



HLP Alumni Shine at Schools of Tomorrow Conference

We always love reengaging with our former students and hearing how they are getting on at their new schools. So you can imagine how delighted we were when four of our alumni - Fatima, Aiden, Rudi and Navayah - agreed to join us this week to represent HLP at the Schools of Tomorrow conference in central London, sharing their insights on inclusion and experiences of exclusion. Representing our school community, they passionately discussed the importance of belonging, being heard, and accessing support in educational settings. Our alumni emphasised the transformative impact of enrichment, creativity, and hope in shaping positive learning experiences for all students.

We're incredibly proud of our alumni for their contributions to the conference. It was wonderful to see them confidently share their stories and offer advice to school leaders.

Below are the words of two students so you can read for yourself what they had to say.



Hello everyone, my name's Fatima and I'm 14 years old in year 10. I go to Heartlands High School and before that I went to HLP, going there was a beautiful experience that I still miss. As well as teachers there's many things they do to at HLP to help you. They work hard to make sure that you can be successful. It's hard for children to be excluded, to be labelled as the bad kid all the time, as the one kid that the teachers are always looking out for. At HLP they really help you to see that you're not just a problem to get rid of, that you actually have lots of strengths and can be successful.

I feel like there's many things teachers can do to keep kids in school. In most mainstream schools, teachers and students are on a professional level in the sense where you can't sit and talk with certain teachers. Most people say that's inappropriate, but in HLP teachers come and join in whilst playing PE, compliment you during the day, just brightening up your mood, they sit at lunch with you, whilst you have a general conversation which helps to

build a strong bond and a safe platform, allowing young people to feel safe, talking about mental/personal issues, which, as a student I feel many teachers should consider doing. If many teachers start really talking to students then you'll know why certain students act the way they do instead of simply labelling them as good or bad.

I know that teaching and managing many students at a time is time consuming and hard, but wouldn't you want your students to feel comfortable with you as a teacher, isn't that the point? Anyway I want to talk about uniform policy and allowing kids to express themselves in any way that feels comfortable. I know ensuring young people look decent is the goal, but schools should still be lenient on certain accessories, earrings, bracelets and hair colour. Hair colour is where race comes in. Allowing white students to dye their hair, blonde and ginger and burgundy, but black students aren't allowed coloured braids.

Myself and many others can say our braids represent us and it feels so good to have. So, instead of school being so quick to exclude, give out the detentions and more, they should learn to talk to young people, get in their head and build a stronger foundation with young people, so they understand why we act how we do.

My last point is the importance of a quiet space for students. We hear the “go to class” so many times in a day that we stop talking about our issues, instead we keep it in and then display that when we get into class and act out of character and all the teachers give us a detention, but who asks why? Why do our kids act out of character? Do we provide a safe space for them, just giving them 5 to 10 minutes out of lesson to fully calm down and get deep into their thoughts before allowing them back to class? Teachers complain when we don't act to expected standards but no one asks why. HLP provides that space. At HLP they allow you to go into the library and take

your time before returning to class. At HLP the library is such a pretty and beautiful place, it can make you feel so calm. Having a quiet space gives students the time they need to be ok when things feel difficult. It's also important to give students different opportunities to express themselves in many ways that make them feel proud and come out of their shells. In HLP, I've done many things that encouraged me to be here talking today. I provided a service serving food to elderly people and exchanging conversations, saying things to them you wouldn't tell a teacher, and art therapy was a good way to express myself. I also got counselling at HLP and I felt like I needed this for a long time but HLP was the first time they actually made it happen. Even now I went back to mainstream, but I still see my counsellor at HLP. I feel schools should set different platforms that reach out to different peoples interests, allowing us to enjoy ourselves and do something we love at our own pace and create solid memories we will treasure in our hearts forever. My time at HLP will always be a special memory for me.

I've spoken lots today, but most important thing I want to say today is thank you to all teachers that support young people. All your hard work and dedication is honoured. One more thank you to Ms Robinson and all the teachers at HLP for allowing me to have an amazing school experience and create great memories. I will never forget. Thank you for giving me hope that I could go back to mainstream and helping me to get there. I feel really happy and lucky to be in my new school and I know they are doing a lot to help me and working with HLP.

Please think twice about excluding children and young people. Think about how they can be helped and what they might be going through. Sometimes the kids that seem like bad kids might just be having a really difficult time or have problems in their lives but not have anyone to talk to or trust.

Fatima Barrie

Year 10 Heartlands High School (HLP Alumni)



Hi, my name is Rudi, I am 15 years old and have been excluded from two schools.

The exclusions have ruined my time at secondary school, they disrupted my life, and my family's life and had a really bad effect on my schoolwork and mental health. The exclusions also made me not trust people, schools, and the school system.

I want to share my story so that it can help things to change, and so that no other children have to go through what I went through.

Being a teenager is difficult, my mum always says it's so much harder for us now a days than it was for her. When she was at school, there were no phones which meant that issues, bullying and problems couldn't follow you home at night and that allowed you time to rest and escape.

She also said teachers were kinder, they were allowed to give you a hug if you were having a bad day and there weren't so many rules that they had to follow which left them less stressed, and more able to be a real person who cared for you.

My teenage years have been all over the place and constantly shifting, which was caused by being unfairly excluded from not one, but two secondary schools.

It was so hard to leave my friends, it was scary to start a new school and to make new friends, and I was then made to do it all over again. In between both of these exclusions I was sent to Haringey Learning Partnership.

I wasn't excluded because I was a troublemaker or naughty, I had never had any behaviour issues before, it was just misunderstandings that got out of control.

The stress this caused me, and my family was over attacked and I began to question myself.

The constant negativity made me believe I was wrong and was a bad person and during this, I lost so much time learning.

Instead of being supported and listened to, I was made out to be a bad kid. If the schools had a little more understanding of their students, got to know them all properly, showed more care and a willingness to listen, it could have made all the difference to my time in secondary school and my education.

The only good bit of my story was my time at the Haringey Learning Partnership, a place that picked me up when I was at my lowest. My mum didn't want me to go there, but both of us are now so pleased that I did.

The teachers didn't see me as naughty kid, they saw me as a child that could do well and they always supported me, motivated me, believed in me, and showed me respect and kindness.

When I was feeling lost, stuck, alone, unwanted, isolated, angry, and frustrated, the teachers (especially the Headteacher Ms Robinson) made me feel seen, heard, safe and worthy of their time and care and support.

Haringey Learning Partnership sent us on so many school trips and activities to let our minds be free of school and work which helped me so much.

I was very lucky that Ms Robinson got me a place at Greig City Academy, and Mr Coleman at Greig City was willing to, and wanted to give me a chance to enjoy school again. He is a great teacher; he is kind and supportive, he made an effort to get to know me and I trust him.



I think all schools should be like the Haringey Learning Partnership. All children deserve to be seen, heard, respected, cared for, and educated the way they do at Haringey Learning Partnership.

Rudi, Year 10

Greig City Academy (HLP Alumni)