Headteacher's assembly 19th October 2026:
Honouring our Communities for Black History Month

Music from black artists played whilst the children entered the hall; this included Michael Jackson, Beyonce, Pharrell Williams, Aaliyah and Chaka Khan. Thinking time whilst the children enter assembly, look at these pictures of 5 people, can you name them and what is the connection:



Four of them were named very easily! Mel B, Nicola Adams, Corrine Bailey-Rae and Lucas Radebe, with Mr Gath giving some great background information on how Lucas Radebe arrived at Leeds United! But the top left was difficult, the lady in the picture is Gertrude Paul, the first black headteacher in Leeds. What connected them all was our city and the contributions they have made.

Honouring our communities.

This year's Black History Month UK theme, **"Honouring Our Communities,"** celebrates the people, organisations and networks whose everyday contributions help shape, support and strengthen society. It encourages us to recognise not only well-known figures from history, but also the teachers, carers, volunteers, community leaders and families whose dedication creates opportunities, promotes inclusion and fosters a sense of belonging. The theme reminds us that Black history is not only about the past, but is also being made today through the positive impact of individuals and communities across the UK. So at Highfield, we honoured Gertrude Paul in our assembly.

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Gertrude Paul (1934-1992) was a pioneering educator, community leader and equality campaigner who played a significant role in the history of Leeds. Born in St Kitts in the Caribbean, she moved to Leeds in 1956 and, after completing further teacher training, became the city's first Black teacher. In 1976, she made history again by becoming Leeds' first Black headteacher at Elmhurst Middle School. Beyond education, Paul was a passionate advocate for racial equality and was a co-founder of the Leeds West Indian Carnival, now the longest-running Caribbean carnival in the UK. She also helped establish organisations including the United Caribbean Association and served on the Commission for Racial Equality, working to improve opportunities and representation for Black and minority ethnic communities. Her dedication to education, equality and community cohesion left a lasting legacy that continues to be celebrated across Leeds today.



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Together, we then watched a video tribute to Gertrude Paul; if you would like to view it for yourself you can find it here:

https://welcometoleeds.co.uk/video/women-of-leeds-gertrude-paul-the-inspirational-head-teacher/

The film was produced by The City Talking and Leeds Civic Trust as part of the city's blue plaque series, highlighting her pioneering contributions to education, equality, and community life in Leeds. It explores her journey from St Kitts to Leeds, her achievements in breaking racial barriers within education, and the lasting legacy she left through her leadership and community activism.



We then left the hall enjoying the music of former Highfielder Corrine Bailey-Rae – one of our own!