



ALEXANDRA HAYDON, HEADTEACHER AT FRANCIS HOLLAND, SLOANE SQUARE



"I really loved school and my memories are very happy. I was always academic but never felt I had any particular co-curricular talent. I was, however, always willing and keen to participate. I was lucky that my school recognised and rewarded this – I was even given house colours for regular spectating! This is something I've taken into my role as head of Francis Holland, Sloane Square. We really encourage participation in every possible aspect of FHS life as the consequent sense of belonging, community and connection is invaluable for pupils' wellbeing. I had many teachers who inspired me; always the ones who were relatable and passionate about their subject and took it beyond the curriculum. They encouraged me to become a voracious reader and develop intellectual curiosity by reading around

subjects – something we fervently encourage at FHS. My time at school has been integral to who I am today. I learned that you don't need to be the best at something to be a leader; you just need to be passionate and interested. Interested people are interesting. In fact, everybody is interesting. If you can't find what's interesting about them, that's on you, not them. I also learned the importance of good manners and asking questions. I discovered that honesty is always the best policy and it is best to own up quickly if you get something wrong. The importance of really valuing my friendships was something else I learned – and something we are hugely passionate about at Francis Holland. I also learned that everybody has their own unique strengths and we can all learn from each other in different ways."

IN THE ARCHIVES...

In the August/September issue of *Belgravia* magazine in 2004, we spoke to Philip Pullman about his school days in Belgravia. The award-winning author is best known for his fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials*, read by schoolchildren worldwide. He attended Eaton House on Eaton Square as a boy and he reflected on one of the hymns he used to sing aged nine – *O Worship the King*.

"I remember singing and enjoying hymns, it was like poetry that we used to sing. It made a good impression," he said.

Pullman told *Belgravia* magazine about his experiences of school between the years of 1956 and 1958. "The school was very nice, It was small then – I suppose it still is. It wasn't hard to mix in and make friends. I was used to it. I moved schools about every 18 months so I was an old hand."

Pullman's father and stepfather were in the RAF – they moved from Australia to Battersea in 1956. "I went to school on the bus, I think it was the 137 to Sloane Square. I remember walking along Prince of Wales Drive. We went past the Battersea Power Station and it was all working then. I had a friend called Harris – none of us had first names then, just surnames. Prep schools in those days could get away with a certain unconventionality in their staff."



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