

Honorary - Alison Kriel (Doctor of Philosophy)

Tuesday 31 July 2018 | 10.00am
School of Social Professions

Vice-Chancellor, it is my pleasure to present to you Alison Kriel for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy honoris causa

Alison Kriel is, in the words of one of her colleagues, '*a woman who is able to achieve what others may believe to be unattainable.*' Alison, in the face of considerable challenges, is a London Met graduate who has had a transformational impact on the teaching and school education and has made a positive impact on the lives of vast numbers of London children.

Alison was born in South Africa under the apartheid regime to two teenage parents at a time of political oppression and financial hardship.

Alison's formative years saw her spend time in Ireland before finally settling in England when she was 15-years-old.

Education became her passion and so she enrolled to study at the North London University which was to become London Met.

After a three-year spell at a North London primary school she moved to Gayhurst School in Hackney. Her choice of an inner-city school reflected her love of diversity. In a recent interview she said of Londoners: '*What makes us belong to the same group is that we are very, very different.*'

Within a just a year at Gayhurst she was appointed as Deputy Head teacher and remained there for eight years until 1999 when the position of Head at new school in Stoke Newington became available.

Under Alison's leadership, The Betty Layward School grew from 75 to 470 pupils and was soon established as a high performing, oversubscribed school.

In 2008, Hackney council asked her to take on the Executive Head position at Northwold School before a visit from Government school inspectors. The school was failing and had a high turnover of leaders and teachers and a shocking staffing attendance of just 64%.

By the time she left in 2017, after taking it through the academy conversion process, Northwold was the highest performing schools in the borough, third in London and 70th nationally. An astonishing turnaround.

The impact of the work has led in improving prospects for students at Northwold was recognised by the prestigious Pupil Premium Awards. The School picked up prizes in the three categories; pupil progress, pupil attainment and pupil premium.

These awards are for those schools that have a large number of disadvantaged pupils and therefore have the largest challenge. Judges look for improvement over time to reward schools which have a sustained record of improving outcomes for students.

At the core of the Alison's approach is human connection and wellbeing. She transformed a challenging culture into a supportive and ambitious environment for both staff and students.

She made bold and courageous decisions, some of which organisations today are only just beginning to embrace. One example is the introduction of mindfulness, to help reduce stress among staff, for which she convinced her Governors to set-aside money from the school's budget. That would be radical in 2018, let alone 2008.

She took time to listen to staff, remove unnecessary barriers, organise their workload to ease pressure and empower them to make the changes to their lives so they could transform the lives of their students.

A former teacher that worked for Alison said of her: *"You're an inspiration to countless people; recognising potential, creating chances and shaping us into all we've become. You make things"*

There can no better role model than Alison Kriel. She is a talented educator, an inspiring leader and a role model. She has built her career based on intelligence, hard work and, perhaps most importantly, a burning passion that has changed the lives of her colleagues and her students.

Vice-Chancellor, it truly is my pleasure to propose London Met alumna Alison Kriel for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy honoris causa.