

Beckford Bell



Friday 26th June 2020



Dear Parents/Carers,

There has been a lot of interest in the wider community, local newspapers and on social media, regarding the origins of Beckford Primary School's name. So I thought I would give everyone an update on the situation. I have even been contacted by Japanese television about it!

In response to this, Camden Council have set up a cross-party review to examine statues, monuments and place names. As a school, we stand together with the local authority in rejecting racism. We also believe in educating our children, so that we can move forward together towards an equal society.

As you all know, William Beckford is not an individual that we celebrate at school and there are no statues or paintings on the premises. In fact, most of the staff, including myself, were not aware of his significance until very recently.

It wasn't until Monday 8th June that I was informed of his significance and his history. I immediately contacted our chair of governors and we decided to speak to the governing body about possibly changing the name. The next day I was informed that there was a petition and two local newspapers had contacted me! On Wednesday 9th June I met with the governing body and they agreed to start the process of possibly renaming the school.

Once Camden have reviewed the origin of the name and we are told that it is definitely linked to William Beckford, we will start the consultation. We will involve all of the school's stakeholders: parents, governors, staff and of course children. However, the final decision will rest with the governing body. Camden have informed us that the formal renaming would probably take place in September 2021. This will allow us to take into consideration all of the required changes, including uniform, logo etc.

I would like to reassure parents that we will take into consideration any costs that buying new uniform will entail.

At Beckford, we also believe that this isn't just about choosing a different name for the school, it is about reviewing the values and curriculum that we teach the children. Over the past few months we have been developing a new curriculum and set of values which we believe reflects the diversity of our community. We will be sharing this with parents in the Autumn term.

Many people have talked about the possibility of naming it after one of my predecessors, Beryl Gilroy. Beryl Gilroy is a very significant figure in the history of Beckford Primary School and it is understandable that her name would be considered. In my first assembly I referred to her, and the children all know about her history. Prior to recent events, in collaboration with her daughter, we already had plans to celebrate her life. Regardless of the final renaming decision, these plans will resume as soon as school returns to 'normal'.

We look forward to getting the process going so we can see what other ideas are out there .

Have a fantastic weekend! Mr Drake, Head teacher