

**“Not everyone will understand your journey. That's okay. You're here to live your life, not to make everyone understand.” (Banksy – Artist)**

**Wednesday 15 July 2020**

**Dear Blackfen students**

Ms Minnis wrote to you on Monday for the last time and this is my last communication to you during these unprecedented times. On Friday, my message to you will be via a year group assembly in Teams. I will invite you to this. Thank you for spending the time reading the emails and for all the feedback you have provided. Ms Minnis outlined in her emails all the different areas that have been covered over the last few months. It has been a roller coaster of a journey.

What a journey we have been on. I fondly remember the first day of the 2019-2020 academic year. We had celebrated great results with students in years 11 and 13 during the summer and we returned to school with the largest number of year 7 students ever to join us. Building work had started to extend and improve our facilities and everything had been tidied up, cleaned and repainted. The new school year had begun. At the end of that first term we had a visit from the Ofsted inspection team and we were delighted with the glowing report. Fortunately, Ofsted left so that the end of year pantomime could take place.

There were no snow days in the early part of the Spring term and staff and students were head down, working hard and making great progress. The groundworks on the new building began. At the start of the half term break in February I received a devastating phone call telling me about the sudden and sad passing away of Emma Moorey, a fabulous English teacher at the school. We were all saddened and shocked and these feelings were shared across the Blackfen school community. There was a sombre feel in the school as you all attended assemblies to remember Emma and to come together to think about her....as a teacher, daughter, partner and mother. It was, and continues to be, a sad time for us all. However, we all felt the power of unity and community that bonded us together at a time of grief and upset.

Three weeks later we were holding assemblies of a different type. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government announced that all schools would be closed to all but a few young people from Friday 20 March 2020. I spoke to each of you in your year groups and Ms Minnis has outlined what I said and what the messages were in her email earlier this week. Since then we have all worked in a very different way and we have learnt to adapt. There have been sad times, worrying times and times when we have all felt like giving up. But continue we have, with support from each other, and this has made us strong people moving forwards. The end of term is not the final destination on this journey and we certainly want to keep going. It is a time to rest, refresh and rejuvenate ready for next term.

I wonder what your journey has been like over the last few months. It will have been your own individual journey. I have used a Banksy quote today. Interestingly, after I decided to use this quote he was in the news this week for his art work on the Tube. Look it up to see what he has been up to dressed up as a cleaner. "Not everyone will understand your journey," because it is individual to you. You know how you have felt, what you have done and how, and how far you have travelled. We don't expect anyone else to understand our journey. We can see the journey that others are on but there is no way we could possibly understand how they have travelled. Whilst people might share their experiences of their individual journey no one will ever know how you have felt and how you have coped with this. It has been, and continues to be a unique journey.

So, as we look back on this year, we can see the phenomenal, unusual and strange journey we have been on. It has not been easy at times and we have needed plenty of support. Look back on the quotes I have used and try to use them as inspiration to keep going on this journey. We have not yet arrived at our destination but, like my tomatoes and the building project, we have made progress. To continue to progress we must support, nurture and be there for each other so that we can be strong to face any situations that arise.

With this in mind, I close this part of the journey - the journey of 2019-2020 - with a wish that I will see you in September as we reconnect and re-establish ourselves as individuals in the Blackfen school community.

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

Matthew Brown