

**Friday 5 June 2020**

**“Let’s build bridges not walls.” Martin Luther King**

Dear Blackfen students

Earlier in the week I wrote about the natural journey we are on and that I would write about the importance of us planning or manufacturing the journey we are on. I will write further on this next week. Today, however, I want to take up the opportunity this communication affords to reflect on the main item of news this week. The quote above, by Martin Luther King, is so poignant. You would have seen in the news the protests around the world following the death in police custody of George Floyd last week. This was a truly sad, devastating and abhorrent incident which has shocked the world. Whether it was filmed or not is not important and we must be clear that this is not just about one incident. Instead, it raises a huge number of questions and we have seen solidarity against these brutal actions and against racism and discrimination - by firefighters in London, football clubs and a range of politicians and famous people to name a few. Most importantly, we have seen solidarity through world wide protests and some of you may have joined local or regional Black Lives Matter protests. Black Lives do Matter and we must now urge each other to work towards an inclusive society in which all lives matter equally. We should not have to wait for an event of this magnitude to make us do this. It should be something that we are always working towards. I wrote, in an earlier email to you, about the opportunity the situation we are in at present gives us to build a better future world for us all and the important role that we all play in ensuring this.

In many ways, it has brought to a head again just how fractured our society is. There is no place for racism, discrimination, injustice and inequality and there is no place for such violence against another human being. Over the last few years, we have often talked about injustice in the world, human rights and racist attitudes. We have been very clear that there is no place for racism in society. Many of you have been involved in events in the school, under the leadership of students and the PPE faculty, which celebrate diversity and difference and aim to build bridges rather than put up walls and barriers. I hope that the events you have seen across the world have made you think about injustice in society but more importantly has made you want to do something about it. I will reinforce the message I often give you in assembly. As young people, you are our future leaders and you can make society what you want it to be. We need to work together to build a better society for us all. This is now about doing something sustained and not just something that lasts a short time and is then forgotten about before it happens again.

So, let us pause for thought and reflect on the words of Martin Luther King. What bridges are we going to build to help society to heal it’s wounds and how are we going to help to take down the walls and barriers which exist and ensure that these barriers are not just put up again in the future?

My best wishes to you and your family at this time.

Matthew