you profess to seek? Does the constant distress and uncertainty we have felt over the last few weeks and indeed, months, “maintain the high standards of teaching and learning so much associated” with our school? It has become increasingly apparent to us all that since the newly appointed board of governors have joined the school, transparency and meaningful consultation with students, parents, and staff has not been a priority – forcing all stakeholders to spend valuable time piecing together the truth behind the decisions taken over the last couple of months rather than devoting all our effort towards achieving the best grades we possibly can in our upcoming exams. In this, whilst we recognise that transparency and democratic choice may not be a priority to you, I can assure you that it certainly is one for us. This school has always valued and believed in the voice of its students – hence, the existence of a Student Leadership Team elected each year by members of each year group, of which I am Chair this year.

We, as students, are incredibly proud of the school we have the privilege of attending. The quality of education and welfare provided at Holland Park School is undoubtedly outstanding and has been for many years. We value and are valued by our community – one that has suffered greatly following the tragedy of Grenfell. In your aforementioned letter, you stated that you “look forward to seeing [us] all during school visits and at events during the course of the year”. Ms Jane Farrell, it is now approaching the end of April and I have yet to see you attend any events organised by the Student Leadership Team in support of our community. As such, given the governors' lack of engagement in this community and our school events since your appointment, I imagine that gaging an understanding of how close we all are may be difficult. If this is indeed the case, please allow me to name some of the events that we as a school, have taken part in to shape and contribute to the solidarity of our community since your appointment on the board of governors. Last November, a football charity match between students and teachers raised £100 for Cancer Research UK. This was followed by a rematch raising £312 for Breast Cancer Research UK. In February, a school-wide book drive was organised on behalf of the Children's Book Project which saw over 400 books donated in an attempt to help tackle book poverty, and to give every child across the country the opportunity to own their own book. Most recently, on Friday 18th, a

charity netball match and bake sale ('peace for cake') were organised and raised £800 in support of DEC's Ukraine Humanitarian appeal - enough money to provide one month's worth of food for 16 refugee families. These are only some of the events that took place this year organised by the Student Leadership Team, and it is simply heartbreaking that our attempts to be involved so deeply within our community are counter-acted by your continuous failure to involve us in your decisions. As I am sure you have realised, the students at this school have continuously sought to stand united in the face of suffering, not least when in the summer of 2017, the whole school came out on a silent walk through Kensington Park to show our solidarity for the victims of Grenfell. We will continue to stand united in the best interest of our community, an interest which we feel you have dismissed in your inability to show any signs of transparency or engagement with the school and its students.

In your letter, you claimed that "the students of Holland Park School are the reason why we are all connected. They must be the focus of our attention whilst trustees and senior leaders work constructively with the review, put in any necessary changes, and rebuild confidence quickly in our ethos, systems, and practice." If this is indeed the case, then why do those whom you claim "connect" you, feel alienated and dismissed in any choices taken by the trustees. Further to this, we do not feel as though we have been "the focus of [your] attention," rather, we feel as though the focus of your attention has been fulfilling an agenda quickly and discreetly with no consideration of collaboration with senior leaders, staff, students, or parents. I need not mention that the decision to join United Learning is not "necessary" – we are an outstanding school with outstanding staff who prioritise our learning each and every day, something we remain grateful for. In this, your seeming inability to maintain a degree of transparency with the community of Holland Park School has not "rebuilt confidence" but in fact broken it for so many of my peers. I speak with Year 11 students each day who outline their concerns about coming back to join the Sixth Form, as well as their uncertainty over our school's future is only a source of distress and ambiguity. This is truly heartbreaking and terribly upsetting given that the standards of education I have received in the sixth form have been nothing short of exceptional.

With all this in mind, I write to you, simply to request that you hear us, meet us, and acknowledge our grievances. In previous years, our board of governors and school community have been deeply involved in school events and in preserving the quality of education that the school provides for its students. Since your appointment, I feel that this has sadly not been the case.

I look forward to receiving your reply and would like to mention that I have copied in Ofsted and others in this email.

Yours Sincerely,

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Chair of the HPS Student Leadership Team