

Statement from The Board of Trustees

January 24, 2016

Dear Alumni/ae, Parents and Friends of St. George's,

The St. George's Board of Trustees is absolutely committed to doing everything we can to respond to the allegations of sexual abuse at the school. We apologize to the victims of this abuse, and they are in our hearts and minds as we try to sort out what happened and learn from it.

From the start, the victims have asked for three actions from the school – to launch an independent investigation to uncover what happened, create a fund to support the mental health needs of the victims, and publicly apologize for what they went through.

The School has taken all three actions. We have joined with the victims to retain Martin Murphy of Foley Hoag to conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation. We have created a mental health fund administered by an outside expert. And, we have and continue to apologize to the victims for what they went through.

Boston Globe Article

An article released yesterday in the Boston Globe three students came to the administration in 2004 alleging that they had been touched by a faculty member.

Unfortunately, the Globe article did not provide the full context of the incident, and thus left a false impression with its readers on many factual details relevant to this matter.

In October 2004, students expressed concerns about interactions with a male dorm parent. Once the concerns were raised, and after speaking with all students in the dorm about their concerns, the school sought the advice of outside counsel, who said that the behaviors described by students did not rise to the level of sexual abuse. This matter was also reported to the parents of the students living in the relevant dorm at the time.

Nevertheless, out of an abundance of caution, and in response to the complaints, the faculty member was immediately placed on leave and the School mandated that he undergo independent psychological tests which ultimately determined the faculty member was not a threat to children. Based on that evaluation from the independent professional not affiliated with St. George's, and the school's review of that professional's report, the faculty member was allowed to return to the school.

At a later point, one of the students affiliated with the earlier report and following his dismissal from St. George's on another matter, alleged that he had been sexually abused by the above referenced faculty member, and he filed a report with the Middletown, Rhode Island Police. The police investigated the matter and determined that the allegations were unfounded and the matter was closed.

The Investigation and Other Points to Clarify

We want to also take this opportunity to address other issues of concern that have been raised by our parents, alumni and other members of our community.

We are listening, and while we have been counseled to be patient and let the investigation unfold, we can no longer sit idly by as misinformation is spread in public, in private, and on social media. We have learned from those who have criticized our approach; we have often acted in response to those critiques. We have, for example, acknowledged and acted upon what over 800 alumni and other concerned stakeholders have asked at [this change.org petition](#).

There have been questions about why we hired Schwartz Hannum, PC to conduct the School's investigation into past sexual assault. Schwartz Hannum has a [long track record](#) of advising independent schools on these matters.

Contrary to what many have posted on social media, Schwartz Hannum has never served as general counsel for the school.

Schwartz Hannum was initially retained by St. George's to conduct boundary training for faculty and to advise the school on sexual misconduct policies, training and education.

The school hired Schwartz Hannum to conduct an independent investigation of the allegations. The firm has a national reputation for leading such investigations involving allegations of sexual abuse in independent schools. The suggestion that the firm had some sort of conflict of interest is false.

We think it is important to reiterate to the community our purpose of the School's investigation. The School sought to provide a framework for any alumni who may have suffered sexual abuse at our school to come forward so that the School could first and foremost 1) support members of our community who had been harmed 2) bring any perpetrators to justice and 3) learn from our mistakes in both what action was taken or not taken by the School and also to examine what contributing factors (cultural or otherwise) allowed these acts of sexual abuse to take place.

On December 23, a report of the investigation's findings was released to the St. George's community. It included 26 firsthand accounts of sexual abuse from six faculty-member perpetrators.

In addition, the investigator reviewed various documents provided by the school, which will now be provided to the new investigator, Mr. Murphy.

The Independent Investigation

We fully support the request that we continue this work with an independent investigator jointly retained by St George's and many of the victims we are trying to support, SGS for Healing.

In no uncertain terms, we believe that Mr. Murphy's investigation should now be the forum for all discovery about sexual misconduct at St. George's, ensuring that all facts are thoroughly and completely reviewed, wherever those facts may lead.

We believe that selectively released (let alone misleading or partial) information in the press has the potential to cause undue, unwarranted harm to many members of our community: current students, survivors, parents and prospective students.

We strongly advocate that all members of our community honor the investigative process now being led by Mr. Murphy. Our community deserves this investigation. Let us all let Mr. Murphy do his work and present his findings – all of his findings – to us all.

Most important, let us as a Board reiterate to the victims our deepest apology for any and all harm that was suffered, both through past sexual abuse and through this investigation process. We hope that our commitment to transparency will be demonstrated not just by our words, but by our actions.

It is our sincerest hope that we can work with the survivors and all members of our community to learn from our past so that St. George's can be a stronger, safer and brighter place.

Sincerely,

The Board of Trustees St. George's School