

Wednesday 17 June 2020

“Leave the road. Take the trails.” Pythagoras

Dear Blackfen students

Earlier this week the first students in years 10 and 12 took giant steps as they came back into school for formal teaching for the first time in 12 weeks. This has continued this week and by Thursday all year 10 and most year 12 students would have had access to learning in school. This provision is to supplement their work, which continues at home, and this type of learning is called blended learning. It is a blend or mix of working at home with being in school. For students in years 7-9, and for students in year 11, we have not moved towards that approach yet. For you, remote learning continues over the last 5 weeks of this term. It is vitally important that you put everything into this learning at this time even when it seems difficult. I know that you are all, along with staff and parents/carers, working so hard to make this situation as positive as it can for you. Staff have been in school and at home working hard to upload resources and to teach students when they are in school.

As Ms Minnis said in her email on Monday, the students in school this week are trail-blazers. Those first few students at 8.25 on Monday morning were the first ever students to take part in this type of learning. Trail-blazers show us the way and it is all, at this time, about showing us the way ahead. Look at the quote. You will recognise the person who said this. Indeed, it is our friend Pythagoras. I was thinking of my secondary school education (some time ago) and your education today. There are many differences but there remain some constants and Pythagoras is one of them. It is just one of those mathematical theories that you had to learn (along with how to use a log book and a slide rule - don't worry if you don't know what these are!!!). You would have definitely heard his name mentioned in mathematics and I hope you know what his theory is. But, if you look closely and google him (other research facilities and providers are available), you will find out that he was more than just someone who made up a mathematics theory. He was a philosopher, music scholar and astronomer. He was a trail-blazer. The teachings that the world is a sphere are attributed to him and he is widely thought as the first person to identify the planet Venus. The theory we all learn in mathematics, Pythagoras' theory, is clearly named after him. He could have lived his life by following the clear road ahead. Instead, he wanted to leave the planned road and take the trails, not knowing where they might lead. A real journey of discovery.

In a sense, we are all trail-blazers because we all lead unique lives. We are all individuals and we can all be what we want to be. Of course, our lives are influenced by those around us and the environment we are in. Sometimes, we are conditioned into being something or someone. But, as trail-blazers, we need to show our unique and individual characteristics. We should, as we often say, do what we are told to do when we are told to do it in terms of our behaviours. It is fundamental to know right from wrong. However, this does not stop us being the person we want to be by proving people wrong when they tell us we can't possibly do something or be something. When I was 17, I was told by an adviser that I would never be a teacher. I vividly remember my dreams and aspirations (I had wanted to be a teacher since I was 12/13) being taken away in that one statement. I even remember the room I was sitting in and the face of the person talking to me. I am sure we can all recall situations where this has happened and we all want to prove people wrong. This person had another road planned for me but I was determined to leave that road and take the trail. And the rest, as they say, is history.....

Whatever you do, now or in the future, remember that to get somewhere you might have to leave the road and follow the trail. Be a trail-blazer. Pythagoras was, can you be one too?

Finally, and with a skip and a jump and a heart a-flutter...it has been so good to see your (year 10) happy and smiling faces once more as you have walked through the front gates. I hope that the rest of the school can join you in the not too distant future.

Best wishes to you and your family and friends at this time.

Matthew Brown