

**"Before you act, listen; Before you react, think; Before you spend, earn;
Before you pray, forgive; Before you quit, try" (Ernest Hemingway – author)**

Wednesday 8 July 2020

Dear Blackfen students

I hope you and your family are well. It was such an exciting day yesterday as our new year 7 students "joined us" for our virtual induction day. It was lovely to see them all eagerly and excitedly working on the activities provided for them. As you know, because most of you will have been there, it is one of the most memorable days of your school life – the first taste of being in a secondary school. Sadly, or maybe not, there is no summer school this year and there will therefore be no opportunity for students, parents/carers and family members to sample the delights of my barbecue cooking!

Many years ago (actually at some point in the last 10 years) I needed to buy a new back door for the kitchen. The old one was well beyond repair, it had opaque glass and was now ill fitting due to the demands of the British weather. For some inexplicable reason I drove down to the local DIY store in a small car. There, I purchased a fine door with a very clear transparent window. It would do just the job...and more. I negotiated the cash desk with the door resting on a trolley with the wheels seemingly wanting to go to all points of the compass. I had sized the door up and knew it would fit in the car - a tight squeeze but it would go....so I thought. I carefully placed the door, lengthways, in the car through the boot. Great, it would fit! I was very pleased with myself, especially as I had left another car at home in which the door would have easily fitted. I pulled the boot down, slamming it hard. With this the door shot forward, did not have enough space, whacked into the windscreen and left a huge and indelible crack from top to bottom in the front windscreen. I drove home feeling both stupid and annoyed with myself. What a complete idiot! The door had cost the price of the door, VAT and a replacement front windscreen....and a great deal of soul searching.

I tell this story as Ms Minnis was telling you about the amazing strong properties of glass - not attributable to my windscreen. Of course, it is not a mistake I will ever repeat. I had simply not thought things through. I had not appreciated the reaction that my actions would have. All of our actions can provoke a reaction - either positive or negative. We must always think carefully before we act. You would have heard the quote, "Actions speak louder than words," and indeed they do. Positive actions say something about the person we are and I am sure you have done lots of positive things this week. Ask yourself, "What have I done positively this week?" Negative actions, and we are all guilty of these, don't necessarily make us feel good and we often regret our actions later. Hopefully, any negative actions we take don't last forever and with a meaningful sorry we can be forgiven.

The journey we are on has meant that we have had to really think things through rather than doing things ad-hoc. More planning is now required to do the things we once took for granted. We might have to book ahead or use an app to do something that we used to turn up to unannounced. I know this will be the case for anyone who managed to eat out at some point over the weekend. And, there are the additional planning pressures of wearing a mask on public transport, sanitising and washing hands carefully and frequently and, of

course, making sure we social distance. So many new things to learn and to do to make sure our actions don't have negative reactions. These things are all done for a reason.

I love the quote above especially the parts that states, "before you react, think...before you quit try." It continues to be a long journey that we are on. As we learn new things it is important that we listen, we take things in and we plan accordingly. We won't get everything right first time but most things will go well if we plan and think about the consequences before starting out.

Despite the strength of glass, I just wish it had been a bit stronger and I wish that I had just thought a bit longer and considered the consequences before putting the door in my car!

With my best wishes to you and your family and friends.

Matthew Brown