

Wednesday 3 June 2020

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson (Philosopher and Poet – 19th Century)



Dear Blackfen students

“Flaming” June has arrivedand probably the last of the sunshine for a few weeks? I hope that you managed some “downtime” over the half term week, however, it is good to see you back, relaxed, refreshed and ready for the challenges that lie ahead this half term. I wrote, briefly, to your parents/carers yesterday to inform them that we are working towards the school being opened for more students in years 10 and 12 from Monday 15 June (not Monday 8 June as previously announced) and we are working on what this will look like.

What is your journey looking like at the moment – manufactured or natural? Manufactured, in that you are having to build it piece by piece, or natural, when you are allowing your journey to take a natural course. Any journey should be a bit of both of these. If it is too manufactured, it does not allow for enough creativity whilst if it is too natural, you may end up not arriving at your destination! On Friday, I will write to you about the manufactured journey. Today, though, it is the natural journey that we are on. I wonder if you have ever tried to stop the flow of water – either in a stream or at the beach (or if you have a leak in your house!). Every time you seem to stop the water from flowing, it finds a natural path to get around your obstacle. Do you remember earlier in the year when we heard about a dam in the UK that was at breaking point because the water was trying to find its natural course and was putting huge pressure on the dam to just break on through? On our natural journey, sometimes we have to leave our well-trodden path. It might seem an adventure and a risk to be going in a different direction or by a different route but, sometimes, we need to take that natural diversion where there may not be a path, so that we can see where it goes and what it leads to. Leadership, and you are all leaders, is about leaving a trail so that others will follow. During this time, we should be leading others and this is done by helping, supporting and providing a clear trail for them to follow.

I was wandering the school on Monday morning, around 11.00. I walked towards the Canteen and I was fondly thinking about the noise, laughter and general good humour there would normally be, made by over 1000 young people eager to see their friends at breaktime and to nourish themselves for the rest of the day. I missed the polite “good mornings” and the discussions about uniform, what you had been doing over half term and whether it was good to be back in school after half term. It was silent, empty and desolate. The school is a very eerie place with very few people in it. Instead, it becomes just bricks and mortar. And then I saw them, surely, they could not be? Poking out between the paving slabs were 2 tomato plants. Not as strong as mine at home but there they were, on their journey. These had clearly grown due to some discarded tomatoes from salads and sandwiches over the last year. The seeds had disappeared into the cracks between the slabs. They had not been sung to, watered or fed but, they had shown strength, resilience, resourcefulness and determination to sprout forth from the ground. Of course, they have been helped because they are not being trampled on underfoot. I went round and counted 8 tomato plants in different places around the canteen. If they survive, I will update you on their progress and their journey. Photos of them are shown above.

So, don't always follow the same natural path, knowing where it will lead. Instead, leave a trail and lead others on this new journey you are on. Be resourceful and resilient, like the tomato plants, and make the most of the conditions you have to continue to travel and to grow. Sometimes that will be tough but keep on going.

With my best wishes to you and your family and friends at this time.

Matthew Brown