

HYDESVILLE TOWER SCHOOL

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2nd February 2018

‘Why male attitudes have to change,’ according to Warren Honey, Headmaster at Hydesville Tower School, Walsall.

*“This is a man's world, this is a man's world
But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl”*

The recording of James Brown's oddly titled, “It's a Man's Man's Man's World”, occurred only 15 miles from Hydesville Tower School, in a studio in Tamworth. The song will be familiar to many with its combination of Brown's vocals, his brass band and the accompanying strings. Even in 1966 when it was released, it was not without controversy. It may have reached No.8 in the *Billboard Hot 100*, but its lyrics were described by Rolling Stone magazine as, “biblically chauvinistic”.

Winding the clock forwards 51 years, and how have attitudes developed? Popular culture has embraced certain empowering viewpoints: “Girl Power” became a statement of strength, borrowed by the Spice Girls in the mid-1990's to characterise the sense that being assertive and ambitious should not be the preserve of males. #thisgirlcan became a trending topic for a while, initially to represent the importance of girls being encouraged in sport; subsequently this was adopted to being an attitude that gender should not be a barrier to aspiration.

On a grander scale, there were changes arising from the stance of the incredible schoolgirl Malala Youfsafzai. Her determination that girls should be educated in the Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province led to an assassination attempt by the Taliban, fearful of how dangerous her views and popularity could be. Surviving, she has become the youngest Nobel Prize laureate and is currently studying PPE at Oxford University. Her work, on behalf of girls receiving education, remains a remarkable testament for what can be achieved.

What a shame, therefore, that the last few months will be remembered primarily for the ways in which certain male attitudes towards women were demeaning, objectifying or utterly offensive. Between the variation in salary pay for undertaking the same role, Harvey Weinstein's approach to casting actresses (and similar stories of abusing power) and the new revelations about The Presidents Club – I'm left feeling disappointed about the XY fraternity. It is 2018, after all!

How are things going to change? Hopefully, the BBC's move to try and level pay will have some effect on all areas of work. Presumably, the culture of men in power acting without care or consideration for others will go as they are found out and removed from office. But key to it all will be our new generations. Education is part of the process of stopping such attitudes being fostered in the minds of young men, and giving young women the chance to realise that they do not have to tolerate or accept such practices.

At Hydesville Tower School, we are taking steps to ensure the right message is being received. In Nursery, there are no restrictions on the activities undertaken by girls and boys, no gender-stereotyping of their toys, and no sense of different expectations of behaviour. This follows through

into the Prep School – where it is notable that boys and girls are equally capable of holding the positions of responsibility, of attaining awards for swimming and karate, and both boys and girls hold open doors for other children or adults. Finally, in the Senior School - where attitudes are additionally influenced by the impact of teenage hormones - time is spent with the girls developing their assertiveness, in PSHE with everyone reviewing healthy relationships, and through English lessons exploring prejudice and behaviours that are inappropriate in the modern times.

The end of the aforementioned song states, *“He's lost in the wilderness, He's lost in bitterness, he's lost lost”*. I think it's time we make sure “He's” found.

